

APRIL 2016

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A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



GERMANY'S Immigration Dilemma

What's Missing from
the Classroom?

Can the Olympics
Save Brazil?

America's Unknown God

How Husbands Can Enrich
Their Families!

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What's Missing from the Classroom?

Teachers, administrators and politicians have tried for decades to fix America's education system. Yet the solution requires an understanding of the cause behind ineffective schooling.

Page 8

FRONT COVER: Migrants walk toward a refugee camp in Brezice, Slovenia, after crossing the Croatia-Slovenia border (Oct. 23, 2015). Because of Germany's policies toward migrants, many travel through Europe to seek asylum in the nation.

PHOTO: JURE MAKOVEC/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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Personal from the Editor-in-Chief
A Coming World Government—God's "First Dominion"
Page 1

Can the Olympics Save Brazil?
As the international spotlight shines on Brazil—a nation preparing for the 2016 Olympics—it faces rising crises that threaten to reverse its progress.
Page 4

Germany's Immigration Dilemma
The results of the nation's acceptance of refugees from Syria and Iraq reveal just how complicated the world is today.
Page 13

America's Unknown God
Most today believe in God, and there are many ideas about His nature and personality. Can all these views be correct?
Page 18

How Husbands Can Enrich Their Families!
Modern society makes it difficult for husbands to lead their families. What is the key to success?
Page 22

World News Desk
Page 31

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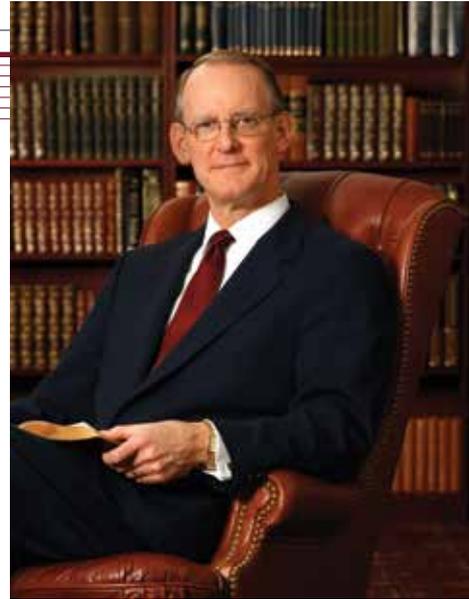
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PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



A Coming World Government— God’s “First Dominion”

BILLIONS TODAY LIVE with no hope. Yet all wish for better lives, a better tomorrow for themselves and their families. Most also recognize that the collective future of all nations seems equally hopeless. If one considers history, the course of the past 6,000 years, it is difficult to avoid pessimism. When the full picture is brought into view—when all facts are considered—*this world is* hopeless. Modern civilization is beset—overwhelmed!—with every conceivable problem, evil and ill that competing, grasping, self-promoting human beings could devise. Having always been sick, it is now deep in terminal illness, wheezing out its final desperate gasps before breathing its last.

Everything on Earth begins with government. The governments of men do not, and have never, worked.

But a better, perfect government—one not left to the devices, machinations and confusion of men—is coming. It will usher in peace, happiness, unity, abundance and prosperity for every human being and every country on Earth. While such a vision may seem impossible, it *will* happen—and in your lifetime!

It was always the Creator’s plan that a whole new and infinitely better world would come—one built from the beginning on the *right* foundation. The coming utopia that God planned long ago will be absolutely marvelous—breathtaking to behold!—and it appears scripturally in vivid colors, with sharp outlines, and in exquisite detail, as a stunning, beautiful, panoramic and previously unimagined future worldscape.

Judah First

This Personal announces in advance events soon to unfold across the entire world. My recent *World to Come*

series, which can be found at *world-tocome.org*, beginning with part one, “Third Temple Foretold—Bible Prophecy!” reveals God’s breathtaking plan for a Temple, Jerusalem and Jews worldwide. It is conclusive and lays critical foundation.

This article expands on many Old Testament prophetic books. A GIANT transformation is scheduled for all nations, with the Jews merely first. Everything you will read describes a coming world government.

Before greatly expanding the wonderful conditions ahead for everyone, it must be understood that God saves Judah first. Zechariah 12 records a huge prophecy. Verse 6 establishes the timeframe is “*in that day*.” Verse 7 declares, “The LORD also shall *save* the tents of Judah *first*...” This is of monumental importance and impact. In fact, world history will soon turn on its meaning. God says He intends to save Judah *first*—before other nations. First means first!—in order or place. There’s no other way to read the verse.

This is why the apostle Paul wrote, “...the gospel of Christ...is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes; to the Jew *first*, and also to the Greek [meaning non-Jews]” (Rom. 1:16). He then repeated: “...of the Jew *first* and also of the Gentile” (Rom. 2:9), and a verse later again, “Glory, honor, and peace, to every man that works good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile” (vs. 10). Paul said this three times, and Zechariah 12:7 is just one passage he knew about.

All the original apostles were Jews, as was Jesus, of course. Jews held many advantages. They could much more easily be converted because they were already observing God’s laws, including His Sabbath, annual Holy Days, tithing and more, which virtually all in professing Christendom today believe are “done away.” Nor did they have to come out of the rank paganism now so blindly practiced by many millions.

The apostle Peter delivered a sermon on Pentecost AD 31, the day Jesus built His Church. Notice his audience consisted of Jews: “Peter standing up

with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, You men of Judea, and all you that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words” (Acts 2:14). Then quoting the prophet Joel regarding Judea and Jerusalem, he continued, “It shall come to pass *in the last days*, says God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh... and I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: and it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:17, 19-21).

Now let’s examine the Old Testament, beginning with the prophet Hosea, whose very name means salvation. Such a prophet would surely address God’s plan for Judah! He does.

In chapter 1: “God said unto him, Call her name Loruhamah: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away” (vs. 6).

And Judah? “I will have mercy upon the house of *Judah*, and will *save them* by the LORD their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle by horses, nor by horsemen” (vs. 7). This is not describing deliverance or rescue. It is referring to Judah being saved first—*before* the other Israelite tribes, or other nations.

Now notice a third prophet—Jeremiah: “The days come, says the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they broke, although I was a husband unto them, says the LORD: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days [Judah is left out because it had *already* by this time entered this covenant], says the LORD, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God,

and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (31:31-34).

The apostle Paul repeats and confirms Jeremiah’s prophecy almost verbatim in Hebrews 8:8-10.

The First Dominion

Now the prophet Micah, who mirrors Isaiah 2. Note the timeframe for what follows: “*In the last days* [before Christ returns] it shall come to pass, that the mountain [the government] of the house of the LORD [the coming Third Temple] shall be established in the top of the mountains [big nations], and it shall be exalted above the hills [small nations]; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and *we will walk in His paths* [nations want to change their conduct]: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Mic. 4:1-3). Peace breaks out across the world—for a time—in the last days. Armies disarm and disband. Weapon stockpiles are repurposed.

“They [now all nations] shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken it. For all people will walk everyone in the name of his god [better translated “judge,” describing God’s government structure], and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever. In that day, says the LORD, will I assemble her that halts, and I will gather her that is driven out,

Please see **PERSONAL**, page 26

HELD CAPTIVE and Completely Unaware!



There are forces at work that have held sway over civilization since the dawn of mankind. Humanity has believed the soothing words of a captor, thinking themselves better off under this subtle but powerful influence. Yet deliverance is coming soon!

Read the fascinating story that has been hidden from all generations. Claim your free copy of *A World in Captivity* today at rcg.org/awic.



CAN THE OLYMPICS SAVE BRAZIL?

As the international spotlight shines on Brazil—a nation preparing for the 2016 Olympics—it faces rising crises that threaten to reverse its progress.

BY DAVID J. LITAVSKY

WHEN RIO DE Janeiro was selected as South America's first host of the Olympic Games, Brazilians rejoiced. The nation had the seventh-fastest growing economy in the world, and winning the honor to host the games was a symbol of Brazil's rags-to-riches achievement. It was expected to bring a revolution and renewed interest in the rising nation.

That was 2009.

In 2016, as the Summer Olympics draw near, Rio de Janeiro—along with the rest of Brazil—is in crisis.

The nation's economy has sunk into its worst recession in more than 100 years. This has left little hope for the nearly 1.4 million residents of Rio—over one-fifth the city's population—living in impoverished *favelas*. These slum neighborhoods are known for dangerous hodgepodge infrastructure, unsanitary conditions, poor nutrition, and pollution.

For the city, increased poverty begets more gang- and drug-related

violence, which has only worsened since the Olympic bid.

A cocktail of other problems threatens to tarnish the upcoming Olympic celebration—some of which may turn away both fans and athletes. Waters for the swimming and boating events were found to be rife with viruses and bacteria from human waste, causing those training in them to fall seriously ill. The Zika virus, which was declared a “global health emergency” by the World Health Organization, has infected 1.5 million in Brazil since last April and continues to spread. Also, corruption and scandal accusations have rattled the national government, hamstringing its ability to deal with Brazil's many crises.

A silent observer watches over Rio. Overseeing every murder, scandal and infection is the massive “Christ the



■ **PRE-OLYMPIC PROBLEMS:** Bottom left, municipal agents prepare to spray chemicals to exterminate the mosquitos that carry the Zika virus in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (Jan. 26, 2016). Bottom middle, an aerial view of the Olympic stadium six months before the 2016 Summer Games in Rio (Feb. 5, 2016). Bottom right, a resident of a favela burns trash in a garbage fire in Rio (Oct. 10, 2015). Construction for the Olympic park can be seen in the background.

PHOTOS: CHRISTOPHE SIMON/AFP/ (BOTTOM LEFT); MATTHEW STOCKMAN/ (BOTTOM MIDDLE); MARIO TAMA/ (BOTTOM RIGHT); GETTY IMAGES



Redeemer” statue on a mountain peak just outside the city.

The predominately Catholic nation yearns for peace, prosperity and justice. Officials desire a successful Olympic Games. Many citizens hope and wait for the fulfillment of the words of Christ in John 14:27: “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

They may also long for His words in John 10:10 to become reality: “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

Sadly, peace and abundance are nowhere to be found, as news headlines make clear:

■ “Brazil’s Sprawling Favelas Bear the Brunt of the Zika Epidemic.”

■ “The 50 Most Violent Cities in the world are revealed, with 21 of them in Brazil...”

■ “As a Boom Fades, Brazilians Wonder How It All Went Wrong.”

■ “Economic Crisis Rattles Brazil as Olympic Year Starts.”

■ “Struggling Brazil Drags Down South America.”

Amid all of this, Rio’s iconic statue silently watches people suffer day and night. There seems to be no answer.

Yet should this beleaguered nation lose hope?

Snapshots

Over the last decade, Brazil has been a rising star among developing nations—a beacon of stability and a force to be reckoned with on the world stage. The nation is even the “B” in BRICS—the coalition of emerging global powers that includes Russia, India, China and South Africa.

Yet the violence, disease and economic woes threaten to erase all progress made by the South American nation.

