

MAY-JUNE 2020

THE

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REAL TRUTH™

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

THE NEW NORMAL?



**"And There Shall Be
Pestilences..."**

Pandemic Set to Hit
Impoverished Countries Hardest

**Americans Forced to Do
Something New: Sacrifice**

Deepfakes: Is Seeing
Still Believing?

THE **REAL TRUTH**TM

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

VOL. XVIII | NO. 3 | MAY-JUNE 2020

ARTICLES

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■ South Korean army soldiers wearing protective suits spray disinfectant to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus at Daegu International Airport in Daegu, South Korea (March 6, 2020).

PHOTO: KIM JOO-SUNG/YONHAP VIA AP

COVID-19: The New Normal?

The coronavirus pandemic is set to impact every aspect of society for years to come.
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FRONT COVER: A woman wearing a mask walks on the Brooklyn Bridge during the coronavirus outbreak in New York City (March 20, 2020).

PHOTO: VICTOR J. BLUE/GETTY IMAGES

CREDITS: All photos from Getty Images unless otherwise noted. Photo illustration on pages 16-17 by Sarah O. Vidal. Articles on pages 5-8, 10-15, 20-27 contain information from The Associated Press.

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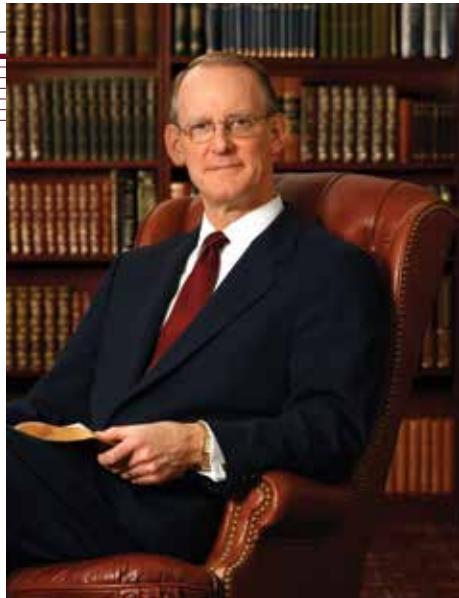
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PERSONAL FROM

David C. Pack



“And There Shall Be Pestilences...”

GROWING MILLIONS are *troubled*, even *terrified*, by what is happening almost everywhere. The world is in a place it has never been before—truly uncharted territory! No crisis since World War II has captured virtually every headline of every major news source like the coronavirus pandemic. Just a quick review of headlines in recent weeks reveals the unprecedented level of anxiety and fear. Masses flocked to stores, panic buying and stockpiling supplies, while others pursued pleasure, heads buried in the sand, trying to ignore the growing storm sweeping across the world.

With global trends and conditions growing grimmer by the day, what lies ahead for all nations has become the very greatest concern. As more perished and entire nations shutdown, millions were left searching—wondering about the course of events.

Jesus' disciples asked Him about the “end of the world”—more correctly translated “age” (Matt. 24:3). The prophet Daniel spoke of “the time of the end” (Dan.

11:40; 12:9) and asked, “O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?” (12:8). And the apostle Paul warned, “In the last days *perilous* times shall come” (II Tim. 3:1). This makes the subject more serious.

Let's pull back and look at the big picture. It has become painfully obvious that this world is in *terrible trouble*. Beyond the deadly pandemic gripping the globe, mankind is *overwhelmed* with every kind of trouble, evil and ill—war, terrorism, violence of every kind, famine, other diseases, pollution, overpopulation, political upheaval, religious confusion and tremendous economic turmoil and decline, threatening to make the Great Depression look like child's play.

Then there are the hundreds of millions who live in abject poverty, ignorance and oppression. Now add rampant and worsening immorality and perversion in every Western nation—and growing hatred, unrest and the never-ending cycle of war in the Middle East—and deteriorating conditions throughout Africa—and frightening weather patterns across many parts of the world—and devastating fires, earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, drought and floods occurring with greater frequency and intensity—and headlines screaming of murder, rape, robbery and crimes of every kind. These mushrooming problems now threaten ALL nations.

Has the final interval in world history arrived? Can you be sure? You CAN—and God even expects you to know!

Major Indicators

Make no mistake. The Bible is plain about the Return of Jesus Christ—many verses speak to this subject. It will happen—and it does not hinge on the opinions of men. In the period leading to this climactic event, many things are foretold to happen—some even catastrophic! Can you afford to be in the dark? What will you believe?

In Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21, Christ foretold a time when 12 MAJOR INDICATORS would signal the imminent arrival of God's Kingdom: (1) wars, (2) rumors of war, (3) nations rising against nations (Greek: *ethnos*, meaning ethnic rivalries), (4) kingdoms rising against kingdoms, (5)

famines, (6) pestilences (disease) and (7) pests (another meaning for pestilences), (8) great earthquakes and (9) great storms (a second meaning for earthquakes), (10) troubles, meaning disturbance, mob sedition and (11) roiling of water, and (12) commotions, meaning instability and disorder.

In a global economy, stock market performance is one of the best indicators of the state of the world. If world events are going well—at least by man's standards—so goes the market. As investment information giant *Investopedia* put it earlier this year (emphasis mine): "There is an old saying on Wall Street that the market is driven by just two emotions: FEAR and GREED. Although this is a simplification, it can often be true. Succumbing to these emotions can profoundly harm investor portfolios, the stock market, and even the economy."

The stock market is now more volatile than it has ever been in history—and by far! Trillions of dollars drastically rose and fell over the past few months. No one has ever seen anything like this—ever! But this is the kind of volatility that a world gripped by fear and greed (fueled by the coronavirus pandemic) will not escape without God's intervention.

What the world does not know is that Jesus said pestilences (and all of its destructive effects) come last. Notice the sequence recorded in Luke 21:10-11—"Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and great earthquakes shall be in diverse places, and famines, and pestilences..." Mark's account does not include pestilences as the "beginning of sorrows" preceding the Kingdom. Matthew's account does—

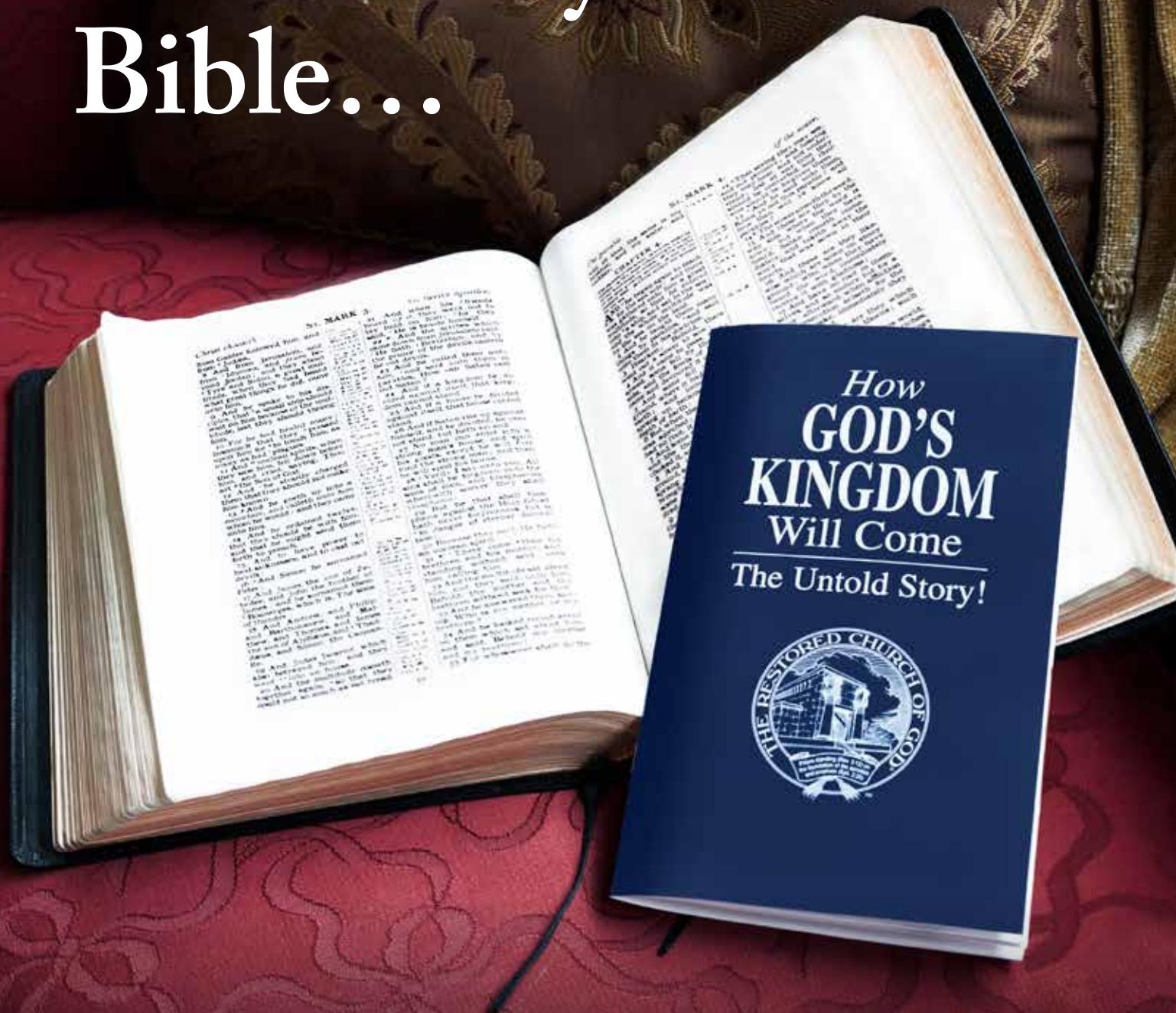
Please see **PERSONAL**, page 32



■ Desert locusts swarm over a tree in Kipsing, Kenya (March 31, 2020). Weeks before the coronavirus spread through much of the world, parts of Africa were already threatened by another kind of plague, the biggest locust outbreak some countries had seen in 70 years. A second wave of the voracious insects arrived in April, some 20 times the size of the first.

PHOTO: SVEN TORFINN/FAO VIA AP

Discover the story hidden in your Bible...



Billions await Jesus Christ's Return to set up the Kingdom of God. But few know *how* He will do this. It will *not* happen the way most expect. This booklet contains the incredible, *never-before-told* story of how God's Kingdom will be established over all nations!

rcg.org/hgkwc



COVID-1

THE NEW NORMAL?

BY DAVID J. LITAVSKY

ON A CHILLY early spring day, an 894-footlong white ship, with red health crosses decaled on its stern, bow, sides and smokestack, was a welcome sight as it sailed into New York City harbor. The Navy hospital ship containing 1,000 beds and 12 operating rooms was deployed to provide relief for the city's overwhelmed hospitals.

The city and the state were the hardest hit in the nation. "Please come help us in New York now," Governor Andrew Cuomo said as the death toll from COVID-19 surpassed 1,200 in late March.

Even before the governor's appeal for more medical staff and equipment, close to 80,000 former nurses, doctors and other professionals were stepping up to volunteer, and the Navy hospital ship—the same one sent to the city after the September 11 terrorist attacks—had arrived. Makeshift hospitals began appearing, from the indoor tennis center that is the site of the U.S. Open tournament to the mammoth Javits Convention Center.

Yet the death toll was so rapid, some hospitals resorted to parking refrigerated trailers outside their doors to collect the dead. At two Brooklyn hospitals, videos posted by bystanders and a medical employee showed workers in masks and gowns loading bodies onto trailers from gurneys on the sidewalk.

■ A worker sprays disinfectant to sanitize Duomo square in downtown Milan, Italy (March 31, 2020).

PHOTO: AP/LUCA BRUNO

Few anticipated the speed at which the novel coronavirus would spread. It took over three months from the moment COVID-19 was detected in Wuhan, China, to reach 500,000 confirmed cases. Only seven days later, that number doubled.

Yet these numbers are regarded with skepticism by public health experts because of different counting practices, a lack of testing in places, the numerous mild cases that have been missed, and perhaps government efforts to downplay the severity of the crisis.

If anything is for certain, however, as quickly as the virus spread, so did the change in life's norms.

"A major coronavirus pandemic may mean social consequences we never foresaw and painful shifts away from economic models on which many jobs depend—on top of the deaths and suffering the virus itself will bring," *Guardian* columnist Gaby Hinsliff said. "But this crisis could end up being less like the banking crash and more like a war, an event throwing everything high enough into the air that some of it never returns to Earth."

However, unlike literal war, when people pull together, the COVID-19 crisis is one in which communities *stay apart* from each other to fight an unseen opponent.