Violence: Brazil has some of the highest violent crime rates in the world. According to the United Nation’s 2013 Global Study on Homicide, 64,000 Brazilians die by homicide each year. This is 32 murders per 100,000 people—a rate higher than that of the Syrian civil war.

The reason? “Experts...blame the continued power of drug gangs, corruption among police and an ineffective court system for the continuing crime,” *International Business Times* reported.

For residents of the favelas, violence is a daily reality.

Robert Muggah, research director of the Igarape Institute, a think-and-do tank in Rio de Janeiro that focuses on security and development issues, wrote for *The Guardian*: “When I get up in the morning and take my car out the driveway, I look both ways, not for

other cars but because of the possibility of being car jacked. I drive down the street and I’m aware that there may be a stray bullet. It just becomes routine.”

“On entering a favela there’ll almost inevitably be a young man wearing a baseball hat, with a 9mm [handgun] stuck in his waistband...There’s the smell of sewage interspersed occasionally with the most gorgeous smells of bread or stew.”

“But there’s another more ominous feeling of the *codigo do silencio*, the law of silence. In favelas where the drug traffickers still have control there is this sense of fear. People are reluctant to speak to you, and may not want to see an outsider.”

Olympic preparations have done little to nothing to stop gangs, corruption and homicides.

Disease: Nearly 220,000 members of Brazil’s armed forces are moving door-to-door to eradicate the *Aedes aegypti* mosquitos, which are carriers of the Zika virus. Brazil’s health minister said that the nation is “badly losing” the battle against the disease.

With almost 400,000 foreign tourists, along with thousands of athletes, officials and sponsors, expected to arrive for the Olympics in August, health officials are concerned that Zika could spread worldwide. Since 80 percent of cases have no symptoms, if the virus spreads among the mass gathering at the games, it likely will not be detected before it leaves the country.

Another concern is that, statistically, half of all travelers engage in casual sex with locals. Zika can be transmitted sexually, which means the virus can be transferred to sexual partners at home and spread from there.

Although the disease is relatively mild—usually only causing fever symptoms for about a week—health workers fear it has a possible link to increasing cases of microcephaly among newborns. Babies born with this condition suffer life-threatening brain damage. (Though the connection between Zika and microcephaly has not been proven, the potential risk is causing increasing fear among health officials.)



■ **FIGHTING VIOLENCE:** Police officers stand guard in the streets of a favela to ramp up security in an area prone to gang warfare and drug trafficking in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (June 30, 2015).

PHOTO: CHRISTOPHE SIMON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The threat of Zika going pandemic is reason enough for many to urge Brazil to call off the games.

CNN reported: “New York University bioethicist Art Caplan said Brazil is being irresponsible with public health. The country shouldn’t be ‘trying to run an Olympics and battle an epidemic at the same time.’”

“The U.S. Olympic committee apparently told athletes who are concerned about their own health to skip the games if they want to, and soccer star Hope Solo has gone on record saying she won’t go unless the situation changes. We’re also seeing other sporting events, like the PGA’s Latin American tour, postpone upcoming dates.”

However, Rio is standing defiant, the media outlet continued. Despite significant risks, Brazilians are determined to let the games occur.

Economic Woes: The economy of Latin America’s biggest country suffered a 4.1 percent recession in 2015—reversing nearly all the growth it experienced just five years earlier. Economists expect it to continue shrinking by 3 percent this year.

In addition to a decreasing economy, the price of goods has increased—Brazil had an inflation rate of 10.67 percent in 2015.

Reuters considered it the economy’s “worst crisis in decades as investors lose confidence in the once emerging-market star, after years of erratic economic policy...”

This prompted Standard & Poor’s to downgrade the economy’s rating from BB+ to BB on the basis of “significant political and economic challenges.”

One of those challenges involves state-owned oil company Petrobras, which has downsized its workforce and was accused of using bribery and corruption. Also, the leader of Latin America’s largest engineering and construction firm, Odebrecht, is in jail for allegedly giving billions of dollars of kickbacks to politicians.

Meanwhile, the prosperity of the rich class has increased, further widening the gap between wealthy and

poor. *International Business Times* reported that “while prosperity may have increased, the income gap hasn’t appeared to narrow with the [now] super-rich sharing the nation with desperately poor and unskilled youth.”

Although the outlook for the nation remains dire, many see the Olympics as a potential spark for positive improvement. They hope disease will be eradicated before the games. They see tourists flooding the economy with funds, specifically to nominal, low-class jobs—taxi drivers, small shop owners, and trinket sellers. They see erased poverty and emphasis on nationalism as a means to reduce violence.

Yet the results of 2014’s FIFA World Cup international soccer tournament—hosted throughout Brazil—dampens hope that the Summer Games will bring lasting change.

World Cup Aftermath

Although Brazil’s World Cup injected \$13.2 billion into the economy and created one million jobs, it inadvertently caused the economy to begin shrinking. *The Wall Street Journal* reported that “economists say [the World Cup’s] impact on other sectors of the economy was decidedly negative. Some World Cup host cities declared municipal holidays on days when matches were played in local stadiums, while untold legions of workers played hooky to watch the Brazilian national team’s seven games.”

Since 2014, the economy has continued to drop. Promises of advancements and hopes of real change were unrealized.

Jankiel Santos, chief economist at Espirito Santo Investment Bank in Sao Paulo, told the newspaper, “At the end of the day what we wanted from hosting the Cup were improvements to infrastructure that were promised but not delivered.”

Mr. Santos called the games a “wasted opportunity” for real change. The Olympics will likely be the same.

Real Problem

While many turn to religion and long for the peace, abundance and prosper-

ity promised by the words of Jesus, their hearts are *still* troubled and they are *still* afraid. Although they may look to what most think Rio’s statue represents—the Jesus Christ of the Bible—they completely miss that the core of the issue in Brazil lies within that very Book He inspired.

Isaiah 59:8 declares this about the nature of man: “The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings...”

Most will not come to grips with the ugly reality of human nature. No nation, team or individual has ever brought true and lasting peace to the Earth.

Yet the Bible does not just point out the flaws of mankind. It also reveals the solutions.

Although Brazil’s situation may seem hopeless, soon the living Jesus Christ will bring a world-ruling “government...upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, THE PRINCE OF PEACE” (Isa. 9:6).

No longer will citizens have to live in fear, having to trust in the misguided, though often sincere, solutions of man. Christ’s government, also called the kingdom of God, will usher in real peace.

Daniel 2:44 says that Christ will “set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all [the world’s] kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.”

God’s kingdom will bring the evils facing Brazil and other nations around the world to a screeching halt. A nation that has long been an epicenter for drug trade, violence, poverty, disease and a host of other issues will soon be transformed into a prosperous, stable and peaceful area of the globe.

Real change will be enacted, but not by the efforts of man. God’s government—and nothing else—will bring this to pass.

For more information, read *How World Peace Will Come!* at rcg.org/hwpwc. □

What's **MISSING** from the Classroom?



Teachers, administrators and politicians have tried for decades to fix America's education system. Yet the solution requires an understanding of the cause behind ineffective schooling.

BY JEFFREY R. AMBROSE AND NESTOR A. TORO

AFTER WALKING THROUGH a bustling phalanx of teenagers in a hallway, you enter a warm, dimly lit, poster-filled room. A set of questions displayed on a digital interactive whiteboard prompts each pupil to transmit a response using a personal remote control, or to stand up and manually enter their

answer through touch-sensitive icons on the electronic screen. As pupils complete warm-up assignments on school-provided laptop computers, attendance is silently taken using an electronic seating chart featuring each student's digital photo, which is sent to the main office via computer network.

The usual suspects are goofing off. The teacher separates them and reminds everyone that time management is crucial.

The activities that follow have been carefully planned to require minimal lecture time, quickly shifting to hands-on experience that is strategically designed for age-specific attention spans. The dynamic format allows for much student collaboration

and trial and error, with the teacher acting as a facilitator.

But actual learning seems scarce, as the lesson flow is often interrupted by gum-chewers, paper-ball throwers, disrespectful commentators, excessive chatter, missing materials, equipment vandalism, detention assignments, one-way restroom trips, students sent to the principal's office, the occasional scuffle—or lockdowns for immediate threats such as gang fights, an armed intruder, or police inspecting lockers for illegal drugs.

The bell rings as the class period ends. Students stand up and shuffle to the next classroom. Whatever is not finished is typed up by the teacher and posted on a homework webpage.

Welcome to the 21st-century American classroom.

Here, the concept of a teacher verbally presenting information to quietly listening students is largely outdated. Modern educators now have to keep up with every technological advancement, combat ever-shortening attention spans, and generally be ready to adapt to what *students* want.

Despite the best efforts of teachers and school administrators, there continues to be widespread scholastic disinterest, high dropout rates, and low test scores.

What is preventing educators from delivering a “good education”?

State of the Classroom

Today's classroom has drastically changed since years past. Sincerely dedicated teachers look for new and effective ways to make a difference in students' lives, even if this means constantly altering established patterns or spending personal funds on whatever does not fit the school budget.

Yet many do not find success with contemporary teaching methods and initiatives. The Alliance for Excellent Education reports that “teachers are leaving the profession at an alarming rate: 14 percent of new teachers leave by the end of their first year; 33 percent leave within three years; and almost 50 percent leave in five years. Estimated conservatively, American

schools spend more than \$2.6 billion annually replacing teachers who have dropped out of the profession. Many analysts believe that the price is actually much larger and point out that the loss in teacher quality and student achievement must be added to the bill.”

Moreover, large numbers of students also quit, creating for themselves a future with far narrower options. In the United States, “Nearly 1 million kids who start high school every year don't make it to graduation” (*NPR*). This has a domino effect: “At a time when federal and state budgets are tight, dropouts costs taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars in lost revenue, health care, welfare and incarceration costs” (*ibid.*).

While there are programs that attempt to counter these trends, the overall trajectory is not changing, and the public has noticed. According to a 2015 Gallup poll, only 31 percent of Americans expressed confidence in their nation's public school system. This figure is nine percentage points lower than the historical average.

Starting at Home

While the old adage “it takes a village to raise a child” is held as the standard in modern education, some in the proverbial village are not fulfilling their part in the education endeavor.

A *CNN* editorial highlighted this: “I don't know the status of parenting in America. But I know a little about the status of education in America. Parents' growing inability to impose manners and limits on their kids when the kids are in school is reflected in record dropout rates, as well as teen drug and alcohol abuse, teen sex, and unwed pregnancies. Maybe it's parenting that's on the decline, more than the schools.”

Dwindling parental involvement (sometimes due to a need to work more hours to pay increasing bills) at schools is causing a shift of responsibilities, with children now virtually raised by schools—along with (after school) the Internet, television, video games, and friends.

Ultimately, a lack of parental involvement means teachers are toothless. If teachers' standards are not reinforced at home, more than half the battle is lost.