At first, this resulted in uncanny scenes of a new way of life: Hand-sanitizing stations at every corner of the grocery store. Italian musicians quarantined in their apartments performing from balconies. Physical education teachers posting digital gym classes for students required to stay home

감염 안전 진료부스



■ (1) A booth is disinfected as a nurse speaks to a woman at a COVID-19 testing booth in Seoul, South Korea (March 17, 2020). (2) A member of the German armed forces prepares for testing at a drive-through coronavirus test station in Gera, Germany (April 1, 2020). (3) A shopper wheels purchases to his car at a Costco store in New York City (March 19, 2020). (4) A pub gives notice to patrons that it has closed (March 19, 2020). (5) A member of the Iranian army walks past rows of beds at a temporary 2,000-bed hospital for COVID-19 patients in Tehran, Iran (March 26, 2020). (6) Nursing students wear masks as they walk on hospital premises in Hyderabad, India (March 6, 2020). (7) Medical staff move a patient infected with coronavirus from an ambulance to a hospital in Seoul (March 9, 2020).

PHOTOS: ED JONES/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES (1); AP/JENS MEYER (2); VICTOR J. BLUE/GETTY IMAGES (3); PAUL MORIGI/GETTY IMAGES (4); AP/EBRAHIM NOROOZI (5); AP/MAHESH KUMAR A. (6); CHUNG SUNG-JUN/GETTY IMAGES (7)

from school. Older members of society frequenting Skype and FaceTime to interact with their grandchildren to abide by government-mandated social-distancing rules.

People were forced to think through all aspects of their lives: “Am I doing all I can to avoid contracting or spreading the virus?” “Am I prepared for a shutdown that will keep me in my house for an indefinite amount of time?” “How can I carry on my lifestyle and maintain relationships without leaving my residence?”

As the weeks passed, the consequences became more devastating.

Millions were furloughed, had salaries cut or were let go from work. Jobless numbers exceeded those of the Great Depression as the number of Americans filing for unemployment surpassed 16 million in three weeks—accounting for 10 percent of the workforce.

Hundreds of companies were forced to withdraw financial projections for the year as the extent of economic damage remained unknown—yet certain losses are ensuring they continue to shed jobs.

The pandemic is pushing the global economy into the deepest recession since the Great Depression. The

head of the International Monetary Fund said nearly every nation will see a drop in living standards. “Just three months ago, we expected positive per capita income growth in over 160 of our member countries in 2020,” Kristalina Georgieva, managing director and chairwoman of the IMF, stated. “Today, that number has been turned on its head: we now project that over 170 countries will experience negative per capita income growth this year.”

And with stores, restaurants and schools closing, thousands of acres of fruits and vegetables have been plowed over or left to rot because farmers cannot sell them. Dairy farmers resorted to pouring out their fresh milk, knowing it cannot be used.

“This is a catastrophe,” a Florida tomato grower told *The Associated Press*. “We haven’t even started to calculate it. It’s going to be in the millions. Losses mount every day.”

“We may be entering an era where things that once seemed impossible, become almost impossible to avoid,” Ms. Hinsliff said.

A Pew Research Center poll revealed some of the profound impact on life patterns. Nearly 9 in 10 adults in the United

States said their life has changed to at least some extent.

“Amid widespread calls from experts for Americans to socially distance from one another to avoid spreading the virus, what recently seemed like mundane daily activities now elicit concerns from large swaths of the population. About nine-in-ten U.S. adults (91%) say that, given the current situation, they would feel uncomfortable attending a crowded party. Roughly three-quarters (77%) would not want to eat out at a restaurant. In the midst of a presidential election year, about two-thirds (66%) say they wouldn’t feel comfortable going to a polling place to vote. And smaller but still substantial shares express discomfort even with going to the grocery store (42%) or visiting with a close friend or family member in their home (38%).

“How are people adapting their behavior in light of the outbreak? Four-in-ten working-age adults ages 18 to 64 report having worked from home because of coronavirus concerns—a figure that rises to a majority among working-age adults with college degrees and upper-income earners.”

The long-term social effects could be staggering. In an interview with *NPR*, Ed Yong, science writer at *The Atlantic*



magazine, speculated public health will drive national policy in the same way the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks “really shook the American psyche and set priorities for the entire country going forward,” namely a focus on counterterrorism.

Mr. Yong also cited “mental health effects to watch out for” such as “agoraphobia, fear of the outdoors, or post-traumatic stress disorder,” signs of which have been surfacing in Wuhan.

In the U.S., with nowhere else to turn and more time at home to reflect, many are turning to a practice typically only ever employed in the greatest of crises.

According to Pew, 55 percent of Americans say they have “prayed for an end to the spread of coronavirus.” The majority of those identify as Christians, but 15 percent say they seldom or never pray and 24 percent say they do not belong to a religion.

In addition, President Trump declared March 15 a national day of prayer specifically “for all people who have been affected by the coronavirus pandemic and to pray for God’s healing hand to be placed on the people of our Nation.”

A White House directive for an individual day of prayer (aside from the annual National Day of Prayer in May enacted in 1952) is not unprecedented—

but it is rare. Abraham Lincoln signed a Congressional resolution in 1863 for a day of prayer and fasting amid the Civil War. President John Adams declared the one before in 1798.

For a nation that has declining church attendance and is turning away from religion, this is a stark change in attitude. Why of all things do people choose to pray in times of major change?

Hard times often lead people back to religion, to get on their knees and pray for help or merely deliverance. The existence of hardships is explained in the Bible, but the answer may not be as expected: “In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the *day of adversity* consider: God also has *set the one over against the other*, to the end that man should find nothing after him” (Ecc. 7:14). Good times are set against bad times. The one follows the other in a continual cycle.

Notice this verse points out that God is the one who “has set the [good/bad times] over against the other.” Why?

Verses 2 and 3 of Ecclesiastes 7 reveal more of God’s purpose in permitting suffering: “It is better to go to the house of *mourning*, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart. *Sorrow is better than laughter*: for

by the sadness of the countenance *the heart is made better.*”

Though these passages may be sobering—and perhaps even shocking—they prove God places great importance on building character. Through trying times, “the heart is made better.”

The apostle Paul also showed that after a life of severe periods of hardship he learned “in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content” (Phil. 4:11).

In verse 12 he continued, “I know both how to be *abased*, and I know how to *abound*: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be *full* and to be *hungry*, both to *abound* and to *suffer* need.”

Paul learned that through days of adversity the heart truly is made better. For more information, read our article “Why Does God Allow Suffering?” at rcg.org.

What about your “heart”? During this time of national adversity, consider the things in your life that you have taken for granted. Consider the plight of all those in less-fortunate circumstances around the world. Consider what you can do to ensure you make it through and become “better”—stronger.

Each of the articles in this section is designed to help you analyze the impact of the coronavirus on the world, but also to allow self-reflection in this “day of adversity.” □



■ (1) People applaud to support healthcare employees in the French Riviera city of Nice, France (March 23, 2020). (2) Health workers react as people applaud from their houses in support of medical staff working on the COVID-19 virus outbreak in Barcelona, Spain (March 26, 2020).

PHOTOS: VALERY HACHE/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES (1); AP/EMILIO MORENATTI (2)



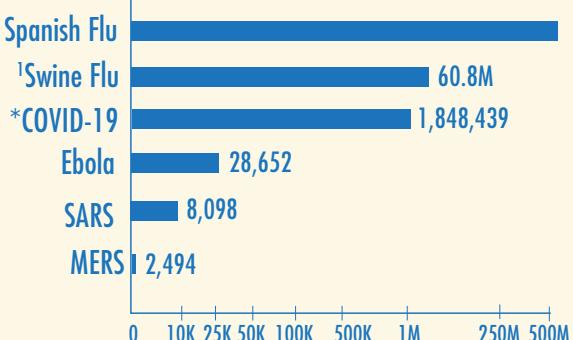
COVID-19 VS. MAJOR OUTBREAKS

Modern history has seen an increase in global outbreaks such as H1N1 Spanish flu, H1N1 swine flu, Ebola virus, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) and several strains of the seasonal flu. Here is how COVID-19 compares to these outbreaks.

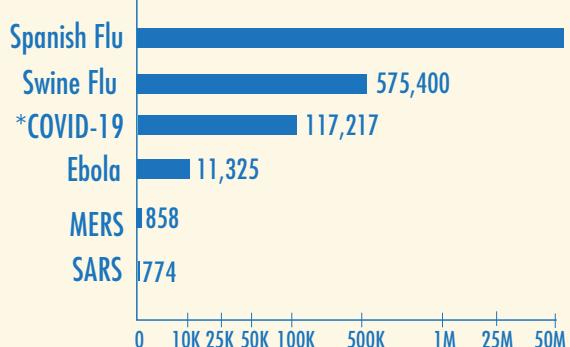
GLOBAL EFFECTS

Data reported during timeframe when each disease was considered a global emergency. Figures are median estimates, as many cases and deaths go unreported.

REPORTED CASES



RECORDED DEATHS



About 1 billion flu cases are reported each year with an estimated 500,000 deaths.

*As of time of publication.

¹Data from U.S. only; global figures were not recorded from onset of pandemic.

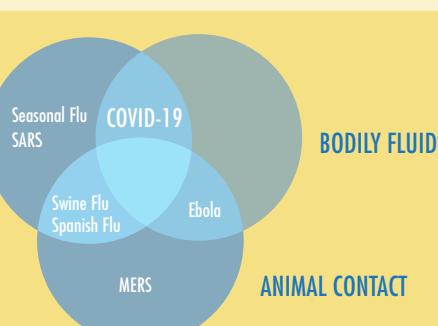
RESERVOIR HOSTS



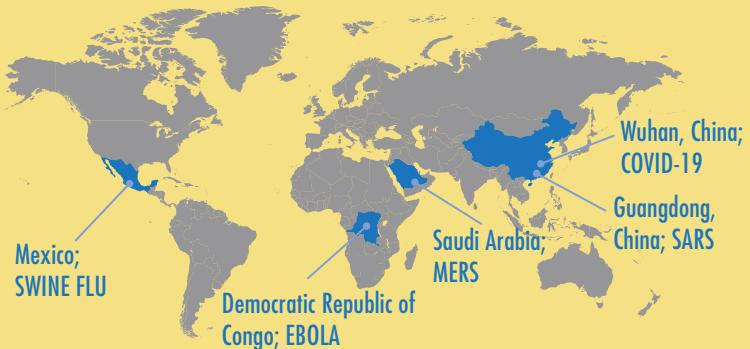
*General belief, exact origin unknown

TRANSMISSION

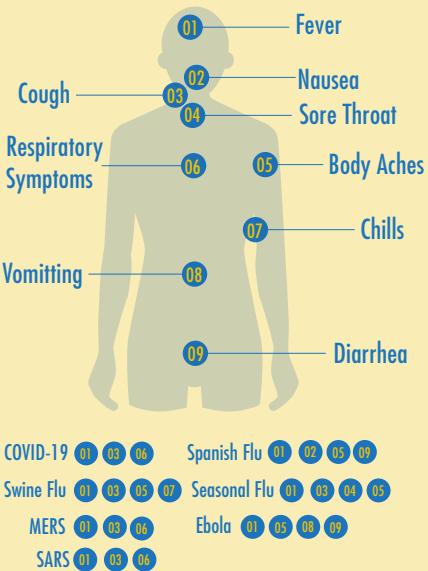
RESPIRATORY DROPLETS



FIRST DETECTION



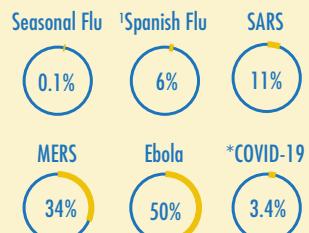
MAIN SYMPTOMS



CASE FATALITY RATE (CFR)

This is used to measure the severity of a disease and predict the course or outcome. It is not a constant, and can vary by environment and population.

$$\frac{\text{Confirmed Deaths}}{\text{Confirmed Cases}} \times 100 = \text{CFR} (\%)$$



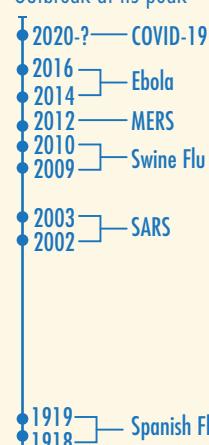
¹Estimated CFR based on global mortality rate of 2%.

*CFR of an ongoing pandemic changes constantly. This is a higher estimate from the CDC.

CFR for swine flu unavailable.