Add to this the constantly changing approach to disciplinary action: warnings, detention, out-of-school suspension, and so on. With low parental supervision and ever-eroding respect for authority, including school officials, standards become impossible to maintain.

Despite schools' attempts to keep up with instructional and technological trends, sophisticated teacher training, and specialized programs, something is missing. Many students continue failing and basic knowledge—even among those who graduate—has become increasingly rare.

A *Huffington Post* article reported: “Only 18 percent of eighth graders were proficient or better in U.S. history in 2014. They scored slightly better, on average, than the eighth graders who took the first such test in 1994—but no better than those who took the test in 2010.”

Literacy scores are not faring well either. In the latest International Adult Literacy Survey, “...between 19% and 23% of American adults performed at the top levels for each of the three literacy scales: document literacy, prose literacy and quantitative (number) literacy...Yet many Americans are being left behind. The same survey found that between 21% and 24% of U.S. adults performed at the lowest level for all three scales, a figure echoed by the National Adult Literacy Survey...”

Illiteracy has a serious impact on a country's economy and well-being. Statistically, less-educated individuals are prone to earning lower wages, depending on government programs, and committing crimes. And in the mind of educators, it all starts in the classroom.

Serious issues such as the achievement gap, dropout rates, illiteracy, insufficient funding, and poor parenting are everyday battles in the 21st-century classroom. Are today's school

systems on the right track to conquer these problems? Or is education on a downward spiral?

Lowering Expectations

Human civilization has seen millennia of various forms of education, and most have required students to reach certain standards. *Encyclopaedia Britannica* states that priests in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia “dominated the intellectual and educational domain...Methods of teaching and learning were memorization, oral repetition, copying models, and individual instruction. It is believed that the exact copying of scripts was the hardest and most strenuous and served as the test of excellence in learning. The period of education was long and rigorous, and discipline was harsh.”

Of the Incas, the article states: “The instructors were highly respected encyclopaedic scholars known as amautas. After the completion of this education, the pupils were required to

pass a series of rigorous examinations in order to attain full status in the life of the Inca nobility.”

Every advanced human civilization has seen a pattern of rigor in education connected to success. More recently, the 20th century saw increased worldwide academic rigor triggered by the Soviet launching of Sputnik 1 and a resultant scientific revolution.

Conversely, a *Washington Post* commentary stated of today’s expectations: “...the question we should be asking ourselves about our nation’s schools is this: ‘Where’s the rigor?’ Or, ‘Where’s the academic beef?’”

Related to these questions are initiatives that lower homework standards. An example is a controversial school policy that advocates for homework to have less weight in determining grades. “Critics—mostly teachers—worry that the policy will encourage students to slack off assigned work and even reward those who already disregard assignments,”

The Los Angeles Times reported. “And they say it could penalize hard-working students who receive higher marks for effort. Some educators also object to a one-size-fits-all mandate they said could hamstring teaching or homogenize it. They say, too, that students who do their homework perform significantly better than those who don’t—a view supported by research.”

How far are some educators willing to lower the bar? Consider the case of Atlanta’s standardized test scandal, which began in 2009: “Cheating occurred in 44 of the 56 Atlanta elementary and middle schools examined, and with the collusion of at least 178 teachers, including 38 principals,” *The Economist* reported, adding, “Answer-sheets in some classrooms found wrong-to-right erasures on test sheets that had standard deviations 20 to 50 times above the state norm... Some teachers gave pupils answers. Some filled in answers themselves. Some pointed to answers while standing over pupils’ desks. Others let low-scoring children sit near—and copy from—higher-scoring ones. One group of teachers had a test-changing party over the weekend...Governor Nathan Deal released a report that found cheating throughout Atlanta’s school system, not by pupils but by teachers, with the superintendent and her administration either encouraging it or turning a blind eye.”

Low expectations early in a pupil’s academic career have far-reaching impacts. At the college level, where professors increasingly complain of poor freshman academics, “Students are hitting the books less and partying more,” *The New York Times* reported. “Easier courses and easier majors have become more and more popular...What many of those students are not walking away with is something that has long been recognized as invaluable—higher order thinking and reasoning skills. They can get their degrees without putting in more of an effort because in far too many instances the colleges and universities are not demanding more of them.”



Stymied by Division

Different countries, and regions within countries, use a myriad of educational philosophies and approaches—with mixed results. Many see Finland as a model for success. In her book, *The Flat World and Education – How America’s Commitment to Equity Will Determine Our Future*, author Linda Darling-Hammond states: “Finland has been a poster child for school improvement since it rapidly climbed to the top of the international rankings after it emerged from the Soviet Union’s shadow. Once poorly ranked educationally, with a turgid bureaucratic system that produced low-quality education and large inequalities, it now ranks [high] among all OECD [Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development] nations on the PISA [Program for International Student Assessments, an international test for 15-year-olds] in mathematics, science, and reading. The country also boasts a highly equitable distribution of achievement, even for its growing share of immigrant students.”

By contrast, American education is sharply divided due to problems outside the classroom. Issues with teacher evaluation, tenure, funding, salaries, benefits and bargaining rights have sparked a series of protests, with ripple effects across the nation—affecting students as well.

On one hand, teachers unions are fighting to preserve collective bargaining in aspects such as teacher-salary, benefit and pension negotiation. On the other, some politicians

are working on reforms to limit the influence of these organizations in a stressed economy.

Another historically insoluble issue for the system has been diversity of religious ideologies. Since prayer and Bible reading were eradicated from public schools in 1963, controversy has arisen regularly over issues such as incorporating multicultural religious holidays, banning or editing the Pledge of Allegiance’s religious language, teaching young children about homosexuality, and the

Herein lies a problem in modern education. Even apparently selfless teachers, who devote their lives to their jobs, fail to bring lasting change. They may affect individual lives, but society as a whole continues on the same path.

Fighting for causes of change presents another problem: there is no set standard of right or wrong. Those championing differing ideals adhere to them because they came to them through intellectualism or because they *feel* right. But there are at least two competing camps on every issue, with little common ground.

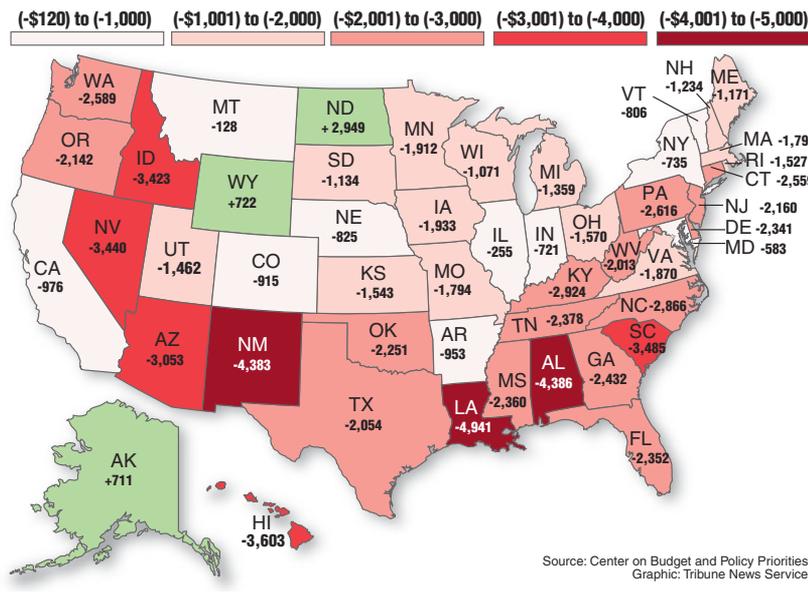
Without a clear sense of right or wrong, mankind cannot solve its deep-rooted problems of war, famine, disease, poverty, inequality and injustice.

The goals of education and knowledge are to solve these, yet they continue to dog mankind—even grow worse. Does this make any sense?

With this point alone, modern education should get a failing grade!

Education Spending

Change in state spending per student from 2008 to 2015 (adjusted for inflation).



infamous grapple between creation and evolution.

Failing Grade

Most teachers enter their profession to be a positive influence on their pupils. Everyone can recall those few teachers they will never forget—even decades later. These are the educators who regularly put in 14-hour days. They give their time to their pupils. They want to better their students by teaching them culture, to think critically, and to enjoy learning. They set out to instill a sense of wonder in their pupils, and to bring meaning to the world in which they live. They teach their classes to promote positive change in society.

Right Foundation

Primary schools, middle schools, high schools, and universities have to accept that, in all of man’s affairs, there will generally be division, dysfunction and social ills. They must build their curriculums around this fact.

Underlying many educational endeavors are attempts to explain what drives human nature. Evolutionary biology textbooks attribute it to animalistic urges. Psychology textbooks say it derives from subconscious desires. Theology textbooks say it originates from the “original sin.” Yet these books only theorize the causes of human nature, and cannot solve the problems created by mankind.

There is a complete textbook on human nature, which most overlook. That book is the Bible. Notice: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9). Also, “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” (Isa. 59:8).

Put together, these verses point to a bleak view of man’s nature. He is desperately wicked, and does not know how to bring peace!

The Bible goes deeper into what is called the “human condition.” While modern education fails to pinpoint a clear definition of right versus wrong, the book of Proverbs clearly states, “There is a way which *seems* right unto a man, but the end thereof are the *ways of death*” (14:12).

Humanity has always done what “seems right,” with the same failed results. It is as if a man built a house on a swamp only to have it sink into the mire upon completion. Years later, his son does the same thing—only to have his home destroyed. Then his

grandson does the same. And his great-grandson...

Absurd! If this scenario were real, the first man’s son would realize his father’s mistake and not repeat it.

Amazingly, this is essentially what educators have unwittingly done for millennia. They have built on what *they thought* was right, but the track record of this thinking speaks for itself: wars, poverty and corruption—evil continually. (To learn more about this topic, read *Did God Create Human Nature?* at rcg.org/dgchn.)

The Bible alone outlines what constitutes a good education, providing the right foundation on how to overcome and avoid the problems that have always plagued mankind’s education system. Notice what God thinks of man’s attempt to govern itself: “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the LORD” (Isa. 55:8).

How far apart from God are mankind’s ways—including its ways to educate? The next verse answers, “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways,

and My thoughts than your thoughts” (vs. 9).

Government officials, school administrators, teachers and parents must all realize that on their own they can never succeed in providing a truly good education. Without this, students do not have a chance.

The only way this could happen would be for every government and school board to admit they are wrong and follow what is outlined in the Bible—the only right foundation for education. This crucial step would unleash true knowledge and incredible *wisdom* the world over. Virtue—true character—would be at the core of every class lesson, which would bring true joy to students. Teachers would command students’ full respect and attention, and *finally* experience what is truly a noble vocation.

Rather than learning to “make a living,” humanity would be taught how to live.