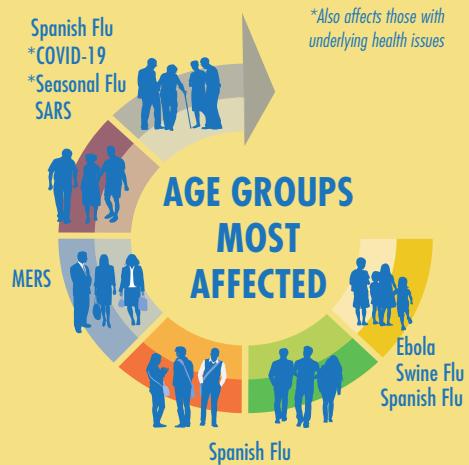
TIME PERIOD

Outbreak at its peak



*Also affects those with underlying health issues

AGE GROUPS MOST AFFECTED



Sources: World Health Organization; Centers for Disease Control
Graphic: Sarah O. Vidal

Americans Forced to Do Something New: SACRIFICE



FOR MOST Americans alive today, the idea of shared national sacrifice is a collective abstraction, a memory handed down from a grandparent or passed on through a book or movie.

Not since World War II, when people carried ration books with stamps that allowed them to purchase meat, sugar, butter, cooking oil and gasoline, when buying cars, firewood and nylon was restricted,

when factories converted from making automobiles to making tanks, Jeeps and torpedoes, when men were drafted and women volunteered in the war effort, has the entire nation been asked to sacrifice for a greater good.

The civil rights era, Vietnam, the Gulf wars, 9/11 and the financial crisis all involved suffering, even death, but no call for universal sacrifice. President George W. Bush encouraged people to buy things after the terrorist attacks to help the economy—"patriots at the mall," some called it—before the full war effort was underway. People lost jobs and homes in the financial crisis, but there was no summons for community response.

Now, with the coronavirus, it is as though a natural disaster has taken place in multiple places at once. Millions of people will lose their jobs. Businesses will shutter. Schools have closed. Thousands will die. Leaders ordered citizens into isolation to stop the virus' march.

Suddenly, in the course of a few weeks, John F. Kennedy's "ask what you can do for your country" injunction has come to life.

"This is a new moment," said Jon Meacham, a historian and author of "The Soul of America."

"Prolonged sacrifice isn't something we've been asked to do, really, since World War II," Mr. Meacham said. "There was a kind of perpetual vigilance in the Cold War—what President Kennedy called 'the long twilight struggle'—but living with the fear of nuclear war is quite abstract compared to living with the fear of a virus and of a possible economic depression."

New Reality

When coronavirus began to spread in the U.S., many saw the shelter-in-place orders as a personal affront.

"A request to do anything becomes a point of attack, and we are always

■ Bofors guns used by the Army and Navy are shown lined up at the Firestone Tire & Rubber Co. in Akron, Ohio (April 3, 1944).

PHOTO: AP

10 steps back from where we should be on big legislative agreements,” said Julian Zelizer, a professor of history at Princeton. “So intense polarization in a moment of crisis...make this much more difficult.”

That has not been universal. Ohio’s Governor Mike DeWine moved swiftly to shut down most activity in his state and he implored Ohioans to help.

“We have not faced an enemy like we are facing today in 102 years,” Mr. DeWine said as coronavirus started to spread in the state. “You have to go back to the 1918 influenza epidemic. We are certainly at war...In the time of war, we must make sacrifices, and I thank all of our Ohio citizens for what they are doing and what they aren’t doing. You are making a huge difference, and this difference will save lives.”

As a nation, Americans are accustomed to seeing swaths of the country destroyed by hurricanes, floods, wildfires and blizzards. But there is then a season of rebuilding and renewal. The coronavirus, with its rapid spread, is giving Americans a public-health Katrina that knows few borders or boundaries, even though some parts of the country are suffering far more than others.

For many at this point the sacrifices have been mere inconveniences. No restaurants or movie theaters. Maybe the need to buy exercise equipment because the gym has closed. Or to leave the cardboard box from Amazon outside for 24 hours to make sure the virus does not somehow enter the home.

Yet, as the COVID-19 lockdown wears on for months, how will we react?

Lean Times

“We used to tax in times of crisis. Now we don’t,” Mr. Zelizer said. “We asked people to ration in times of crisis. Now we don’t. We asked people to serve in times of crisis. Now we don’t. So this is a sea change. The thing is, Americans might not have a choice.”

For many, the choices are personal and painful. In March, Representative Abigail Spanberger could not see her parents or her in-laws for the foreseeable future because she may have

been exposed to the virus. At the time, however, she saw the impact of the virus in many other ways that are far more harmful.

“I think we are at the beginning stages of people understanding what the sacrifice is,” Ms. Spanberger said. “People with loved ones in nursing homes are told they can’t go visit their loved ones. That brings it home. For people who have kids, trying to explain why they can’t go to school, can’t have playdates, can’t see friends, can’t see family members.

“It is this element of everyone needs to disrupt their lives so that other people won’t die,” she said. “It’s different than eating less meat because of war or working in a factory because a husband is overseas. But you also can’t engage with the community, so it makes it harder. You can’t lean on your social circle, church, or school. All of those things are taken from us trying to keep people safe.”

With people being asked to sacrifice their jobs, their children’s education, their ability to commune with family and friends, Ms. Spanberger said, “the depth of empathy that should be available and the strength

of concerns over these decisions needs to be unparalleled...”

One can hope this time of crisis pushes Americans to put aside differences, band together, and tackle the problems head on, even if it requires painful sacrifice.

Yet the coronavirus lockdown—and the economic fallout from it—should do something else. We should realize how good we have it in the United States. God has blessed this nation with unmatched abundance for many decades.

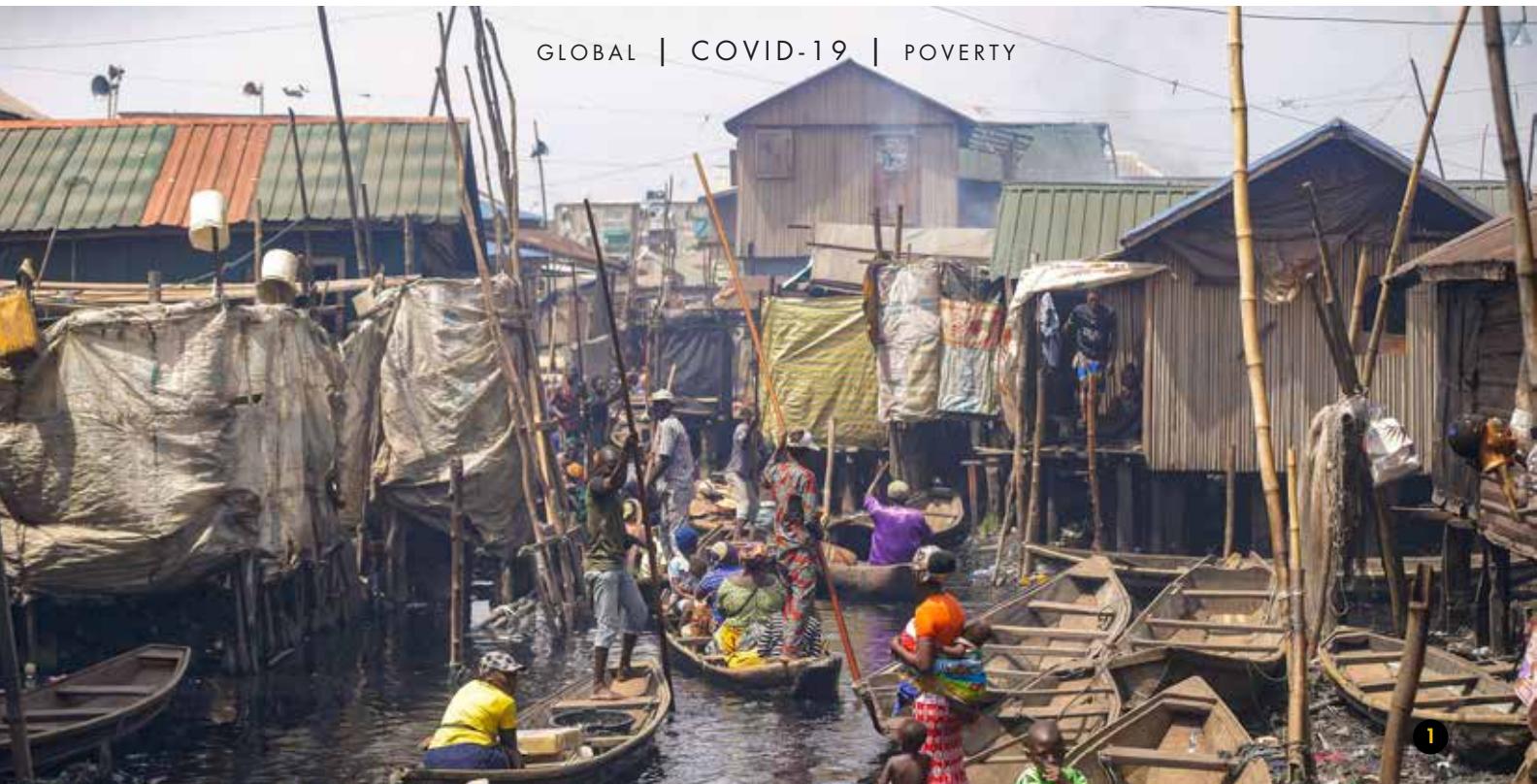
When times were good, we forgot this. We became complacent and failed to appreciate what we have. Lean times, on the other hand, should splash ice-cold water on our collective consciousness. It should force us to ask: “Why have we been so *clearly* blessed in ways the rest of the world can only dream?”

God’s Word actually answers this question in no uncertain terms. The Bible details why the United States rose to such high heights—and also reveals why it is going through tough times now. Read *America and Britain in Prophecy* at rcg.org/aabibp to put any sacrifice required today into proper perspective. □



■ Women sign up at the headquarters of the newly organized American Women's Voluntary Service Agriculture Auxiliary in Washington, to take a course in farming to help ease a shortage of farm labor (Jan. 23, 1941).

PHOTO: AP/WILLIAM J. SMITH



Pandemic Set to Hit Impoverished Countries Hardest

AT FIRST, the coronavirus was just a rumor along the dusty lanes of the displaced persons' camp that Habiba Ali calls home. It seemed fantastical: an illness sweeping the world far beyond Somalia's borders, killing thousands of people and sending some of the richest countries into panic.

Then Somalia's first virus case was announced on March 16, and one of the world's most fragile nations staggered even more. Nearly three decades of conflict, extremist attacks, drought, disease and a devastating outbreak of locusts have taken a vast toll.

Already vulnerable, millions of Somalis now contemplate a new way to die.

"We have been overcome with an extraordinary fear about the disease," Ms. Ali said as she worried about her

six children. "And we are even avoiding shaking hands with people. Our fear is real, and we are helpless."

Somalia ranked 194th of 195 countries in the Johns Hopkins Global Health Security Index for 2019 and scored zero in several areas, including emergency preparedness, emergency response, infection control practices and health care access.

The country lacks essential equipment for the kind of intensive care that COVID-19 patients, sometimes gasping for breath, desperately need, Health Minister Fawsia Abikar told *The Associated Press*. Less than 20 beds in intensive care units are available.

Somalia also has lacked the capability to test for the new virus, meaning samples are sent abroad and results are delayed for more than a week. Quarantine tents have been erected around an old port in Mogadishu.

Some 6 million Somalis live in squalid conditions, many of them uprooted by past disasters. Most are acutely hun-

gry. Hundreds of thousands cling to existence on the fringes of Mogadishu, their homes of corrugated metal, even hanging cloth, jammed side-by-side. Access to water is severely limited.

The Somalia director for Action Against Hunger, Ahmed Khalif, told *AP*: "It's going to be beyond anyone's imagination. A widespread outbreak of the disease would be catastrophic to the people who are already vulnerable." The virus does not discriminate among rich or poor, he stated.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned that the world faces the most challenging crisis since World War II, confronting a pandemic threatening people in every country, one that will bring a recession "that probably has no parallel in the recent past."

"We are facing a global health crisis unlike any in the 75-year history of the United Nations—one that is killing people, spreading human suffering, and upending people's lives," the report said. "But this is much more



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than a health crisis. It is a human crisis. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is attacking societies at their core.”

“Let us remember that we are only as strong as the weakest health system in our interconnected world,” he said. “It is essential that developed countries immediately assist those less developed to bolster their health systems and their response capacity to stop transmission.”