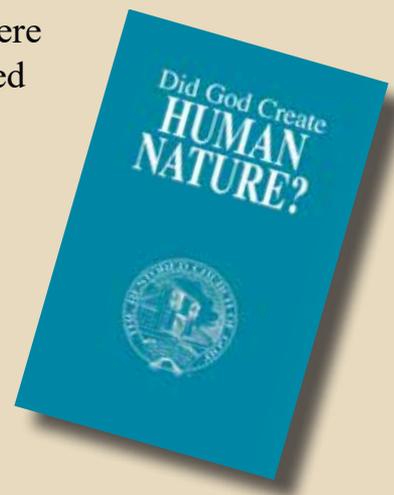
To learn what a world living God’s Way would look like, read the book *Tomorrow’s Wonderful World – An Inside View!* at rcg.org/tww. □

“I don’t understand this world anymore.”

A father uttered these words after a school shooting where many lay slaughtered. His daughter had been trapped inside the building.

Such a reaction is perfectly understandable given that world troubles and evils continue to worsen. Appalling violence, terrorism and war are escalating as human nature hurtles further out of control.

Yet you CAN understand both this world and the cause of its troubles. Understanding human nature is the key.



Order the free booklet *Did God Create Human Nature?*
at rcg.org/dgchn for the plain answers!

GERMANY'S

IMMIGRATION DILEMMA



The results of the nation's acceptance of refugees from Syria and Iraq reveal just how complicated the world is today.

BY SAMUEL C. BAXTER

“GIVE ME YOUR tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free...” These words, inscribed on a plaque inside the Statue of Liberty in New York City’s harbor, apply to an unlikely place of late: Germany.

The nation is spearheading the Western response to a global refugee crisis. There are an estimated 60 million displaced persons throughout Earth due to war, economic downturn, and environmental disasters.

Last year, Germany took in one million refugees from Asia, Africa and the Middle East. It notably opened its borders to thousands of men, women

and children fleeing the conflicts in the majority-Muslim Iraq and Syria—despite Islamic terror attacks throughout the European Union.

Amnesty International dubbed Syria’s civil war the “worst humanitarian crisis of our times.” Others have called it the worst since World War II.

The context of the second world war begins to frame why Germany is leading the charge on accepting refugees.

A *Bloomberg* opinion piece explained: “The phrase ‘German moral leadership’ may sound strange

to many ears, what with the role the country played in two world wars and more recent indignation over the tough stance it took towards Greece’s debt woes. Yet anyone witnessing how the nation has responded to [2015’s] flood of refugees would have to acknowledge that leadership as a fact.

“Why such a transformation has taken place is a tough question to answer, not least because as recently as the 1990s, Germany responded in a far less heroic way to the wave of refugees who fled the war in former Yugoslavia.”

■ **IN SEARCH OF A HOME:** Migrants travel near Miratovac, Serbia, after crossing the border from Macedonia (Jan. 23, 2016).

PHOTO: ARMEND NIMANI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Understandably, Germany wants to land on the right side of history for this issue. Yet taking a central role in accepting refugees has exposed the Gordian-knot complexities of the crisis—both for the nation and the entire world.

Heart-string Motivations

Even a cursory examination of the roiling Syrian civil war proves there are legitimate refugees from the region. Their plight makes it easy to see why nations would provide asylum.

Amnesty International summarized the situation: “Since the crack-down on peaceful protests in March 2011, over 190,000 men, women and children have been killed. 11.6 million people have fled the violence in Syria, a staggering figure almost three times the population of New Zealand.

“What started as a peaceful cry for freedom has descended into a devastating civil war. With an ever-rising death toll and millions left without food, water or healthcare, the people

most harmed by the fighting are innocent civilians.”

Each day, an estimated 5,000 people flee their homes in Syria. About four million have inundated nations in the surrounding region.

When people flee war-torn regions of the Middle East—even to Europe—they are likely to wind up in another destitute location filled with continued hardship and heartache.

For Syrians fleeing to Europe, the first step is to get across the border. One path is to migrate north on foot, but others take a shorter yet more dangerous route: small boats from Turkey’s western coast to Greek islands in the Aegean Sea.

According to the International Organization for Migration, more than 3,770 died while crossing the Mediterranean in 2015. Since the start of 2016, about one in every 190 who attempted to cross the sea have not made it.

Those who do land on European soil find themselves on the streets in debt-stricken Greece, where the

unemployment rate hovers around 25 percent.

Some, with the hopes of making it to Germany—where jobs are abundant—are left to camp just outside the closed Macedonian border.

The conditions for those living in the makeshift camps grows worse as more people arrive every day. An emergency coordinator for the International Committee of the Red Cross told *BBC*: “Many people here are soaking wet from having to sleep out in the open; it still dips below 10 [degrees Celsius] here during the night. We are already seeing a lot of flu cases, especially among children, so imagine if they have to sleep outside in the wet again. It could turn into a very serious health problem.”

Immigrants have even created a community out of the former Olympic venues in Turin, Italy. *The Guardian* reported: “The occupied buildings are in bad condition and need ‘perpetual maintenance’, according to [Nicolo] Vasile, who is...a mechanical engineer. He describes them as perma-

■ **HARDSHIP:** Left, a man and his child cry as they arrive on the shore of the Greek island of Lesbos after crossing the Aegean Sea from Turkey (Oct. 24, 2015). Middle, migrants are escorted by Slovenian soldiers and police officers as they walk toward a camp in Slovenia after crossing the Croatian-Slovenian border (Oct. 26, 2015).

PHOTOS: ARIS MESSINIS/ (LEFT); STRINGER/ (MIDDLE); AFP/GETTY IMAGES



ment, concrete structures with temporary insides and flimsy, plasterboard interior walls. ‘These weren’t built to last forever; they were built for two weeks,’ he says, citing problems with mold, plumbing, and electricity.

“Inside, almost all available space is occupied by mattresses. One of the overcrowded buildings, built to accommodate fewer than 100 athletes during the Games, is now home to as many as 500 people.”

When asked why he chose to live here, one resident of the shelter explained what pushed him to leave Libya: “I stayed to make money [working in a cafe] and send it back to my family [in Senegal]. But then problems increased, everyone had guns in the street...there was no work anymore, no money anymore.”

Back in Idomeni, Greece, where 10,000 migrants camp outside the closed border to Macedonia, a 27-year-old Palestinian man who spent two days trapped in no-man’s land between razor-wire fences said: “This is like something out of the

movies. We can’t go to Europe, we can’t go to Greece. Nobody wants us” (*Reuters*).

Given the situation, German Chancellor Angela Merkel has continually advocated an open-door policy for those fleeing war. She and other EU leaders are working with Turkey to limit the daily flow of new migrants to the continent, however, she stands by her promise to accept those in need.

Another Reason

Beyond humanitarian motivations, there is another reason for Germany’s refugee policies. This time it is more pragmatic: a low birth rate and shrinking workforce numbers means the nation needs more adults.

This necessity caused politicians to coin the term *Willkommenskultur*, which means “welcome culture.”

The Guardian explained the meaning behind the word: “Coined by politicians a few years ago, it was originally meant to be the siren call that would attract people from other

countries to come to Germany and compensate for a big shortage of skilled workers in vast, sparsely populated areas such as Brandenburg and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

“These days Willkommenskultur is used to encourage help for the hundreds of thousands of refugees coming to Germany. And thousands of Germans have pitched in; they take food and clothes to the camps, take refugees to meetings with the authorities in their own cars, pay their fares, foot their medical bills, teach German, translate forms, share couches and bikes, act as nannies, open up soccer clubs, schools and kindergartens for refugee kids, and go on demonstrations against rightwing attacks across the country.”

Yet the reality of welcoming refugees to fill skilled positions may not be quite as good as it sounded on paper.

The problem with the plan? *Politico* answered that most refugees “lack the skills German companies need.”

■ ON THE MOVE: Right, migrants walk down railroad tracks near the Serbian town of Horgos on their way to Hungary (Aug. 27, 2015).

PHOTO: ANDREJ ISAKOVIC/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



“Let’s not delude ourselves,” Ludger Woessmann, director of Munich-based Ifo Center for the Economics of Education, told the magazine. “From everything we know so far, it seems that the majority of refugees would first need extensive training and even then it’s far from certain that it would work out.”

Politico continued: “Even those with training often don’t have the skills expected in Germany. On average, an eighth-grader in pre-war Syria had a similar level to a third-grade student in Germany, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).”

Numbers Game

Yet the mass education of refugees is just one problem. Another is the sheer number of people seeking asylum.

The Atlantic put the situation in perspective in its article “The Staggering Scale of Germany’s Refugee Project.” A longer quote from the piece compares

what such a massive migration would look like if it occurred in the United States.

“There’s no clear parallel for this sort of influx in the United States. On paper, the U.S. is a giant in the refugee-acceptance business, taking in more refugees than every other country in the world combined, according to Kathleen Newland, a senior fellow and co-founder of the Washington-based Migration Policy Institute. But there’s a difference, she pointed out, between the refugees the United States resettles and the asylum-seekers arriving in Germany. In the former case, individuals are carefully vetted outside the destination country and only then resettled in that country. In the latter, people are flowing over the border—effectively presenting themselves on the ground—and then asking for state protection.”

“‘I think [the distinction is] not widely appreciated,’ said Newland. ‘When Germany says, “We’ll get 800,000 people this year,” these are

not people Germany has selected or invited in any way. These people are just turning up.’ In contrast, those accepted by the United States have first been chosen on grounds of particular vulnerability or special ties to the U.S., and then additionally ‘have been through the most lengthy, exhaustive, laborious security screening that you can imagine,’ according to Newland. ‘It usually takes one to two years for someone to get through that process once they’ve been referred for resettlement.’ Germany, she added, is confronting a tremendous immediate challenge to provide these asylum-seekers with food, housing, and ‘weather-appropriate clothing.’

“In other words, imagine a giant increase in undocumented immigration across America’s southern border. Pew Research has estimated that each year since 2009, an average of roughly 350,000 new unauthorized immigrants have entered the United States. (Net migration is much lower for a variety

■ **ACROSS THE CONTINENT:** Top left, migrants try to break through a border fence into Macedonia near the Greek village of Idomeni (Feb. 29, 2016). Top right, anti-Islam protesters march during a rally in Berlin, Germany (Jan. 19, 2015). Bottom left, a migrant holds a tattered picture of German Chancellor Angela Merkel after arriving in Munich, Germany (Sept. 5, 2015). Bottom right, people walk among stands offering employment at a jobs fair for migrants in Berlin, Germany (Feb. 29, 2016).

PHOTOS: LOUISA GOULIAMAKI/AFP/ (TOP LEFT); ODD ANDERSEN/AFP/ (TOP RIGHT); CHRISTOF STACHE/AFP/ (BOTTOM LEFT); CARSTEN KOALL/ (BOTTOM RIGHT); GETTY IMAGES



of reasons, including that a large number of undocumented immigrants are deported every year.) That's only about 40 percent of the number of asylum-seekers expected to arrive in Germany before the end of the year.

“Now consider what that means proportionally. The United States has close to four times the population of Germany and is almost 28 times bigger territorially. In fact, Germany is much closer in size to California than it is to the United States—a bit smaller in terms of land, but about twice as populous, with a larger economy. In terms of GDP per capita, California was ahead of Germany as of 2014.”

While Germans have tried to remain positive regarding the immigrant influx, there are signs things are changing. According to public broadcaster *ARD*, 80 percent of Germans think the situation is out of control. Forty percent feel Angela Merkel should resign over the issue, according to a poll in *Focus* magazine.

Vicious Cycle

Despite noble intentions and potential economic benefits, accepting Muslim refugees brings a host of unintended consequences—especially with Paris' two Islamic terror attacks not far in the rearview mirror and the Islamic State group promising that more are to come.

The threat of letting terrorists in with legitimate refugees is very real. One of the perpetrators of the Paris attack allegedly came in with a group seeking asylum in the EU. And French President Francois Hollande labeled Syria a “factory of terrorists.”

Sifting through who legitimately needs help and who is ready to strap on a suicide vest is a logistical nightmare.

In addition, mixing European culture with Islam has caused problems for centuries. Each time there is an influx of Muslims, xenophobia rises. Any criminal bad seeds in a group of refugees causes some to paint all of them as religious extremists.

This all perpetuates a vicious cycle.

Any protests by anti-Islam groups in European nations are then used by groups such as the Islamic State as proof the West wants to destroy Muslims. They are then able to recruit more extremists to their cause—which leads to more unrest in the Middle East and more refugees. It also leads to the potential for more terror attacks across the EU.

The reality of war in the 21st century adds *even more* complications. Military conflict is no longer as simple as Allies versus Axis as it was in World War II. Today, there are competing religious militias, political militias, individual nations, coalitions of nations, and the United Nations all embroiled in long-term conflicts—often with conflicting agendas within each group.

In all of this, if Germany wants to land on the right side of history, it must walk a fine line. □

■ **STUCK:** Migrants gather at Victoria Square in Athens, Greece (Feb. 24, 2016). Several thousand migrants were left stranded in the country after Macedonian authorities closed the border.

PHOTO: MILOS BICANSKI/GETTY IMAGES





AMERICA'S Unknown God

Most today believe in God, and there are many ideas about His nature and personality. Can all these views be correct?

BY GREGORY E. K Aidannek

FROM THE MOMENT the pilgrims fled England because of persecution and settled in what would become the United States, American society has been deeply intertwined with religion.

While drafting the Constitution, Founding Fathers George Washington, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Patrick Henry, and James Madison, among others, strove to incorporate the idea that church and state should remain separated, yet God should still be central in a nation's affairs.

During his 1796 farewell address, Washington stated, "Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of pecu-

liar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect, that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle" (*Religion and the American Presidency*).

The thinking was similar 70 years later under the 16th president, Abraham Lincoln, who outlined the concept of divine providence in a public speech proclaiming a day of national fasting in 1863: "It is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God...and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord."

While the nation's culture and history are clearly inundated with mementos of a pious past—from its currency stating, "In God We Trust," to the country's constitutional laws,

many of which are based on Old Testament laws—religious freedom was always a mainstay, a safe haven for those previously persecuted for their beliefs. Think Puritans, Quakers and Jewish settlers.

Fast-forward to the 21st century, when most Americans still classify themselves by their religious views. In fact, over 90 percent of Americans believe in a *form* of God.

Almost all worship in their own way, often with beliefs that run contradictory to each other. A tattooed pastor sporting a Bible in one hand and a cigarette in the other believes God condones his preaching in a bar, while another man believes that God views drinking as sin, worthy of hellfire. Rosary beads in hand, an elderly lady listening to the soft sounds of a preacher reciting a Sunday mass in Latin believes that God expects

somberness, while another woman believes He wants her to honor Him by jumping, dancing and speaking in unrecognizable languages. Some believe God expects them to don dresses and suits for church services; others maintain God takes a more laid-back, come-as-you-are approach, meaning it is acceptable to wear a ratty T-shirt with pajama pants.

In the chaos of opposing views of what God expects—and *how* He should be worshipped—is there any way to know which is correct?

Four Gods

According to Baylor University researchers Paul Froese and Christopher Bader, Americans view God in one of four ways: authoritative, benevolent, critical or distant. In their book, *America's Four Gods*, the authors propose that the non-mutually exclusive views that Americans hold of God are based on opinions about His judgment and involvement in society. This, in turn, affects the way in which they rear their children, handle finances, and treat other people.

While the book was published in 2010, its findings still provide insight into how the U.S. views God. It reported that 31 percent of Americans believe an authoritative God is directly involved in many aspects of society and individual lives. Those with this view maintain God helps them in their daily decision-making, but also perceive Him as angry, constantly bringing down harsh judgments on those who directly oppose His rules. Some believers even go so far as to say that God hates people, stating, “It is simple: God loves us and hates you” (ibid.).

Another 24 percent of Americans hold the belief that God is benevolent—the kind of Being described by the apostle John in the New Testament: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

“Their God is a force for good who cares for all people, weeps at all

conflicts and will comfort all,” Mr. Froese told *USA Today*.

Similarly, *America's Four Gods* stated that up to 16 percent view God as “highly judgmental but simultaneously disengaged.” This “critical” God is perceived to be keeping some type of spiritual “score” on all human beings, but never directly involves Himself. Americans who hold this assumption believe heaven or hell waits for people after death based on that score.

Then there are the nearly 24 percent who believe in a distant God. They suppose that God is not concerned with human beings and their existence. He simply created the “game pieces,” set the rules, and pressed “play.”

Benjamin Franklin held a similar view, as demonstrated in his book *The Works of Benjamin Franklin*: “...I cannot conceive otherwise, than that he the Infinite Father expects or requires no worship or praise from us, but that he is even infinitely above it.”

Biblically Backed?

All four views of God—authoritative, distant, benevolent and critical—appear to be biblically endorsed.

Consider. The Bible seems to support the idea of a harsh and punishing God: “God *is* jealous, and the LORD revenges; the LORD revenges, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves wrath for His enemies” (Nah. 1:2).

On the other hand, the Old Testament records His benevolence: “...The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...” (Ex. 34:6-7).

In addition, King David stated that God considers everything a person does, which appears to support the notion that God is critical: “The LORD looks from heaven; He beholds all the sons of men. From the place of His habitation He looks upon all the inhabitants of the earth. He fashions their hearts [minds] alike; He considers all their works” (Psa. 33:13-15).

Yet the prophet Isaiah apparently recorded that God distances Himself from mankind: “Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear” (Isa. 59:1-2).

The apostle Paul understood that people develop their own ideas of God. While in Greece, “Paul stood in the midst of Mars’ hill, and said, You men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore you ignorantly worship...” (Acts 17:22-23).

The same is true today. While most assume they know Him, many rarely—if ever—consider peering into their Bibles for any type of instruction.

ABC News reported that 83 percent of U.S. citizens identify as Christian. In addition, according to American Bible Society’s *State of the Bible 2015* survey, “Nearly half of Americans strongly agree that the Bible contains everything a person needs to know to live a meaningful life (49%).”

However, only 52 percent of American adults are considered “Bible readers,” which is defined as reading the Book at least three times a year. In addition, 28 percent say they never read the Bible—up from 25 percent in 2011. The other 20 percent of adults read the Bible less than once a year.

The survey found that even at church services or mass, where people go to learn more about God’s Word, about one-quarter of U.S. adults say that they never hear biblical text read aloud.

Gallup stated that 22 percent of Americans say the Bible is the actual word of God, to be taken literally. Twenty-eight percent believe it is the actual word of God, but with multiple interpretations possible. Yet, according to a 2015 Pew Research Center

survey, roughly 70 percent knew that Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem—and less than half knew the four gospel accounts are Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Without looking to the correct source for information, an improper foundation of understanding is created. With so little biblical information, Americans are in fact worshipping an “UNKNOWN” God, developing views of what He is like based on their own opinions and ideas.

Given this, it is unsurprising that so many competing and confusing opinions exist. God, however, is not the author of this confusion (I Cor. 14:33). He leaves clues throughout the Bible about how He should be viewed—if one is willing to look.

The True God

For centuries, most have paid more attention to things that have been created by the hand of man, such as lifeless statues, pictures and inanimate stone carvings, while ignoring the true God—the One who is *actually* alive.

To understand the *true* God, it is necessary to examine His characteristics, starting at the beginning of the book He inspired—the Bible. The following section is filled with Bible references to fully paint the correct picture of God.

Genesis 1:1 states, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” Recognize that everything in the universe was created by God. This includes even those things that are invisible, such as gravity, magnetism, time and space. Colossians 1:16-17 states, “For by Him were *all things* created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, *visible and invisible*, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: *all things* were created by Him...”

Because God is a spirit (John 4:24), He is not confined to physical boundaries. This does not mean He is a blob that permeates the universe. As no human being is amorphous, neither is God. Genesis 1:26 states that humans were created in God’s image and likeness. In fact, God has features just

as humans do (Rev. 1:14-16; Ezek. 1:26-28).

As Creator of time and space, God is also eternal. In Exodus 3:14, God revealed Himself to Moses as “I AM,” which means ever-living, existent one. God has no beginning or end of life (Heb. 7:3). He has always existed (Rev. 1:8).

God is the most dynamic of all beings. The Bible reveals God’s true qualities—His character—as holy and perfect (Matt. 5:48). Later in His Word, God is described not only as

“God is the most dynamic of all beings. The Bible reveals God’s true qualities—His character—as holy and perfect (Matt. 5:48). Later in His Word, God is described not only as *having* love, but also as *being* love (I John 4:8, 16).”

having love, but also as *being* love (I John 4:8, 16).

The Creator ponders each and every situation and decides the absolute best way in which to act. He is wonderful, mighty and fair (Isa. 9:6; 45:21), as well as comforting, merciful, faithful and forgiving (II Cor. 1:3; I John 1:9).

Some people have the misconception that the Old Testament God is harsh and authoritative, while the God of the New Testament is benevolent and merciful. This idea divides professing Christians, leaving most to

form their own opinions. According to the Bible, however, this assumption is false. Malachi 3:6 states, “For I am the LORD, I change not...”

In actuality, the One who became Christ *is* the God of the Old Testament, who created all things! “And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ” (I Cor. 10:4; Psa. 18:1-2).

Although there is only one true God, the Bible reveals that God is actually a family, currently composed of two members: Father and Son.

Notice what God said in Genesis: “Let *Us* make man in *Our* image, after *Our* likeness...” (1:26). In this verse, the pronouns “Us” and “Our” are used in direct reference to the original collective Hebrew noun for God, *Elohim*.

Further, John 1 states, “In the beginning was the Word [meaning “Spokesman” in Greek] and the Word was with God [the Father], and the Word *was* God...And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us...” (vs. 1, 14). The Word, who later became Jesus Christ, was in the God Family with the Father before the creation of time.

This truth is contrary to the common belief that God is a three-in-one being, composed of the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit—a doctrine the Bible simply does not teach.

In fact, throughout Scripture, no mention is made of a third God-being. Notice: “...there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him” (I Cor. 8:6).