But many areas in Western nations have seen an exponential increase in the spread of the coronavirus and have needed emergency aid, which bodes ill for countries with fewer resources and greater social gaps between the wealthy and impoverished. “This is a disease which has overwhelmed more sophisticated health care systems of countries than ours,” Somalia President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed warned in a public awareness campaign.

Worldwide Implications

From Jakarta to Johannesburg, the same story is playing out in some of the

world’s poorest regions, where tens of millions live in crowded slums without adequate water, sanitation and access to health care.

“The future of this pandemic to a greater extent will be determined by what happens in very large and densely populated countries,” Dr. Michael J. Ryan, executive director of the World Health Organization’s health emergencies program, reported.

In Mumbai, 53-year-old Abrar Salmani lives with 11 family members in a house so small that many regularly sleep outdoors in the Bhim Nagar slum. The unemployed weaver said most families do not have access to water and rely on communal washrooms for bathing. “Our demands to have a water pipeline haven’t been answered for years,” he said.

In the Gaza Strip, where more than half of its 2 million residents are unemployed, the arrival of the virus prompted the territory’s Hamas rulers to order the closure of cafes and wedding halls, and

to cancel Friday prayers at mosques. Residents were urged to stay at home and refrain from close contact. But with chronic power shortages of at least eight hours a day, it is hard for Gazans to stay inside their homes.

Iran, on top of reporting the highest toll of confirmed cases and deaths from the virus of any country in the Middle East, is also battling an epidemic of alcohol poisonings. A 5-year-old boy is “now blind after his parents gave him toxic methanol in the mistaken belief it protects against the virus,” *The Associated Press* reported.

A doctor assisting Iran’s Health Ministry told *AP* in March that around 480 people have been killed and 2,850 people sickened from ingesting methanol. “Other countries have only one problem, which is the new coronavirus pandemic. But we are fighting on two fronts here,” said Dr. Hossein Hassanian. “We have to both cure the people with alcohol poisoning and also fight the coronavirus.”

■ (1) People travel by canoe in a floating slum in Lagos, Nigeria (March 21, 2020). (2) A motorist rides past residents in a low-income neighborhood in Jakarta, Indonesia (March 23, 2020). (3) Volunteers deliver packs of food to residents in Sao Paulo, Brazil (March 24, 2020).

PHOTOS: AP/SUNDAY ALAMBA (1); AP/DITA ALANGKARA (2); RODRIGO PAIVA/GETTY IMAGES (3)



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AP also reported, “Videos aired by Iranian media showed patients with IVs stuck in their arms, laying on beds otherwise needed for the fight against the coronavirus.”

Across Africa, home to some of the world’s fastest-growing cities with badly strained infrastructure, authorities worry that the virus could swiftly spread through slums and impoverished townships. Tear gas and gunfire have been used in a couple of cities in a rough bid to enforce social distancing.

On the first day of coronavirus restrictions in Kenya, police fired tear gas at people crowding to board a ferry in the port city of Mombasa ahead of the overnight curfew. The tear gas caused hundreds of people to touch their faces as they vomited, spat and wiped away tears, increasing the chance of the virus’ spread, Amnesty International Kenya and 19 other human rights groups said in a statement.

In Nigeria’s seaside city of Lagos, Africa’s largest with more than 20 million people, authorities scrambled to spread the word about the virus among slum dwellers. In the vast Makoko slum, where shacks are built on stilts and sewage runs into the sea, residents listened with a mix of fear and defiance. Biodun Edward scooped up a handful of the murky water and drank it. “Let [authorities]

come and test it, there’s no disease here,” he declared.

Lagos traders are also worried after nonessential markets were shut down and the country’s cases rose. “If we do not go out, we cannot eat, our government did not make any provision for us,” Bolaji Tajudeen said.

In South Africa’s crowded, impoverished townships, tens of thousands of workers pack into groaning minibus taxis for commutes with little or no protection. At home, extended families squeeze into a single room or two and communities draw water from collective taps.

“Coronavirus scares us since we’re living in a shack,” said one Soweto resident on the outskirts of Johannesburg, Mando Masimola. “We don’t know how we’ll survive if the virus infects us.”

“Social distancing is very impossible here,” said Sipho Moyo, a manicurist who lives in Johannesburg’s Hillbrow neighborhood. “I share a room with two other people. The next room has four people, another room has a family. We all share one bathroom and a kitchen. We all try our best to maintain distance and cleanliness, but it is difficult, as you can imagine.”

South Sudan’s recovery from civil war became more challenging as the government suspended the training of nearly 50,000 unified forces as a pre-

caution. The country, its health system shattered by conflict, has not recorded a virus case.

India’s 21-day lockdown has effectively kept 1.3 billion people at home for all but essential trips to places like markets or pharmacies. But the world’s largest lockdown has turned into a humanitarian crisis for India’s improvised workforce.

They mostly live in squalid housing in congested urban ghettos. But with no daily earnings, no savings, and thus no way to buy food, they must head to their home villages to survive.

Train services are suspended, taxis are unaffordable, and the hundreds of buses brought to the outskirts of New Delhi to ferry people home lacked enough seats.

That leaves walking. The government told India’s top court last month that 500,000 to 600,000 migrants have walked to their villages from cities.

Shiv Kumari, 50, said she was thrown out of her rented accommodation in the northern state of Haryana by her landlord. She and her 28-year-old son packed their bags and set off on an arduous journey of 550 miles to their home.

As the crisis worsened, authorities scrambled to arrange transport, shelter and food for them. But it was too late. Some people died under the physical



strain of the relentless walking, while others were killed in road accidents. Some were beaten at state borders by police, who said they were just trying to manage the crowds of people.

Deep Impact

Experts warn that the virus could have an even deeper impact in Latin America, potentially killing scores of the poorest people, who must work every day to feed their families, live in unsanitary conditions and lack proper medical care.

Haiti, the Western Hemisphere's poorest country, has cut banking and government office hours, closed schools and broadcast radio messages asking people to stay home. But thousands in Port-au-Prince still crowded into street markets, buses and repurposed pickup trucks known as tap-taps.

For hundreds of thousands of Haitians who earn a few dollars a day selling goods on the street, quarantine would mean near-starvation. "People are not going to stay home. How are they going to eat?" said Marie-Ange Bouzi, who sells tomatoes and onions on the street of Haiti's capital. "Haiti isn't structured for that."

In Chile, many coronavirus diagnoses have been in upper-middle-class neighborhoods, in people just back from Europe, particularly Italy. Health Minister Jaime Manalich has complained that wealthy residents of the Las Condes and Vitacura sections of Santiago, the capital, are routinely violating required quarantines after they tested positive or encountered someone who did.

While there are more poor people in other regions of the world, Latin America remains the region in which the greatest proportion of wealth is held by a small number of citizens.

"Latin America is the most unequal region in the entire world. We're talking about class disparities that are unlike anywhere else on the planet," said Geoff Ramsey, a researcher at the Washington Office on Latin America.

Some Latin American governments were striving to help workers whose informal jobs provide them no access to the social safety net, including unemployment payments or severance packages. But Brazil's government has no such plans.

The lack of help worries Patricia Martins, who lives in Brazil's largest

favela, or slum, Rocinha in Rio de Janeiro, which houses about 70,000 people in brick homes packed tightly together on steep slopes overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. Clean water is sporadic, sewage often runs in the streets and winding alleys and soaring staircases make it difficult for medical professionals to retrieve a sick person in an emergency.

"My concern is that if someone gets that sickness, this is going to be a focal point, like it's a focal point for tuberculosis and for HIV," said Ms. Martins, a 45-year-old cleaning woman.

"The person who's a cleaner, the person who counts on that money to survive, to sustain their family—they're going to bring in money from where?" she said of anti-virus measures. "If everything stops, it will end people's lives! There will be nothing people can do to survive!"

"There's a large population of working people...that are just going to be unable to simply stay home," Mr. Ramsey said.

"We're looking at a region that's going to be deeply, deeply impacted by the global pandemic." □

■ (1) Kenyans gather in a drinking den on the last day such activities will be permitted in Nairobi, Kenya (March 22, 2020). (2) Residents walk through a crowded market where social distancing is difficult in Nairobi (March 24, 2020). (3) Cinderblock homes fill the hills of the Catia neighborhood in Caracas, Venezuela, where a government-imposed quarantine to help stop the spread of the coronavirus is in place (March 20, 2020).

PHOTOS: AP/BRIAN INGANGA (1, 2); AP/MATIAS DELACROIX (3)

DEEP

Is Seeing Still Believing?



NOELLE MARTIN, an Australian Indian-Catholic woman, discovered at age 18 that her face had been photoshopped onto pornographic images.

Shocked, she went to the police for help. But in 2012 Australia had no laws specifically targeting fake pornographic images. She went to various government officials and even tried to hire a private investigator to find the source of the photographs. Each time, she was told that nothing could be done without specific laws regarding image abuse.

Miss Martin spent years contacting the sites hosting the images of her as well as the people who posted the images online. Those responsible would tell her she should be flattered or even blamed her for putting photos of herself on Facebook and other social media that they could use.

Her efforts contributed to Australia's development of an agency dedicated to removing images of victims. But with the internet as widespread and uncontrollable as it is, it is nearly impossible to ever stop all attacks.

Even though Miss Martin was instrumental in getting the necessary laws passed to protect women from this abuse, it only broadened the attacks on her. The internet trolls came out in force and blamed her for the images that others had created of her. Pictures of her accepting awards for her activism were used to create even more pornographic images. Then advances in technology allowed for the creation of fake video

Manipulated videos proliferating across the web are raising questions about whether what we see is real.



FAKES

All Believing?

Cross the internet are forcing people to
they see and hear is true.



and audio—which has come to be known as deepfakes—and Miss Martin began to see the emergence of convincing pornographic videos of her across the internet.

Miss Martin’s life is forever altered for the worse: “I think back to the time when I first discovered all the deepfake videos and recall the sensation of numbness. I had been targeted for so many years; it was a decade long campaign. I had spent my entire adult life watching helplessly as my image was used against me by men that I had never given permission to do anything of any kind. And I was in so much pain. I don’t know how many videos of me now exist. These days, I try not to check.”

Hers is far from the only story.

“There are at least 14,678 deepfake videos—and counting—on the internet, according to a recent tally by a startup that builds technology to spot this kind of AI-manipulated content,” CNN reported in October 2019. “And nearly all of them are porn.” Deeptrace Labs reported in September that 96 percent of deepfake videos are pornography where likenesses of women were used without their consent.

But the potential for damaging lives goes beyond just women. In 2018, a simple application was made that allows non-tech-savvy users to create their own deepfake videos, further complicating the ability to control fake content online. This could be weaponized to change public opinion, including the capability of influencing political decisions.

“Deeptrace CEO and chief scientist Giorgio Patrini told CNN Business that the growth the company charted over just seven months shows the

potential for false content to be created and quickly circulated. Even if one of these deepfake videos isn't very realistic looking—at this point, plenty of them aren't—it could still be good enough to influence many people's opinions."

"That is a fairly worrying threat for social media," Mr. Patrini said to the news organization.

An example shows the extent of the threat is not limited to video. Some software can fake a voice after processing *five seconds* of audio. Police believe cybercriminals used such software in March 2019 to convince the CEO of a British energy company that he was speaking to his boss from a German parent company. These criminals had the CEO transfer \$243,000 to a bank in Hungary.

As the technology improves, the deception will only get worse. "In the short term, detection will be reasonably effective," Subbarao Kambhampati, a professor of computer science at Arizona State University, said to the think tank Brookings Institution. "In the longer run, I think it will be impossible to distinguish between the real pictures and the fake pictures."

What does this mean for society? "Some people already question the facts around events that unquestionably happened, like the Holocaust, the moon

landing and 9/11, despite video proof. If deepfakes make people believe they can't trust video, the problems of misinformation and conspiracy theories could get worse. While experts told CNN that deepfake technology is not yet sophisticated enough to fake large-scale historical events or conflicts, they worry that the doubt sown by a single convincing deepfake could alter our trust in audio and video for good," *CNN Business* reported.

Tech Behind the Fake

"Deepfake" is the alias of a Reddit user who combined "deep learning" and "fake" to describe the kind of videos he produced. Today, anyone with a computer and internet access can create them.

In simple terms, deepfake software uses an algorithm called an autoencoder that maps a person's face and places it onto another by aligning key features such as eyes, nose, lips, pupils and even wrinkles.

More sophisticated systems use generative adversarial networks (GANs). These have two components: a *generator* that creates fake images and a *discriminator* that looks for flaws.

If the discriminator finds flaws in the forged image, it informs the generator how to improve and to try again. The process of detection and improvement continues until the entire video is completed.

Nothing New

"There is no new thing under the sun," stated ancient King Solomon (Ecc. 1:9). "The thing that has been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done."

Though Solomon never saw a video in his time, deepfake videos are just the latest iteration of a long history of people creating deceptive images.

The world's first photograph was taken in 1826. Only 20 years later, a person in a photo was painted over and subsequently blocked from the printed image. Throughout the rest of the 19th century, wealthy

■ A woman views a manipulated video that takes what is said by President Donald Trump and makes it appear former President Barack Obama said those things (Jan. 24, 2019).

PHOTO: ROB LEVER/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



clients and magazine editors retouched images with increasing sophistication.

Not all image editing was for malicious or political purposes. “Most of the earliest manipulated photographs were attempts to compensate for the new medium’s technical limitations—specifically, its inability to depict the world as it appears to the naked eye,” Mia Fineman, an assistant curator of photography at the Met, said in an interview with *PBS*.

In most cases, manipulation was used to make the image “look the way it felt” rather than to deceive.

A famous example is a cut-out of Abraham Lincoln’s face from an 1860 photograph of him pasted onto the body of Vice President John Calhoun in an 1852 engraving. The composite image, which portrayed the 16th president wearing a robe in a near-Napoleonic pose, circulated during a wave of heroic-style pictures of the president after he was assassinated. For a century, no one noticed the image was fake.

Photoshop computer software debuted in 1987 and ushered in a new era of deceptive image manipulation. With a computer and the right software, anyone could change images. Advertisers, publishers and propaganda machines churned out so many digitally altered images that the term “photoshop” can now refer to any photo manipulation.

Enter deepfakes, which are becoming more difficult to decipher. “Presently, there are slight visual aspects that are off if you look closer, anything from the ears or eyes not matching to fuzzy borders of the face or too smooth skin to lighting and shadows,” Peter Singer, cybersecurity and defense strategist at the New America think tank, stated to *CNBC*.

But the “tells” are becoming harder to find as the technology increases, Mr. Singer said.

Detection methods “often lag behind the most advanced creation methods,” warned John Villasenor, a senior fellow in Governance Studies and the Center for Technology Innovation at Brookings Institution. This could leave them with a dilemma: “Will people be more likely to

believe a deepfake or a detection algorithm that flags the video as fabricated?”

Hidden Danger

Every tool that mankind has developed can be used for good or evil. The internet has allowed for instant communication, online schooling and access to a plethora of “do-it-yourself,” or DIY, videos. Yet it also allows for the intentional spread of misinformation, the hacking and stealing of personal information, and for pushing extremist ideals abroad.

Similarly, deepfake videos are generally harmless. But, more often than not, they are used as “a perfect weapon for purveyors of fake news who want to influence everything from stock prices to elections,” an MIT technology report stated.

Independent research from Gallup, Pew Research, and Hill-HarrisX came to the same conclusions. Less than half of Americans believe the news stories they hear, and over half believe the media ignores important stories in favor of pushing their own agenda using “fake news.”

With the 2020 presidential elections approaching, experts believe it is just a matter of time before deepfakes promoting or denigrating candidates will proliferate.

And the problem is most people lack the mistrust needed to see through the deception. Even when viewers know that the videos are altered, the deception still works. People are simply inclined to believe what they *want* to believe.

The research organization RAND Corporation reported: “‘Deepfakes play to our weaknesses,’ explains Jennifer Kavanagh, a political scientist at the RAND Corporation and coauthor of ‘Truth Decay,’ a 2018 RAND report about the diminishing role of facts and data in public discourse. When we see a doctored video that looks utterly real, she says, ‘it’s really hard for our brains to disentangle whether that’s true or false.’ And the internet being what it is, there are any number of online scammers, partisan zealots, state-sponsored hackers and other bad actors eager to take advantage of that fact.”

People who cannot trust what they see are faced with three options: accept the deception, try to ignore it, or spend time getting news from multiple sources to discern the truth. Daunted by the effort required to find truth, many give in to deception.

Thousands of years before the discovery from these polls, a seldom-quoted passage in the Bible was written about this human tendency: “The heart is *deceitful above all things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9).

Lies and deception are tools that have been used for millennia as a way for people to get what they want, whether individually or on a national, corporate or political scale. But with the advent of sophisticated deepfake technology in a world where deceit is already so rampant, a time is approaching where facts can be completely distorted and “truth is fallen in the street, and equity [meaning straightforwardness, integrity, truth, or right] cannot enter. Yes, truth fails” (Isa. 59:14-15).

How many times have you found yourself at a loss to locate *any* source of truth? Looking at the media landscape, it becomes easy to say: “Truth fails.”

But there is a place you can turn to find truth. God’s Word—the Bible—states that it is truth (John 17:17 and II Tim. 2:15). God says that He cannot lie (Titus 1:2) and that His words will not pass away (Matt. 24:35). In a turbulent time when you are not sure who to believe, God’s Word provides comfort and stability on which you can rely.

Yet you do not have to remain unsure whether to take Scripture at face value—you can actually PROVE it. The booklet *Bible Authority...Can It Be Proven?* (rcg.org/bacibp) shows that you can determine, beyond all doubt, that the Bible is truth.

This magazine uses God’s Word as the bedrock foundation from which to view and understand world events, bringing you the truth hidden beneath the lies.

For more on the faltering trust in news media, read *The Real Truth* article “Broken News – Who Can You Trust in a Post-truth Era?” □

Is Peace in AFGHANISTAN IMPOSSIBLE?

The peace agreement reached between the United States and the Taliban is only further complicating matters. The Bible explains why this was destined to be the case.

BY EDWARD L. WINKFIELD

AFGHAN President Ashraf Ghani's inauguration speech at his compound in the capital of Kabul was interrupted by sounds of a nearby rocket attack.

Amid the jolting sounds of explosions and missiles hitting their targets, the re-elected, second-term leader maintained composure. As those in the crowd ducked and scrambled for cover, Mr. Ghani remained on the podium. He even opened his suit jacket to show he was not wearing body armor—an obvious effort to display confidence in the face of chaos.

The wild scene was a microcosm of Afghanistan's situation. It demonstrated the existential danger to the nation's government as America continues to pull out of its longest war.

U.S. and Taliban officials signed a peace agreement in late February with the goal of ending a conflict so old that many Afghan and American soldiers have no memory of when it started. The "good war," which began in October 2001 immediately following the September 11 terrorist attacks, eventually became the "necessary war," as the world's greatest military power

struggled to bring the conflict to a swift end.

Now it is dubbed "the war that won't end." Meant to resist and root out terrorist groups, the War in Afghanistan appears to only have succeeded in draining staggering amounts of money and spilling American and Afghan blood.

The latest deal was the culmination of 18 months of negotiations between the U.S. and Taliban leadership. President Donald Trump said American military forces have been killing thousands of terrorists in Afghanistan and it was "time for someone else to do that work and it will be the Taliban and it could be surrounding countries."

The peace deal calls for the U.S. to begin withdrawing more than 4,000 of its 12,000 troops in the region and for a comprehensive, nationwide ceasefire to be negotiated in talks between the Taliban—a Sunni Islamic fundamentalist political and military organization—and the current Afghan government, which the Taliban see as bitter rivals. The only requirement is for the Taliban to take the negotiations seriously, and continue its counterterrorism commitments, including a rejection of al-Qaida and other groups.

The U.S. has been the prime backer of the Afghan government since it

invaded the country in 2001 and overthrew the Taliban. Yet the government was not a part of the latest agreement in the hopes that it and the Taliban can separately work out a path to peace.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who witnessed the signing of the agreement, said, "The agreement will mean nothing—and today's good feelings will not last—if we don't take concrete action on commitments stated and promises made."

The U.S.-Taliban deal could not come at a better (or worse, depending on how you look at it) time. Violence in the region remains high. In the last quarter of 2019, the Taliban committed 8,204 attacks—the most in 10 years for the same timeframe. U.S. armed forces unleashed more than 7,400 bombs and missiles in 2019. The war, mostly forgotten by American citizens, is only becoming bloodier.

The White House hopes the deal with the Taliban is the fulfillment of a long-awaited promise made to war-weary Americans. The Trump administration, like the Obama and Bush teams before it, has struggled in its attempts to inject peace into a region where wars seem normal.

Political and military leaders cannot figure out how to stop this fight despite

■ Soldiers lift the coffin of a soldier killed in Afghanistan into a van at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware (Feb. 10, 2020).

PHOTO: JIM WATSON/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



having every reason and desire to do so. In so many ways the problem is much bigger than they understand.

“Peace” Agreement?

What has transpired subsequent to the most recent peace agreement being signed does not signal peace. Since then, the U.S. military launched an airstrike targeting Taliban fighters. The assault was triggered by a spike in violence by the Taliban against members of the Afghan security force. The Taliban remains upset at the Afghan government’s refusal to release thousands of Taliban prisoners ahead of negotiations between the two.

The Taliban were warned repeatedly about their increased violence, and when the attacks continued to escalate

and become more intense, the U.S. military determined it was necessary to take action to defend Afghan forces under assault.

U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper called the Taliban attacks unacceptable. He acknowledged that the Taliban are honoring the agreement by not attacking U.S. and coalition forces, “but not in terms of sustaining the reduction in violence.” He added that “keeping that group of people on board is a challenge. They’ve got their range of hard-liners and soft-liners and so they’re wrestling with that too, I think...”

This underscores the fragility of the U.S.-Taliban peace accord and the murky nature of Washington’s response to try to enforce it. It also justifies the fear among Afghans that an American

pullout would only embolden the Taliban.

Many in the Taliban’s leadership see America’s willingness to negotiate as outright victory in the war. To them, determination and resolve have brought the world’s greatest military power to its knees. Secretary Pompeo warned the Taliban against taking such a view: “I know there will be a temptation to declare victory,” he said. “But victory for Afghans can only be achieved if they can live in peace and prosperity.”

Peace and prosperity appear a long way off with such a contingent-laden agreement. Especially one in which the Afghan leadership was blocked from participating.

The Taliban and Kabul are not the only ones at odds. Even the Afghan

government cannot agree. President Ashraf Ghani's opponent in last September's presidential elections, Abdullah Abdullah, rejected the count, and has set up a parallel government that he presides.

In an effort to get the sides to cooperate, the Trump administration decided to slash \$1 billion in assistance to Afghanistan and threatened further reductions in all forms of cooperation.

"The United States deeply regrets that Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and former Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah have informed [me] that they have been unable to agree on an inclusive government that can meet the challenges of governance, peace, and security, and provide for the health and welfare of Afghan citizens," Secretary Pompeo said.

Washington pays Kabul billions every year, much of it going to the country's defense forces. Afghanistan raises barely a quarter of the revenue it needs to run the country, giving the U.S. considerable financial leverage to force the two squabbling leaders to overcome the impasse.

Speaking to reporters aboard his plane on a return flight home from

Afghanistan, Mr. Pompeo said he was hopeful the two leaders would cooperate to allow the U.S. to avoid having to cut assistance. "But we're prepared to do that," he said.

In promoting peace, Mr. Pompeo is hoping dollars will do what weapons cannot.

But the political infighting seems to be just another roadblock on the impassable path to peace, and inevitably stalls any chance of the U.S. bringing home its troops.

No Easy Exit

Madhav Joshi, research associate professor and associate director of the Peace Accords Matrix at the University of Notre Dame, studies peace agreements between nations. In a *Conversation* article, he expressed the perils of the U.S.-Taliban agreement.

"The U.S. approach of negotiating withdrawal first and initiate a peace process later is unheard of and has never been tested in the contemporary peace process. This nontraditional method is not necessarily doomed to fail, but it does not align with tactics of successful peace processes to date, as I know from my years of research on peace building."

Mr. Joshi has researched nearly 200 real peace accords. He wanted to understand: Why do some agreements result in lasting peace, while others fall apart?

Using this analysis, he noted three key reasons the current Afghanistan agreement does not "conform to patterns of successful peacemaking."

First, the agreement is silent on key ceasefire elements of successful peace deals. Examples include: addressing new recruitment in security forces, weapons transportation, or a mechanism to settle disputes from ceasefire violations.

"Without these elements," Mr. Joshi also stated, "it's less likely that violence will diminish or that a ceasefire will hold. That, in turn, makes the peace process more difficult."

Second, the U.S.-Taliban deal does not give a framework for how the negotiations between the Taliban and Afghans will continue.

"Without a framework like this, the proposed deal with the Taliban may or may not lead to any progress. For example, last year in Yemen, Houthi rebel fighters and Saudi-backed pro-government forces reached a ceasefire settlement but did not stop fighting.