The Godhead currently consists of two *distinct* beings, not some mysterious and strange three-in-one enigma as the trinity doctrine purports. When understood in its entirety, the trinity doctrine *limits* God and His ultimate purpose for mankind!

Way of Understanding

The Ten Commandments detailed in Exodus define how God wants people to live—and give an inside look into

how to view Him. The first four Commandments address how to show God proper respect, while the last six teach how to treat fellow human beings.

The First Commandment, “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Ex. 20:3), leaves no room for personal opinions or ideas. God expects that everyone will not worship other gods. In return, He promises to disclose His true nature.

Traditional Christianity does not understand God or His nature because it does not keep His Commandments (Psa. 111:10). On the other hand, *true* Christians, those with God’s Spirit (Rom. 8:9), understand His nature and know who and what He is (I John 2:3).

Yet many today believe that the Commandments are done away. Deceitful ministers, who themselves are deceived, have taught many that God’s Law is a “heavy burden” or “Christ kept it for us.”

But God can only be understood by keeping His Commandments, which, in turn, can only be fully internalized through practice. Keeping them, however, requires real effort, which does not come naturally (Rom. 8:7).

King Solomon was inspired to record, “...there is a way that seems right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 14:12, 16:25). In addition, the prophet Jeremiah was stirred to write, “It is not in man to direct his steps...” (Jer. 10:23). Taken together, these verses reveal that human beings on their own cannot do what is right.

Without God’s Spirit, the human mind is unable to properly discern between right and wrong—including the concept of God’s true identity.

There will always be those who do not want to obey God and who find ways around His Law. Professing to follow the “Lord,” they do not do what He says (Luke 6:46). They fail to recognize Christ’s plain words in Matthew 5:17: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.” Instead, God describes His

Law as a blessing—“holy and just and good” (Rom. 7:12).

Positive effects flow from keeping the Commandments versus negative consequences that occur when they are broken. When the effects are considered, greater understanding, appreciation and reverence are natural byproducts that illuminate the true identity of the One who created these spiritual laws—God.

In his book *The Ten Commandments – “Nailed to the Cross” or Required for Salvation?* publisher and editor-in-chief of this magazine David C. Pack stated how the Ten Commandments, beginning with the first, point to the true God: “The all-important First Commandment establishes *Who* it was that gave these laws to ancient Israel in the wilderness. This command must be firmly established in your mind from the outset of your thinking about the Ten Commandments. When understood in its fullest context, it lies at the heart of all religion.

“Surely, if the Bible is the inspired INSTRUCTION BOOK of an all-wise and all-powerful Creator God, who was also the *only true God* in the universe, His first commandment could not have been otherwise. Under no circumstances would that God want *other gods* worshipped in His place. In fact, in the very next commandment, the Author of these laws describes Himself as ‘a jealous God.’

“The God of the Bible leaves no room for doubt in the first *four* commandments. He expects to be worshipped *as He is*. He allows no room for confusion and does not want human opinion added—He accepts no substitution of the false for the true.”

Later in the book, Mr. Pack stated: “The First Commandment is the most basic requirement for beginning to understand God’s truth and to fulfill our ultimate purpose. All humanity is warned to put God first, and to avoid false gods. The Being who issued

that FIRST and GREAT commandment rephrased it in Matthew 22:37.

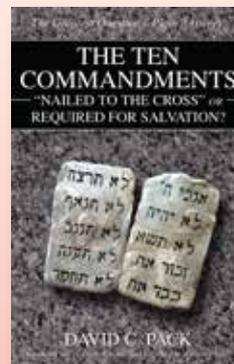
“Notice: ‘Jesus said unto him, You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment.’ In this New Testament passage, Christ was essentially quoting the very words that He inspired in Deuteronomy 6:5!

“The message of putting God *first* should ring loud and clear. Proverbs 9:10 tells all who will listen, ‘The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.’ Psalms 111:10 adds, ‘The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do His commandments: His praise endures for ever.’

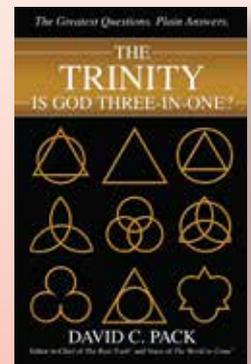
“Only by putting God first (in every area—worship, obedience and goals in life), is sound judgment and understanding accessible.”

“Here is another vital key. Matthew 6:33 talks about seeking God’s kingdom *and His righteousness*. But what *is* righteousness? Recall Psalm 119:172 defined it: ‘My tongue shall speak of Your word: for ALL YOUR COMMANDMENTS ARE RIGHTEOUSNESS.’ Certainly this means that we should OBEY these commandments!”

To learn more about the true God and His Law, continue reading this book at rcg.org/syottc. Also read Mr. Pack’s book, *The Trinity – Is God Three-In-One?* at rcg.org/ttigtio. Both of these will help you grasp the principles needed to identify the true God and build a relationship with Him. □



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How Husbands Can Enrich Their Families!

Modern society makes it difficult for husbands to lead their families. What is the key to success?

BY F. JACO VILJOEN

“GUESS DEAR OLD Dad will have to be the big provider!” announced Carol Brady, the mother in the classic stepfamily television series *The Brady Bunch*, during a family fishing expedition. The six children’s hopes for a fish fry were slipping away as everyone, including dad,

came up short. In the end, the family had to settle for a picnic lunch, but their sense of togetherness was unmistakable.

It is significant how this 1960s pop culture series was conceived.

While reading the *Los Angeles Times*, the show’s creator formed the concept. The article he read stated, “In the year 1965, more than 29 percent of all marriages included a child or children from a previous marriage.” This was much different than the average family, which then consisted of the original father and mother and multiple children. As a result, “A new kind of TV family” was born. One “that America was not only ready for, but maybe even needed,” the creator would later write.

Mike, the husband and father in the series, did his best to make his new, blended family work. He endeavored to be a good leader of his family and create a wholesome, nurturing environment.

Today’s dads and husbands can relate. Despite the many challenges of modern life, most men remain committed to the task of properly leading their families.

Though deadbeat dads and other negative examples often steal the spotlight, there are many more men who, like the archetypal Mike Brady, strive to fulfill their family responsibilities.

But the rigors of competing needs take their toll. Men are increasingly finding it difficult to supervise, prioritize and categorize all the demands on their time and attention.



The American Psychological Association noted a change in what is expected of fathers: “In tandem with the growing autonomy of women, related trends such as declining fertility, increasing rates of divorce and remarriage, and childbirth outside of marriage have resulted in a transition from traditional to multiple undefined roles for many fathers. Today’s fathers have started to take on roles vastly different from fathers of previous generations.”

This disparity has led to a gap in expectations.

Dr. William F. Harley, author and secular authority on marital relations, detailed this disparity in a men’s magazine: “Each day I am confronted by women who are extremely frustrated with their marriages. They usually express no hope that their husbands will ever understand what it is that frustrates them, let alone change enough to solve the problem...When I talk to their husbands, they

usually have a very different explanation as to why their wives feel the way they do. They often feel that the expectations of women in general, and their wives in particular, have grown completely out of reach.”

Dr. Harley surmises, “Very few men, these days, feel that they have learned to become the husbands that their wives have wanted, and the job seems to be getting more and more difficult.”

Surrounded by an ever-changing society, the need for men to find answers about the modern husband’s responsibility has never been greater.

But all is not lost. The desire to change is key. Combine this with a proven pattern of what to do and success is all but guaranteed. Despite what can seem like insurmountable odds, husbands and fathers can succeed.

Worldly Models

Men often look toward their own experiences growing up, advice from confidants, or images in the media as role models. These, along with personality types and individual strengths and weaknesses, can shape a man’s paternal style.

Examining the typical personas or actions men can embody—and seeing which may apply to you as a husband—is a great first step to improving your role in the family. Note that some of these examples can be positive in certain settings and in certain doses, but all are problematic in the extreme.

■ **The Egotistic Dictator:** This man believes he must maintain control at all times. He usually does so by domineering his wife and children and leading with an iron fist. He has little concern for others’ perspectives and uses intimidation through his stature and deeper voice to bully others and get his way. He must always get the last word and very seldom if ever seeks advice from his wife. He rarely admits mistakes, and does not show his imperfections to his children.

■ **The Braggart:** This man is all about himself and his accomplishments. Status is first and foremost in his mind. Whether it means having the best job, the biggest house, or the latest toy, he is all about one-upping the competition. His confidence and view of self is based on material things and his latest achievement. Usually these pursuits come at the expense of spending time with family, since he constantly works to maintain this lifestyle. He lacks self-control and rarely sacrifices for others.

■ **The Workaholic:** This man provides for his family financially but does little else. He almost always puts his job before the needs of his wife and children. He works long hours and usually only pays attention to his family when there is a problem. Because he spends so little quality time with his family, he has little empathy when problems arise.

■ **The Pushover:** This is a man in name only. He rarely takes a stand in family matters and leaves most important decisions to his wife and children.

He is indecisive and goes with the flow in an attempt to appease and avoid conflict. He lacks resolve during tough times and does not appear to learn very much from his mistakes. Outside family members hold much sway over his household.

■ **The Puppeteer:** This man likes to fulfill his own fantasies and dreams through his children. Whether it means pushing them into a certain sport or hobby, or being overprotective and not accepting failure in his children, this man also likes to maintain control. He promotes himself through the achievements of his offspring.

■ **The Greek God:** This man is characterized by narcissism—focusing on himself. He is especially caught up in how he looks. He must remain trendy—wearing the latest fashions and perfecting his physique. Instead of seeking the attention of his wife, he derives more pleasure in grabbing the notice of other women. He spends an unbalanced amount of money and time tending to himself and spends very little time with his family.

■ **The Pot-bellied Drinker:** This man is preoccupied with the latest sport news or other pastimes. He spends excessive time at the bar or in front of the television while habitually drinking too much alcohol. He cares little about maintaining his appearance, which would sustain interest from his wife and set a good example for his children. The complete opposite of the “Greek god,” he has almost completely let himself go physically, mentally and otherwise. He is also prone to outbursts and fits of foul language.

Without a guiding hand, men are usually left to figure things out on their own. They must cobble together their own version of manhood, affecting the type of husband and father they become. Though sincere, they can find themselves trapped in these and other stereotypes, which all fall somewhere within extremes—some between overbearing and feeble, others between selfish and self-effacing.

The best approach is one that is balanced. The most balanced individual to ever walk the Earth was Jesus Christ.

The Perfect Model

Peter, a first-century apostle and eyewitness to this flawless model, wrote to all who would follow, “For even hereunto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, *leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps*” (I Pet. 2:21). Mankind is to follow Jesus Christ’s “example.” *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* underscores that an example is “a copy for imitation.”

Jesus Christ is the ideal *example* husbands should strive to imitate.

Even though Jesus never married during His physical life, He was a leader and teacher. He also cared deeply about people’s problems—*physical* and *spiritual*. He expressed compassion by healing the sick and feeding the hungry, and was interested in the details of people’s lives. He inspired them to become more than they thought they could become.