■ Political activists celebrate the signing of the agreement between the U.S. and Taliban in Quetta, Pakistan (March 1, 2020).

PHOTO: BANARAS KHAN/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Evidence from other past ceasefires suggests that a formal ceasefire agreement alone is neither necessary nor sufficient to initiate a peace process.”

Third, the ceasefire deal is not specific enough.

“It is easier to agree on ceasefire protocols when parties are making progress in negotiating other issues. The Taliban and the U.S. deal does not touch on political issues. The current Afghan government and the Taliban have different political visions—a recipe for a stalemate.”

“Turning failure into success in a peace process takes time. It is not clear what strategies the U.S. will take, should the Taliban fail to comply with the terms of the proposed deal,” Mr. Joshi continued. “There is also a significant risk of stalemates in negotiations between the Taliban and the Afghan government.”

Based on Mr. Joshi’s assessment, the United States and Afghanistan may be no closer to peace than they were prior to the latest agreement.

The Way of Peace

Many topics we cover in *The Real Truth* demonstrate how mankind cannot solve its problems. Despite incredible scientific discoveries, advances in technology, and vast stores of knowledge, the world is filled with increasing turmoil. Disease, poverty, pollution, ignorance, religious confusion, terrorism, violence, hunger, immorality, oppression, political deadlock and war—the subject of this article—are on a growing list of problems. The nearly 20-year war in Afghanistan is just more proof.

The extremely complex issues surrounding this war paradoxically illustrate a very simple premise. No matter the number killed, families broken, or money spent, human beings refuse to stop fighting against one another.

The reason why is also easy to see. The prophet Isaiah, speaking of mankind, said, “The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goes therein shall not know peace” (59:8).

Re-read that verse. Men *do not know* the “way of peace.” They cannot employ something they do not know. This helps explain, from a biblical perspective, the dilemma not just in Afghanistan but in all the thousands of wars mankind has fought.

Also referring to mankind, the apostle Paul repeated in the New Testament what Isaiah said in the Old, “Their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known” (Rom. 3:15-17). Seeing it twice in the scriptures should not leave any doubt as to the reason that peace has been impossible.

The greatest thinkers, leaders, educators, scientists and religionists have failed in their quest for lasting peace in Afghanistan or anywhere else. The pain and suffering of war is the result.

Hosea 4:6 also points to the fact that “people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” Throughout history, world leaders, some of them well-meaning, lack the essential *knowledge* needed to maintain peace.

As we can see, destruction exists where knowledge does not. Yet notice it says destruction came as a result of the *rejection* of knowledge.

Consider. Mankind can only reject something that exists *and* that was taught to him. There is no other way to understand this. Therefore there is a “way of peace” and it was taught to mankind by someone.

For a clue on who gave this precious knowledge to people, go back to Hosea. The verse states: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” People belong to God. It is *His* people who are destroyed for lack of knowledge. God is a loving Father who does not want His children fighting and killing each other. He gave us the knowledge to avoid this. The problem is we rejected it. This is why our pursuit of peace is futile.

What is the knowledge to the “way of peace” that mankind rejected?

The answer is in Mark 12. When asked about the greatest commandment, “Jesus answered [saying], The first of all the commandments is, Hear,

O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is none other commandment greater than these” (vs. 29-31).

The commands to love God and to love our neighbor are tied directly to the Ten Commandments. The first four address God and the last six address our fellow man. The tie to peace should be obvious.

When individuals put God first with all their hearts, minds and strength, and love their neighbors as they love themselves, then war is impossible. It COULD NOT happen.

Most either blow off the Ten Commandments entirely or merely see them as a nice set of principles. The majority fail to understand the immense importance they carry.

The Ten Commandments form the foundation of God’s entire interaction and purpose for mankind. Unending war is just one of many negative consequences of rejecting God’s 10 laws for His children. Murder, adultery, stealing, lying, greed, jealousy, Sabbath-breaking and rejection of God—among many others—are the fruits of this global ignorance of God’s Law.

Mankind is being given the chance to see that his ways do not work. Nevertheless, a time is coming when these commandments will be enforced by a Father who has seen enough. It will happen under the greatest government the world has ever seen.

For more on the meaning and importance of the Ten Commandments, and how rejecting them has led to so many problems in the world, read our free book *The Ten Commandments – “Nailed to the Cross” or Required for Salvation?*, which can be accessed at rcg.org/syottc.

This book will shed new light on the most important set of instructions ever given to mankind and make the connection to how men following them will solve the world’s problems. □



ANOTHER year, another homicide total unseen before in Mexico's modern history as the country struggles to check rising violence.

Cartels and other criminal groups that hold sway over large territories are blamed for much of it, warring with each other and preying on local populations in places where the state, especially local authority,

is weak or even in cahoots with the gangs.

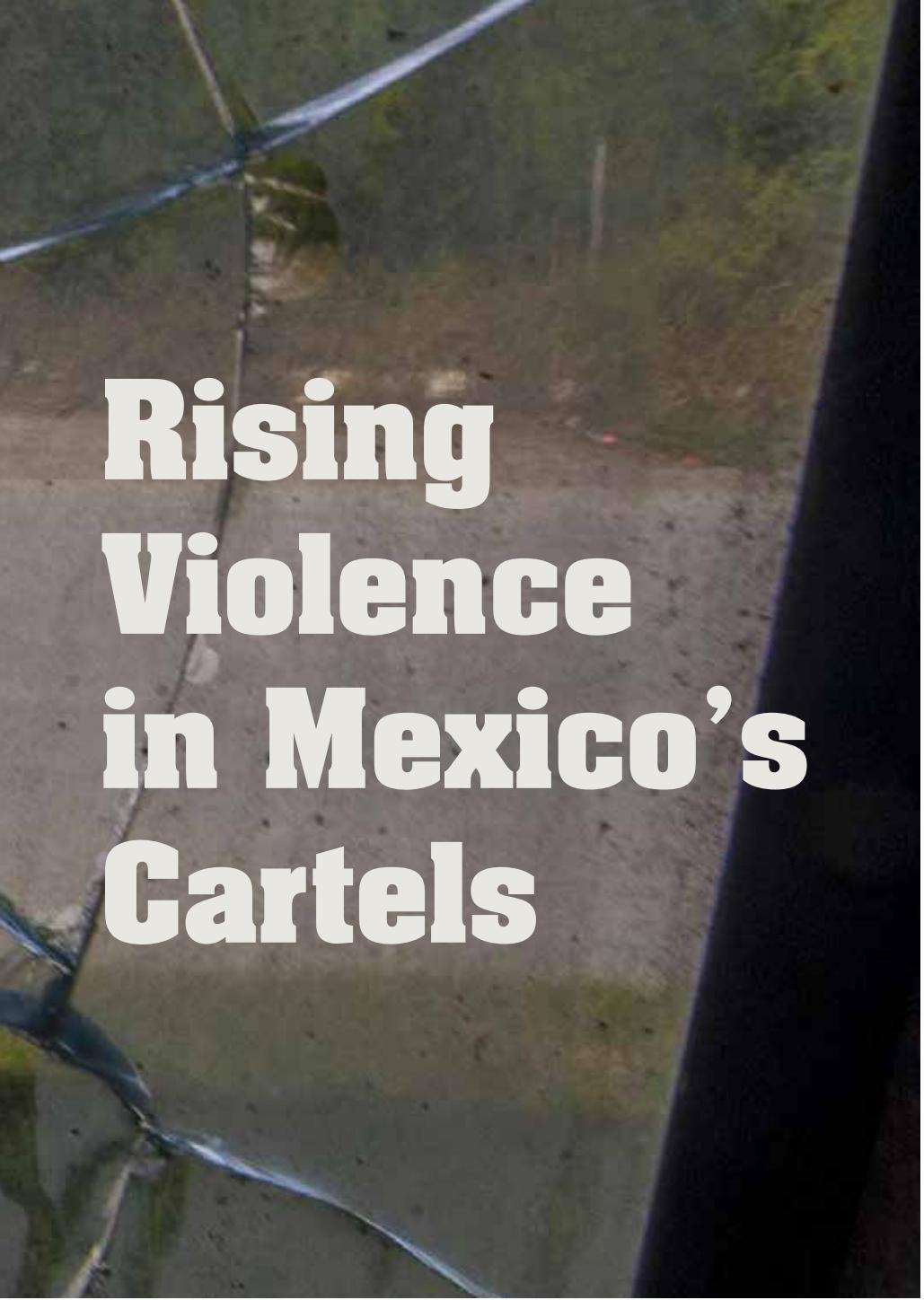
Here is a look at Mexico's criminal underworld today.

The Players

In its latest National Drug Threat Assessment, published early this year, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration lists six Mexican criminal organizations as having significant trafficking impact on the United States: Sinaloa, Jalisco New Generation,

Beltran-Leyva, Juarez, Gulf and the Zetas. But experts say most of the cartels have been splintered into competing factions in recent years, and today only Sinaloa and Jalisco meet the traditional conception of cohesive organizations with a large footprint. There are also other smaller, more local outfits.

Sinaloa, long led by notorious kingpin Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, who is serving a life sentence at a Colorado supermax, is based out of the Pacific



Rising Violence in Mexico's Cartels

coast state of the same name but has a presence in much of the country, sometimes via allied local proxies. Sinaloa survived an apparent power dispute after Guzman's extradition that ended with the capture of cartel figure Damaso Lopez in 2017 and the surrender of his son. Today Guzman associate Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada and Guzman's sons, known as "los

Chapitos" or "the little Chapos," are believed to be firmly in control.

Jalisco, based in Guadalajara, Jalisco, is Mexico's fastest rising cartel, aggressively expansionist and not shying away from brazen, brutal tactics such as the October 2019 massacre of 13 police officers in Michoacan or the mass dumping in August of 19 bodies in the same state. CJNG

■ A woman is seen through a bullet hole on a window at an abandoned hotel in China, Nuevo Leon State, Mexico (Nov. 22, 2019).

PHOTO: JULIO CESAR AGUILAR/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

leader Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes, alias "El Mencho," is one of the most wanted men by both Mexico and the United States; the latter has offered a \$10 million reward for his capture. The DEA says Jalisco is present in at least 24 of Mexico's 32 states.

The Conflicts

There are turf wars in many states, often between local groups or rival factions of erstwhile allies or even proxies for the big cartels. Jalisco's ambition to expand and subsume smaller groups all over the country is seen as driving much of the conflict.

Experts say Jalisco is fighting Sinaloa in places from Tijuana, across from San Diego; to Zacatecas, in central Mexico; to Quintana Roo, home to Cancun and other popular Caribbean resorts. It is fighting Gulf and Zetas splinters in Veracruz, along the Gulf of Mexico. And in states such as Guerrero and Michoacan, against local groups such as Los Viagras. Michoacan has seen some of the most shocking violence so far in 2020, such as the massacre in early February of nine people including four boys at a video arcade.

Sinaloa is also in conflict with Juarez remnants and proxies in the border area of the northern states of Chihuahua and Sonora; it was here that three women and six children from the U.S.-Mexican Mormon community were ambushed and shot dead in November along a rural mountain road. Sinaloa is also said to be supporting some local groups in their fights against Jalisco.

Zetas and Gulf offshoots are disputing control of the eastern part of Mexico's border with Texas, including the Gulf coast state of Tamaulipas, a key smuggling corridor. Scott Stewart, a vice president and security analyst for global intelligence firm Statfor, said Jalisco has also made a play there including in Reynosa, across from McAllen, Texas. He called the conflict in Reynosa "a free-for-all" with little likelihood of a single figure emerging to control the "plaza" anytime soon.



The Drugs

The DEA says Mexican cartels continue to “export significant quantities of heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine, marijuana and fentanyl” to U.S. markets.

According to a February report by Stratfor, synthetics such as meth and fentanyl offer the largest profit margins. Production appears to be exceeding U.S. demand, it said, and cartels have begun looking to ship synthetics to new markets in places like Australia, New Zealand and Europe.

Precursor drugs are often imported from China.

Stratfor also noted an increase in 2019 in production of concentrated cannabis oil. Often smuggled in buckets, it is more compact and easier to move across the border than the huge marijuana bales of old and can

be used to make edibles and other products.

Most cross-border drug smuggling happens through ports of entry in private vehicles or mixed in with legitimate cargo on tractor-trailer trucks, according to the DEA. Cartels, mostly Sinaloa, employ underground tunnels to California and Arizona. They also use cargo trains, passenger buses, boats and individuals carrying loads in backpacks. The DEA says cartels use light aircraft for drug drops, mostly marijuana. Drone use is currently limited to small loads, though that could change “if their carrying capacity is increased.”

Other Interests

Cartels and gangs are not just in the business of smuggling drugs and fighting each other.

Rather, they have diversified into a range of illegal activities such as

extorting businesses—Coca-Cola Femsa was forced to shutter a bottling plant in Guerrero in 2018, and last year a Ford dealership in Guanajuato closed after it was shot up.

Criminal groups are also involved in kidnapping, people-smuggling and theft of cargo and fuel. President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador’s government has prioritized cracking down on fuel theft and says it has dramatically reduced incidence rates, but that has come with its own unwelcome side effects—in Guanajuato, the Santa Rosa gang has turned from fuel theft to extortion.

A notable exception, according to security consultant Samuel Gonzalez, who previously headed up the Mexican Attorney General’s Office’s now-defunct Special Organized Crime Unit, is the Sinaloa cartel, which he said has basically stuck to the traditional business of moving



drugs: “They have not wanted to get involved in other areas.”

Tackling the Gangs?

Mr. Lopez Obrador espouses what he calls “hugs not bullets,” emphasizing addressing root social causes of criminality such as poverty, inequality and joblessness. That is at least a rhetorical departure from his two immediate predecessors, the latter of whom launched Mexico’s militarized anti-cartel offensive in 2006.

Mr. Lopez has restructured security forces under a new National Guard, with tens of thousands of troops drawn mostly from police and the armed forces. But immediately upon deployment last year, many

Guardsmen were diverted to immigration enforcement following pressure from Washington.

Last October saw a security operation in Culiacan, the cradle of the Sinaloa Cartel, that cornered one of “El Chapo’s” sons. After gunmen with high-caliber weapons paralyzed the city with gunbattles, blockades and burned vehicles, authorities ordered a retreat and the son was allowed to go free to prevent further loss of life. That decision prompted questions about whether the federal government has a realistic strategy to achieve security.

Mr. Lopez Obrador, in office since December 2018, says it will take time for his holistic approach to bear fruit. He has also said that white-collar crime

such as corruption has done more damage than the cartels.

Both gangland violence and corruption are problems that well precede his administration.

Since then-President Felipe Calderon launched a militarized anti-cartel offensive in 2006, homicide rates are up more than triple. Mexico recorded 35,588 murders in 2019, the most since comparable records began to be kept in the 1990s, although the rate of increase was 2.7 percent—significantly below recent years.

The rule of law is broadly wanting in Mexico—over 90 percent of all crimes go unpunished—and many areas lack firm regional control, either by government or a strong gang. □

■ Opposite page, makeshift graves are used in Tijuana, Mexico, to keep up with an increase in murders (Nov. 22, 2019). Top left, Drug Enforcement Agency agents are briefed in a parking lot prior to an arrest of a suspected drug trafficker in Diamond Bar, California (March 11, 2020). Bottom left, a law enforcement officer enters a home with a drug-sniffing dog (March 11, 2020). Right, soldiers patrol an avenue in Guadalajara, Mexico (Nov. 22, 2019).

PHOTOS: GUILLERMO ARIAS/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES (OPPOSITE PAGE); AP/RICHARD VOGEL (TOP LEFT, BOTTOM LEFT); ULISES RUIZ/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES (RIGHT)



9 Ways to Eat Right When Money Is Tight

HEALTHY FOOD can seem to be expensive or overly time-intensive to prepare. That is why, when the budget gets tight, we tend to take the easy way out and buy fast food or heavily processed snacks. These foods are more filling and provide the immediate gratification of “comfort food” ingredients—fat, sugar and sodium.

Yet excess sugar and starch weaken the immune system, making the body susceptible to illness and running down our health in the long run.

Even in the face of financial difficulties, you can trade convenient, empty nutrition for a diet that will keep you healthy but not break the bank. The following are nine tips for eating healthfully even when times are tight.

(1) Plan Ahead

For those not used to cooking, planning out meals can be daunting and unappealing. Even if it is difficult at first, however, it pays big dividends in the end! Not only will you save money by not spending it on unnecessary food items, but you will also minimize the number of trips to the store.

Take the time to sit down and calculate how much money you have to purchase food items. Then develop a weekly or bi-weekly meal plan.

Keep it simple! Think of dishes that are easy and quick to prepare, such as steak and roasted Brussels sprouts with sweet potatoes or tuna casserole. Choose recipes that you can cook in larger batches for leftovers the following day, like chili or curry chicken and rice, or make a cycle of repeat meals such as “Taco Tuesdays.”

There are many websites that feature creative recipes with inexpensive but healthy ingredients. Many even include the cost per item so you can judge how much the overall cost of the meal may be. Do a bit of research and save the recipes that interest you.

Incorporate meals within your plan that use similar ingredients so that you

do not need to purchase a vast array of items. Just searching for “beef and broccoli” can bring up five or more ways to prepare a meal with those ingredients. You may wish to get a large container of spinach and use it for salads with lunch for the first few days and then cook it with chicken for dinner on the fourth day.

Also, plan out what kind of foods you would like to have as a treat to yourself. Being excessively strict with a healthy diet can cause a pendulum effect, resulting in a return to old habits. Yet incorporating rewards in your plan will keep you interested and help you exercise moderation.

Elisabetta Politi, the nutrition director at Duke Diet and Fitness Center, told *The Wall Street Journal*: “It is important to integrate a favorite treat into your daily routine, especially in times of stress. Be selective. Decide what you want to have and where you want to be when you have it. Whether it’s a cookie or a piece of chocolate, apportion the treat ahead of time. Then ask yourself, at what time of day do I feel most vulnerable, when I would really enjoy eating this?”

Proper planning will help you buy what you need once you are at the store and curb impulse spending. You will also have many options of meals to make, thereby reducing the need to order food out, which is more expensive and less nutritious than recipes prepared at home.

In certain countries, using coupons can reap great benefits. Be careful, however, not to buy something simply because you have a coupon for it. Many discounted and advertised products are not nutritious. Remember, your health is at stake!

(2) Opt for Nutrient-dense Items

Processed and packaged foods are cheap, but they are often devoid of nutrition and will leave you hungry shortly after eating. Whole, nutrient-dense foods are more filling and promote satiety (the feeling of being satisfied after eating). This will also help cut down on how much you eat, aiding any grocery budget.

According to an article by the U.S. Department of Agriculture: “Dark green leafy vegetables are great sources of nutrition. Salad greens, kale and spinach are rich in vitamins A, C, E and K, and broccoli, bok choy and mustard are also rich in many of the B-vitamins. These vegetables also contain an abundance of carotenoids—antioxidants that protect cells and play roles in blocking the early stages of cancer. They also contain high levels of fiber, iron, magnesium, potassium and calcium. Furthermore, greens have very little carbohydrates, sodium and cholesterol.”

The organization further stated: “Perhaps one of the most appealing benefits of dark green leafy vegetables is their low calorie and carbohydrate contents and their low glycemic index. These features make them an ideal food to facilitate achieving and maintaining a healthy body weight. Adding more green vegetables to a balanced diet increases the intake of dietary fiber which, in turn, regulates the digestive system and aids in bowel health and weight management.”

Avoid items that contain white sugar, bleached flour or empty carbohydrates. These are processed by the body quickly and leave you desiring more. Instead, look for whole grains such as whole wheat and quinoa. These complex carbohydrates take more energy to break down and will help you feel fuller on less, which will also reduce the amount that you need to eat to feel satisfied.

(3) Buy It Fresh or Frozen

Fruits and vegetables contain many vitamins and minerals your body needs to stay healthy. Most times, these are best bought fresh, as certain nutrients are broken down when cooked or processed.

One fresh produce strategy is to buy items that can be eaten raw or cooked later. For example, kale lasts several days in the refrigerator and can be eaten fresh in a salad or sautéed later if it starts to wilt. This also applies to tomatoes, peppers, and green beans, among others.

Sometimes, fruits are even better for you when bought in the frozen food section. These fruits are usually picked ripe and frozen within hours—versus fresh fruit that is usually harvested *underripe* to ripen while in transit. For this reason, frozen fruits often have a higher nutritive value—they also do not go bad quickly!

Strive to strike a balance between fresh and frozen. Find what works best for you.

(4) Incorporate Protein

Science has shown that protein is critical for brain and muscle development and can provide better stamina than carbohydrates alone. Protein is also filling, which helps limit total caloric intake.

While it is somewhat more expensive than other types of food, strive to incorporate sufficient protein into your diet. Certain fish (e.g., wild-caught salmon and tuna) are high in nutrients such as vitamin C and essential fatty acids, making them an investment that will boost overall health.

Eggs are another good protein source. Unlike meats, they have a fairly long shelf life. A *Men’s Health* article labeled eggs “the perfect protein”: “The protein in eggs has the highest biological value—a measure of how well it supports your body’s protein needs—of any food, including our beloved beef.”

While beef also contains protein, be careful what you buy. The most commonly available varieties are laden with antibiotics and hormones and can be higher in fat and cholesterol.

Other options for protein are chicken, turkey, lamb and plant proteins such as quinoa, beans and nuts.

(5) Read the Labels

Preparing food from scratch means limiting the amount of hidden ingredients and chemicals that can be damaging to our health. To gain these benefits, however, does require tons of our precious time!

Some items can be purchased ready-made. Try to find items that are made mostly of whole foods, such as pasta sauce with only tomatoes, olive oil and

garlic. Even frozen vegetables can have hidden additional ingredients.

One popular additive is white sugar. When reviewing labels, remember that four grams of sugar is the equivalent to one teaspoon, and try to minimize and eliminate it from your diet. *New York Daily News* reported: “The average American eats a third of a pound of sugar every day—130 pounds a year.

[California-based endocrinologist Dr. Robert] Lustig says his research proves that the sweet stuff causes heart disease and cancer, as well as Type 2 diabetes and obesity.

“And it’s not just the added sweeteners we add to our foods, like table sugar, or the desserts we eat.

“Sugar is everywhere in foods where we least suspect it, including breads, yogurt, peanut butter and sauces.”

Instead, *Discovery News* advised, “Turn to natural sweeteners for your drinks and food alike. Honey, organic maple syrup, molasses, date sugar, brown rice syrup, and stevia are just a few...”

Most premade sauces also contain synthetic additives or unnecessary sweeteners. A better idea is to create your own using spices and herbs. Many have health-promoting properties.

Dr. Wendy Bazilian, a nutrition adviser for Golden Door Spa & Fitness Resort in Escondido, California, told *Fitness Magazine*: “Technically, spices are vegetables in concentrated form. Like veggies, they contain thousands of healthy phytonutrient compounds, including antioxidants.”

She further stated: “I think of dried oregano leaves as miniature salad greens.”

One teaspoon of the spice contains bone-building vitamin K and just as many antioxidants as three cups of spinach. Some research shows oregano can help fend off stomach flu.

Dr. Bazilian continued: “Bacteria often hitch a ride on the food we eat, and oregano may keep them from multiplying and making us sick.”

Skip sugar-filled barbecue sauce for your baked chicken and opt instead for a flavorful marinade of olive oil, salt, pepper, garlic and red pepper flakes.

In addition, try mixing a few pinches of dried basil into some olive oil with salt, pepper and a trace of lemon to create an easy Italian dressing. This is a welcome alternative to the substances found in most store-bought salad dressings such as polysorbate 60 (an emulsifier that conjoins ingre-

dients) or “caramel color” (which can contain contaminants).

(6) Be Price Conscious

Before even entering a shop, make sure you *know* your budgetary limits.

It is helpful to have an overall number in mind before going shopping for items. If you determine, “I allow myself to spend this much,” it is much more likely you will stay in the confines of your budget. It will also help you decide which brands and quality of products to purchase.

Once you have determined your number, spend time comparing brands. You may find store brands are just as good as name-brands for less cost.

If while shopping you calculate you have exceeded your limit—do not checkout! It is worth the effort to return items to their shelves if you do not need them or if you can find cheaper substitutes.

Typically, the items that put shoppers past their budget are “cravings” items: bags of chips, cookies, soft drinks. Realize that spending \$2 on a bag of frozen collard greens is a much better investment than spending \$3 on a bag of chips.

When possible, check out the bulk bin in your grocery store. “The bulk

“Having meals for the entire week also makes it easy to bring lunch to work or school, rather than resorting to heavily processed convenience foods, which negatively affect both your budget and your waistline.”



bins typically contain dry foods such as grains, rice, beans, and nuts, as well as a variety of seasonings and spices,” *Everyday Health* reported on its website. “Because these containers allow you to buy exactly the amount you need at a lower price than brand-name goods, you can save a significant amount of money while cutting down on waste.