These are all characteristics that lead to success as a husband and a father. But there is more.

Christ “took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being *found in fashion as a man*, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:7-8). These verses clearly show that, though He was God, Christ was willing to take on the form of a man and thus become a servant to the very beings He created. If God was willing to humble Himself, what excuse do mortal men have!

Christ’s entire life was an example of selfless service, even unto death.

But Jesus was not just “in touch with His emotions.” He represented manhood in its truest form. Putting verses together, it is clear that Christ was a “man’s man.” We see that He was a carpenter—a skilled yet rugged trade in His day. Growing up, He no doubt spent many hours under the burning Middle East sun helping His stepfather Joseph. He also displayed strength in His ability to fast for 40 days and nights and turn over tables and other items in the Temple (Matt. 4:2; 21:12). This image is much to the contrary of a soft, effeminate Jesus.

Comparing husbands to Christ, however, is not merely a matter of inference. The Bible makes direct statements about how a husband is to emulate Christ in his relationship to his family. These statements should be seen as commands—not mere suggestions.

Notice: “Husbands, love your wives, *even as* Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it” (Eph. 5:25). Jesus dedicated His life to the Church, displaying patience and forgiveness. In the end, He died for it.

Men, like Christ, have been given tremendous authority in the home: “For the husband is the head of the wife, *even as* Christ is the head of the church: and He is the savior of the body” (vs. 23). Just as Christ heads or leads the Church, the man has been appointed as the leader in a marriage.

However, to truly emulate Christ’s high standard, men should not fly away with this authority. It was not given to satisfy himself, but to use for his family’s ultimate benefit.

The passage continues by stating that Christ would “sanctify and cleanse” the Church “with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church...without blemish” (vs. 26-27). Christ inspires and encourages His Church in order for “her” to improve. Likewise, men should “love their wives *as* their own bodies,” and a man properly “nourishes and cherishes” her “*even as* the Lord the church” (vs. 28-29).

What a crystal-clear example of the role of a husband!

Proper Husband

While the modern role of men seems to be complex and confusing, God’s intention has always been to bring simplicity to their task.

Consider *four* main areas, based on Christ’s example, that encompass a husband’s responsibility:

■ **Leadership:** God placed men in a leadership role. He gave them qualities that, if developed, can be useful for proper leadership.

Men are naturally adventurous and daring. They tend to think long-range and are willing to take risks to achieve

their goals. Men also have larger body frames, are more muscular, and have deeper voices. This establishes them as protectors of the home and family. Wives admire their husband’s ability to carry heavy furniture, change a flat tire, or dig a hole in the backyard to plant a tree.

Women can do these things as well. However, having the man primarily perform these physical activities is ideal.

The strength element of manhood brings up an important point. Peter encouraged husbands to give “honor unto the wife, as unto the *weaker vessel*” (I Pet. 3:7). The Greek word for “weaker” means “fragile” or “delicate.” Understand. This does not mean a woman is weak. Rather, she is more fragile or delicate *compared to her husband*. This can be physically as well as emotionally.

Delicate also implies that the man should handle his wife with care. His tone of voice and behavior should never come across as if he is speaking down to her or to another man. For example, if he is busy with a task, he can either bellow, “I am busy right now, leave me alone!” or say, “Honey, I will be with you in a moment.” The difference is obvious.

Fathers should of course lead their children as well. Proverbs states, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (22:6). This training requires knowledge, discipline and direction. Fathers have a tremendous responsibility to direct their children to success.

Understand that true leadership does not mean you have all the answers. The best leaders are those that can take sound advice into consideration and apply it when necessary. Realize that a wife can be a husband’s greatest counselor if the man allows her to be.

■ **Love:** The phrase “loves and cherishes” is often repeated in the marriage ceremony. Yet it is rarely fully understood or sustained long after saying, “I do.” Displaying true love and cherishing a mate is not like the poor example shown in most movies and society. Most of what is considered

“love” in the world is actually lust. Love is about outgoing concern for others. Lust is about what someone can get for self.

A man is to cherish his wife. *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* states that this word means to “cherish with tender love, to foster with tender care.” Proverbs states, “Whoso finds a wife finds a good thing” (18:22), and adds, “Who can find a virtuous [able, efficient] woman? For her price is far above rubies” (31:10). If a man has a wife, he has received a precious gift from God. Men should treat their wives special without going overboard by idolizing them.

Promote an atmosphere of appreciation regularly. Display affection toward your wife—hold her hand while you stroll through a park or embrace her and tell her she is very important to you.

Show your wife that you appreciate her. Consider surprising her by preparing a special dinner or, if your budget allows, take her out to her favorite restaurant. Think about helpful ways to lighten her load.

Offer to wash and dry the clothes on your days off, or help vacuum and clean the house. Make a habit of making the bed in the mornings and picking up your own dirty laundry. Helping her shows that you do not take her for granted.

Do not forget the little things that say she matters to you. Occasionally buy her flowers or write her a note that says you care.

Also, the way each spouse perceives expressed love might differ. You might expect her to verbalize her love to you, whereas your wife feels she expresses her love to you when she prepares your favorite meals. Learn to accept and appreciate the way she loves you.

Fathers must love and cherish their children as well. Spend time with them. Pick them up when they are down. Often the best feeling in the world for children is to know that their dads stand behind and support them even when things are not going well.

■ **Nourishment:** Paralleling the need to love and respect your wife is the need to take care of your family. If a man does not provide for his family, in God's eyes he is worse than an unbeliever (I Tim. 5:8).

A man is to provide for and to protect his family. In trying to accomplish this, however, many become overly focused on their work—becoming workaholics. A man's responsibility is more than just making money. He must also help those under his care to thrive physically and emotionally.

The book of Proverbs states, “Where there is no vision, the people perish” (29:18). A man must provide a vision for his family or they will not prosper. He sets the pace and the direction his family will go. Then he creates an environment where they can grow to fulfill that dream.

Again, concerning children, fathers are to bring up their children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). Strive to strike a balance between nurturing and correcting your children. Too much of either can negatively affect a child.

■ **Inspiration:** An additional responsibility of a husband is to help his wife fulfill her potential. He should get to know her strengths and abilities, and take an interest in her hobbies and the things she is passionate about. Motivate and inspire her to develop her talents and, where possible, help her to realize her dreams. For instance, if she enjoys tennis or another sport, allow some flexibility in the budget for her to buy the equipment she needs. Till the ground and prepare the soil for the vegetable garden she always wanted to start. In other words, do all you can to encourage her to stretch beyond what she may think is possible.

Likewise, right words of encouragement at the right time have the potential to be etched into a child's mind for the rest of his or her life. Your involvement in the lives of your children will be a pillar of strength as they grow older.

Inspiration works both ways. Fathers and husbands also need encouragement from time to time. Make this easier

for your spouse by including her in your decisions. Ask for her opinion when facing a difficult decision at work or even with simpler matters such as deciding which tie to wear for an upcoming meeting. Listen to and incorporate her feedback. Sharing your joys and successes, as well as your fears and failures, not only inspires your wife but also binds you closer together.

Positive Impact

The success of a marriage and family is inseparable from the role of the husband. Not only are the husbands that fulfill their role happier, their wives and children rejoice too. A husband who strives to grow in character—discerning right from wrong and doing the right thing against resistance—is an anchor of stability. His good example is worth emulating.

These benefits, however, reach beyond the family—the smallest building block of society. In a fast-paced, ever-changing society, a man who understands his role and purpose will stand out. He adds value to his employer's business, and his neighbors appreciate and profit from his example.

A husband's positive example can stretch even further. The special relationship a father shares with his children reflects the relationship God the Father desires with mankind. Children's obedience to the *spiritual* Father will be greatly enhanced if they see a strong yet loving and caring *physical* father.

“A *good* man leaves an inheritance to his children's children” (Prov. 13:22). Although this verse mainly refers to leaving a monetary or physical inheritance, the principle has an overarching application. A proper husband and father impacts generations to follow.

To learn more about how to be a proper husband and father, order the free booklet *You Can Build a Happy Marriage* (available at rcg.org/ycbahlm) and the free book *Train Your Children God's Way* (available at rcg.org/tuyc), both written by editor-in-chief of this magazine, David C. Pack.

Determine to become a more effective husband and father—and see how your family can prosper! □

PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

and her that I have afflicted; and I will make her that halts a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the LORD shall reign over them in Mount Zion from henceforth, even forever. And you, O tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion [in Jerusalem], unto you shall it come, even the FIRST DOMINION; the *kingdom* shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem” (Mic. 4:4-8).

Focus on “first dominion”—connected to a “kingdom.” *Dominion* means “rule,” “ruler” and “realm” (*Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*). Another definition is “land a government or ruler controls” (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*). So “the LORD shall reign over them in mount Zion” (Mic. 4:7) in His “first dominion; the kingdom”! Zechariah 9:9 says: “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, your King comes unto you...” The dominion’s King—its head of state—is Jesus Christ!

The next verse shows the scope of this kingdom: “...His *dominion* shall be from [the Mediterranean] sea even to [the Dead] sea, and from the river [Jordan] even to the *ends of the earth*.” The boundaries describe Judah, but soon also the whole world—“the ends of the earth.”

Christ is not just interested in Jews, but rather all mankind, merely starting with Judah. No wonder He said in Matthew 13 that His kingdom starts as a tiny mustard seed but grows into a large tree: “Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, the kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof” (vs. 31-32).

Christ Builds His House

Next realize that Jesus Christ is often called “the BRANCH” in connection

with His first dominion. Zechariah uses this term twice: “...for, behold, I will bring forth My servant the BRANCH” (3:8). In Chapter 6 the same “BRANCH” oversees the Temple construction: “...Behold the Man whose name is The BRANCH; and He shall grow up out of His place, and He shall build the temple of the LORD: even He shall build the temple of the LORD; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne...” (vs. 12-13). Christ supplies the dimensions to the one “measuring the temple” (see Revelation 11) to ensure it is built to His exact specifications. This is because it is His house—the Temple of the Lord.

“ A WORLD GOVERNMENT under God is just over the horizon—much closer than anyone would believe! ”

Now more key verses from Jeremiah: “Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice *in the earth*” (23:5). Make yourself believe this. The magnitude of meaning is almost overwhelming. But it is true.

Notice what comes next: “In His days *Judah shall be saved*, and Israel [clearly a separate group of peoples] shall dwell safely: and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (vs. 6). Christ is plainly identified by three titles: “Branch,” “King” and “Lord Our Righteousness.” (Other scriptures show how Christ will govern during this period.)

Let’s summarize: Jesus Christ will *build a Temple*—in *Jerusalem*—

where He will reign as King and Lord of Righteousness over His first dominion—with His rule spreading to all nations after Judah is saved first—with all of this BEFORE the time of the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:21), not after. These things happen *in the last days*. If not, throw your Bible away. You cannot trust it because God does not mean what He says.