“The bulk bin is fresh and affordable,” says the Buffalo, New York-based dietitian Noelle DeSantis... ‘The items are much cheaper for staples, such as oats and beans, and you don’t wind up with a jar of spices in the cupboard for years that will only be used a few times.”

(7) Make a Meal Schedule

While planning out your meals requires some effort, it results in less wasted food. Statistics from the United States Environmental Protection Agency showed that in 2017 alone, the total national food waste stood at 40.7 million tons—accounting for more than 15.2 percent of total solid waste generation! You can reduce or eliminate your share of this massive amount of wasted food.

Do not forget that wasted food means wasted money!

Once you plan what you will buy, arrange a time within your schedule to cook meals. This may take some practice and experimenting to find what works, but developing a routine will help you stay within your monetary means.

Try to find meals that take 15 to 30 minutes to prepare for a busy week-night, or prep food ahead on your day off. For example, if you shop on Sunday mornings, set aside a few hours on Sunday afternoon to chop produce or pre-cook ingredients for the meals during the week.

This can include preparing a casserole and freezing it for use later, cooking a breakfast dish that can be eaten every morning, roasting any fresh vegetables that you do not plan to use in your salad that week, freezing coconut milk mixed with berries and honey for dessert, and baking several pieces of

chicken to eat with the roasted vegetables for dinner. Anything you do not use can be stored for later in reusable containers or frozen.

Having meals for the entire week also makes it easy to bring lunch to work or school, rather than resorting to heavily processed convenience foods, which negatively affect both your budget and your waistline.

(8) Use a Crockpot

Using a crockpot can help you eat a more wholesome diet while also saving time. One of the most popular crockpot meals is pot roast, which consists of a cut of beef, potatoes, carrots and onions. All of these ingredients can be simmered in a crockpot for a number of hours. Start it before you leave for work, and your meal will be ready about the time you return!

Often, cheaper cuts of meat like corned beef take longer to cook and using a crockpot can help you save money on food and time on cooking.

Another option for a hectic schedule is to slow cook frozen vegetables while you are away.

Collard greens are an example of a vegetable that is easy to make in a crockpot. Just add a little water, olive oil, salt and pepper and set on low for several hours. Then enjoy all the healthy nutrients once you arrive home!

If you do not have a crockpot or the funds to buy one, visit a used-goods shop, where they can be found for as low as 10 percent of the original price. It is a worthwhile investment and the health benefits that you reap from your homemade food beat a microwave dinner any day.

(9) Forget Soda, Drink Water

While water is not food, it will help you feel full and keep your body running well. Some sources recommend drinking one ounce per two pounds of body weight daily.

“Water serves as a lubricant,” a *New York Times* health guide stated. “It

makes up saliva and the fluids surrounding the joints. Water regulates the body temperature through perspiration. It also helps prevent and relieve constipation by moving food through the intestines.”

Soda is expensive and can be detrimental to health given its high levels of sugar and salt. According to *USA Today*, Americans drink an average of 44 gallons of soda per person per year! Think of the health benefits and cost savings that would result if soda was replaced with water.

More than Food

This article has briefly addressed some ways to stretch your budget while building your health. To realize the full benefits of these strategies will require more research. A myriad of articles and books are available for free online and at the library.

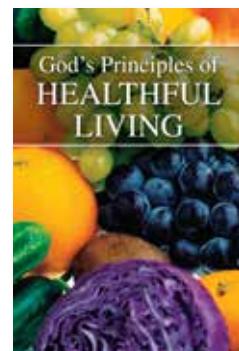
Our booklet *God’s Principles of Healthful Living* states: “God’s physical creation is governed by definite, physical laws. These include laws that regulate our bodies. To be healthy, you must follow them.”

“When a person breaks these principles and laws of health—whether through omission or negligence—the body suffers. Among the negative results are malnutrition, atrophy from inactivity, or exhaustion from lack of rest—simple cause and effect.”

Healthy eating is only part of the equation. While it will help your mind stay sharp and minimize illness, it takes a balance of proper diet, sleep, exercise, good hygiene and other elements to maximize your wellbeing.

These principles are discussed in greater detail in the free booklet. Thousands have put them into practice and are already living healthful lives with more vigor and vibrancy than they ever thought possible.

It can take time to improve your eating habits. But the benefits you reap are WORTH IT! □



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PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

but the original Greek does NOT! (Translators added it on their own authority to match Luke!) So neither Matthew nor Mark mention pestilences among the early indicators that God's Kingdom is drawing near. Luke *does*—while at the same time dropping a reference to the “*beginning of sorrows*.” Why? Because pestilences are the LAST SORROW before the Kingdom. No one knows this! But now YOU do.

Get this giant metric straight in your thinking: PESTILENCES COME LAST! As terrible as what we are witnessing is, understand that God has given all of us something unmistakable that we can *watch*. This means all the headlines you read SCREAM God's Kingdom is close! *Very, very close!*

Pestilence—*disease*—will remain the focus of this Personal and a large part of this *Real Truth* issue.

Coronavirus

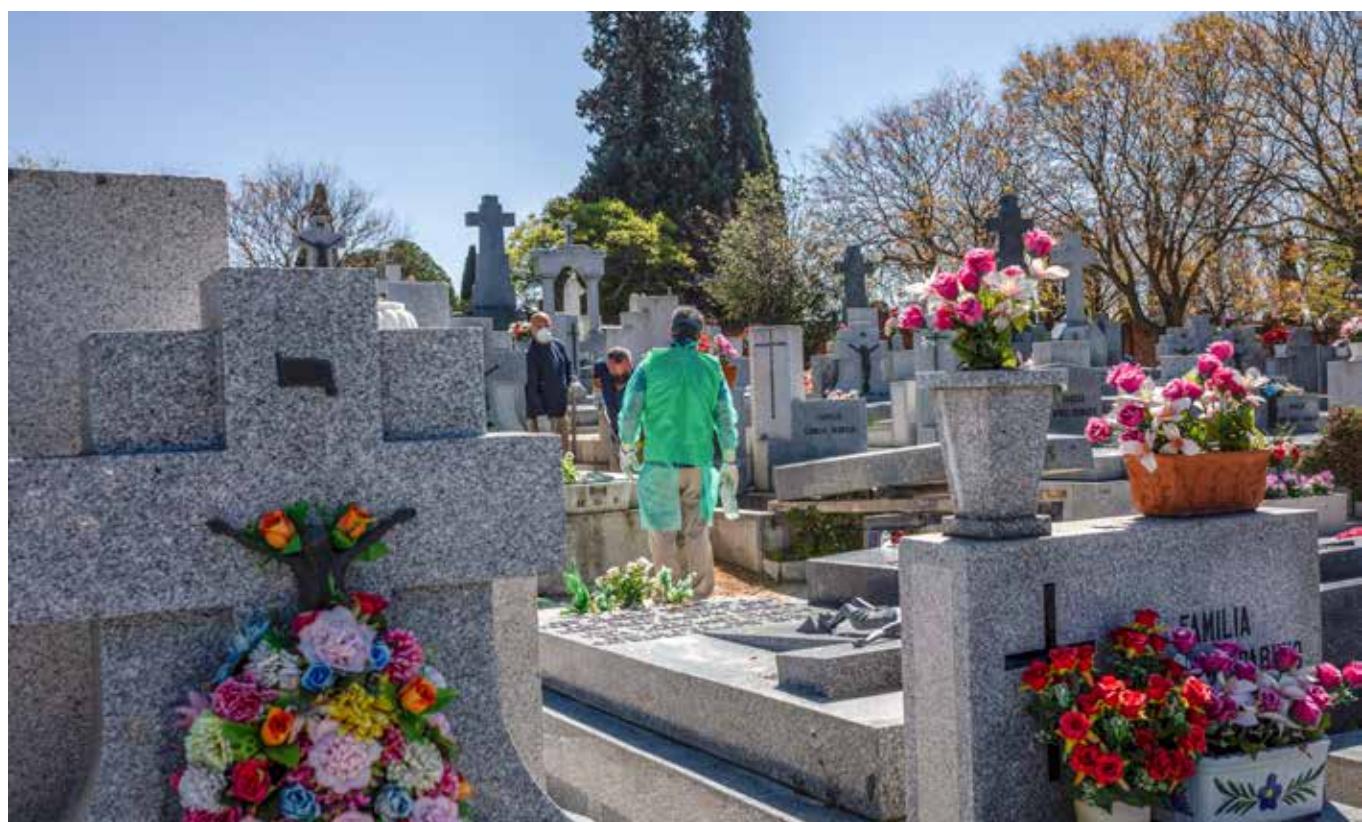
As with Ebola and influenza, the COVID-19 virus appears to have spread to humans from animals. This new virus was traced to a wildlife market in Wuhan, China, and quickly spread beyond China's borders. Not since the influenza pandemic of 1918, in which an estimated 500 million became infected with the virus—one-third of the global population at the time—has the world seen anything with the same impact. The number of deaths worldwide was estimated to be at least 50 million.

The coronavirus affects the respiratory system. Many hundreds of thousands have been infected and tens of thousands left dead. Yet the impact is far greater than the disease itself. The incalculable toll it is having on people's physical *and* mental health may pale in comparison to what *society* would look like were time to go on.

Due to the fear of catching the contagious disease, people everywhere

have faced considerable disruptions, cancellations, postponements and shutdowns of nearly all aspects of their lives. Schools have been dismissed for weeks—even months. Religious services have been broken up. The *economic* pestilence of a virtual global shutdown is impossible to comprehend. What would follow (or maybe run parallel to) the coronavirus pandemic would be a global depression that would make what the United States endured during the 1930s seem like a walk in the park. And 90 years ago, people had *much* stronger character. Today there is almost none. In fact, a *lack* of character virtually defines this age in every regard.

Get this all-important point. Wars, rumors of wars, commotions, famines, pestilences, earthquakes—all kinds of instability and disorder—FIRST grow to where they engender *terror*. Deep *fear* has gripped the minds of billions. But Luke recorded that we should see these things and “be not terrified” (21:9)—we should NOT be



■ An undertaker wears a plastic bag over a gown for extra protection while working at a cemetery in Madrid, Spain (March 25, 2020).

PHOTO: AP/BERNAT ARMANGUE



■ Hospital staff pray before starting their shift in Quetta, Pakistan (March 26, 2020).

PHOTO: AP/ARSHAD BUTT

scared! Believe Christ's words. Those who are seeking God with all their hearts have nothing to fear!

I hate bringing this bad news, but with it comes the *best GOOD NEWS*. It is in *this world*—one defined by turmoil, trouble, heartache and FEAR—that GOD'S KINGDOM will intervene. With the Kingdom's arrival comes the long-prophesied paradise for which mankind longs. In a single day—very soon!—we will no longer have to pray for its arrival. *It will come!* Mankind will once and for all collectively learn the solution to *all* its problems and God's Kingdom will usher in a peace that is now unimaginable.

What This Means for You

The world has reached critical mass. It has passed the point of no return. Things could ebb and flow a little—from day to day. But do not be fooled!

The world's descent into chaos WILL NOT TURN AROUND!

During today's heightened time of fear and uncertainty, people begin to ask questions. They begin to pull away from the routines and pleasures of their existence and ponder how their lives fit into the big picture. With all that has transpired with the virus, millions even admitted to praying to God for deliverance.

This is no coincidence. Do not miss a great purpose we are all witnessing. Come to grips with the truth of prophecy. Understand what is going on all around you. Jesus Christ was right! And when the chaos intensifies in a BIG way—when *terror* and *trouble* prevail everywhere—know that God's Word foretold all elements of it.

The Real Truth is proclaiming the truth about these things. This is it! Read the articles in this issue.

In a world wracked with terror and frightening events, know also that Christ brought a counter-message. He came preaching the gospel—the ultimate GOOD NEWS for this dying world!

The many terrible things we are witnessing all have an ultimate purpose. God is not a monster. He does not take pleasure in seeing people suffer. When people see that their decisions and ways can only take them so far, they become more open to an alternative. God understands this. The alternative is a government ruled by God in which all that we see today is far behind us. Only then will events cited here—and bigger and worse stories to come—be old news.

The Bible foretells a violent wake-up call is coming that no one should miss—but sadly most will not heed its importance. This need not be *you*. Keep your eyes on world events. It is not too late! □



The path to success doesn't have to be complicated.

Does achieving life goals seem distant, out of reach, IMPOSSIBLE? Most everyone has set out to accomplish their ambitions only to quickly slam into a brick wall of setbacks and difficulties. Soon, they abandon their dreams entirely.

It does not have to be this way! There are seven simple laws governing success. Order your free copy of *The Laws to Success* to begin applying these bedrock principles.

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