A WORLD GOVERNMENT under God is just over the horizon—much closer than anyone would believe!

Incredible Coming Utopia

The prophet Isaiah opens his 66 chapters with this: “The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning *Judah and Jerusalem*...” (1:1). This book is mostly about *these people*.

Chapter 11 speaks of the same period: “There shall come forth a Rod [Christ] out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots [Christ descended from David]; and the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; and shall make Him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears: but with righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth...” (vs. 1-4).

It is the poor and meek of the Earth who are *most* on Christ’s mind when He brings His kingdom. These are the people who most need attention and help *right away*. God knows this, and intends to bring it. Endless verses reveal this.

The chapter then gives a glimpse of an amazing, utopian time that is life in Christ’s first dominion—His rule BEFORE mankind rebels and requires world punishment: “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the



bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox” (vs. 6-7).

Earth’s worst predators—wolves, leopards, lions, bears and others—become harmless. They live alongside former prey. Of course, God must alter their instincts—and digestive systems so former carnivores can eat plants. Isaiah continues, “The sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ [adder’s] den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all *My holy mountain...*” (vs. 8-9). The most venomous snakes on Earth babysit infants! Like all other animals, they will not harm anyone—including by accident! And remember, God’s blessings are worldwide!

Continuing: “...the earth shall be *full* of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (vs. 9). God’s Word flows from His government in Jerusalem and blankets the *entire* world. All nations not only see and hear about God’s model nation Judah, but are also taught God’s Way. Some truly heed, but all comply.

Now chapter 35: “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God” (vs. 1-2).

What God brings far exceeds the remarkable human achievement of some Israeli scientists. To accommodate a large influx of Jews, the barren Negev—basically all of southern Israel—will be miraculously transformed to arable land, gardens and homes. And this is just one desert. Such a landscape would reflect God’s “glory” and “excellency.”

Verses 3 and 4 contain a message for Jews worldwide, now living in fear: “Strengthen you the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God

with a recompense; He will come and save you.” God wants Judah to take comfort. He brings salvation after vengeance.

Here is another awesome picture: “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing...” (vs. 5-6). All crippling conditions will be healed. Modern medicine will become obsolete!

Also, healing waters flow through now verdant former deserts: “...in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons [reptiles], where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes” (vs. 6-7).

Transportation systems will be greatly upgraded to meet God’s standards, with a magnificent highway the centerpiece. Let’s read: “A highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The Way of Holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there” (vs. 8-9).

The Temple Mount

Isaiah 60 presents a fuller picture of Judah’s future, starting with how God takes the Temple Mount. First, some central understanding. The Temple Mount does not belong to the Jews or Palestinians. GOD OWNS EVERYTHING, including what He calls “His dwelling place” (Psa. 76:2). He *temporarily* gave it to ancient Israel, until the nation’s disobedience caused Him to let it fall back to the Philistines—the modern Palestinians. The rightful owner—God!—will soon take back what is His—and in a BIG way—to glorify Himself. For the ultimate good of both peoples, God plans to use it Himself. He is doing this—not the Jews. Mere riders on a bus God is driving, neither side understands this!

How this happens was carefully designed by Almighty God to shock all peoples of Earth—making it unmistakable that He is *personally* and *visibly* entering the affairs of mankind as never before.

After the events of verses 1 and 2 of Isaiah 60, no one will doubt God’s existence. Every atheist will quickly realize how wrong he has been. Now an incredible picture: “Arise, shine; for your light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross [thick] darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon you, and His glory shall be seen upon you” (60:1-2).

Understand! Pitch black darkness is described—beyond a solar eclipse. Apparently even the moon and stars cease shining where it is night. But a brilliant light pierces this as Christ descends on Zion. At this point, God—the new King shrouded in a cloud (Isa. 4:5)—will be Zion’s undisputed possessor.

In time, people—including heads of state—come to view the amazing sight firsthand: “The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to you: your sons shall come from far, and your daughters shall be [as] nursed at your side” (60:3-4).

Resources that stagger the mind come to Zion and Judah: “...the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto you...” (vs. 5). This means minerals—precious metals locked in the oceans—but also abundant fish for food.

Continuing, “...the forces [more correctly wealth or resources] of the Gentiles shall come unto you...they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of the LORD” (vs. 5-6).

Why? God answers: “...they shall come up with acceptance on My altar, and I will glorify the house of My glory” (vs. 7). This colossal transfer of wealth helps fund the most magnificent structure ever conceived! But

it also pays for much more than a single verse can contain.

In Jerusalem

Now another glimpse into this time—and it is startling. Isaiah 60 verse 8 asks: “Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?” “Who” connotes personages. These are angels, and maybe with human riders. Christ can travel instantly anywhere in the universe, but the Bible shows He travels with angels (Psa. 68:17).

Now a fascinating vision of Christ’s throne witnessed by the prophet Ezekiel: “I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north [the part of the universe where God lives], a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire. Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man. And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings. And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf’s foot: and they sparkled like the color of burnished brass. And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings. Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward. As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle” (1:4-10). The passage next describes Christ’s throne above their heads. The picture was so mind-boggling to Ezekiel that he “saw it” and “fell upon his face” (vs. 28).

Angels fly—like clouds through the sky or doves swooping to roost. This suggests being *visible* in Judah, but everywhere soon after. If Christ uses angels for transportation, His servants might also. The monumental commission they must carry out may

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WITH DAVID C. PACK



The “first dominion,” a term found in the biblical book of Micah, is part of a prophecy soon to be fulfilled. Bible scholars have not been able to understand its meaning—even though it has life-changing, EARTH-SHATTERING implications for all nations and people today.

The knowledge of this prophecy has been lost for centuries—yet you can know what it means!

To understand these soon-coming momentous events, watch the series on the subject on *The World to Come with David C. Pack* at worldtocome.org. It provides an in-depth explanation of the “first dominion” prophecy and reveals your part in it.

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Step back and ask: Where else are you hearing these things? Any of them? They are not my ideas. God inspired prophets to record them long ago. Isaiah wrote 2,600 years ago. But his words *now* carry urgency. Also ask: Would God perform such extraordinary prophecies without first making them known? The God of the Bible announces in advance what He does.

God is the most logical being in the universe. He does “all things... decently and in order” (I Cor. 14:40). Surely, a plan of such enormous magnitude would be executed with precision—including making everyone involved aware of His purpose. Read Amos 3:7. Secrets revealed to prophets of old are being opened to you. Stay focused. This will soon be personal to everyone!

Isaiah shows how Jews are repatriated from abroad, bringing their assets: “Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring your sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD your God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because He has glorified you [Zion, not the people]” (60:9). But all nations contribute: “...strangers shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister unto you: for in My wrath I smote you, but in My favor have I had mercy on you” (vs. 10). Favor means “delight” (*Strong's*). God delights in extending mercy.

What about visitors to Jerusalem? “Your gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto you the forces [wealth] of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought” (vs. 11). A constant stream of income and precious commodities flows into Jerusalem—day and night. Kings may personally oversee such transfers—visiting to see the center of the world’s attention.

Some will want to help. Those who do not pay the greatest price: “The nation and kingdom that will not serve you shall *perish*; yes, those nations shall be *utterly wasted*” (vs. 12). Wise

King Solomon recorded, “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Ecc. 8:11).

When “sentences” *are* “executed speedily,” the vast majority will think hard before rebelling. Probably only a few will, and others will witness what happens. The Bible states, “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof” (I Cor. 10:26). Remember, God owns EVERYTHING. He can seize anything He wants—whenever and from whomever He chooses. His purpose and logic are always perfect—and benefit *all nations*.

Even Lebanon—where 150,000 terrorist rockets point at Judah today—contributes: “The glory of Lebanon shall come unto you, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together...” (Isa. 60:13). Timber from world-famous forests will be transported south to Jerusalem for the Temple. God uses Lebanon’s magnificent wood “to beautify the place of [His] sanctuary” and “make the place of [His] feet glorious” (vs. 13).

No More Violence

Israel’s adversaries “shall come bending unto you; and all they that despised you shall bow themselves down at the soles of your feet...” (Isa. 60:14). Imagine today’s bitter foes doing this! They recognize Christ’s presence in Jerusalem: “They shall call you, The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel” (vs. 14). Peace, happiness and unity prevail between former adversaries.

Notice that God stops today’s epidemic of anti-Semitism: “Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through you, I will make you an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations” (vs. 15).

Next comes more about foreign funding—and salvation: “You shall also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shall suck the breast of kings: and you shall know that I the LORD am your Savior and your Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob” (vs. 16). Resources are so abundant that God promises, “For

brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron...” (vs. 17).

Business and tithing are conducted God’s Way: “I will also make your officers peace, and your exactors [leaders and revenue collectors] righteousness” (vs. 17).

Imagine this utopian peace: “Violence shall *no more* be heard in your land, *wasting* nor *destruction* within your borders; but you shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise” (vs. 18). Understand. Not just less violence and destruction. They are gone! Because the God whose “eyes... run to and fro throughout the whole earth” (II Chron. 16:9) prevents *all* crime.

Isaiah 60’s capstone pictures nationwide improvement of character—and the byproducts: “Your people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the LORD will hasten it in [its] time” (vs. 21-22).

Stunning prophecies are opening to you—stupefying things from the Word of God that no human being, me included, could begin to conceive, let alone bring to pass. These things will come very soon to those Jesus called “*this* generation” (Matt. 24:34)—our generation.

As “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Rev. 19:11-21), Christ will rule all nations as they have never been ruled before. This new King will be loving, merciful, faithful, absolutely perfect in godly character, full of wisdom and all knowledge, honest and filled with love for those He governs. He will never compromise on God’s Law, the way of outgoing concern for others. Yet He will administer it in every nation with compassion, love and patience, granting forgiveness to all who seek it.

It will be a world full of happy, fulfilled human beings finally living in peace, led by Jesus Christ and the saints. This coming utopia will soon be a reality! God speed this day! □

SOCIETY & LIFESTYLES

Spike in Antisemitism in Europe Linked to Mass Exodus



■ **RACIAL VIOLENCE:** France's minister of the interior, Bernard Cazeneuve, exits a synagogue in Marseille, France, during a visit to the Jewish community after an anti-Semitic attack occurred there (Jan. 14, 2016).

PHOTO: ANNE-CHRISTINE POUJOLAT/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Increasing numbers of Jews are abandoning Europe to relocate to Israel following a surge in violent acts involving antisemitism, according to a study released by Tel Aviv University's Kantor Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry.

The findings reveal a 38 percent increase of violent acts against Jews or Jewish institutions (schools, synagogues, community centers, cemeteries, memorial sites, etc.) in 2014 compared to the previous year. The incidents included arson, vandalism and direct threats.

CNSNews.com reported: "Overall, the Kantor Center registered 766 violent anti-Semitic acts 'perpetrated with or without weapons and by arson, vandalism or direct threats against Jewish persons or institutions such as synagogues, community centers, schools, cemeteries and monuments as well as private property' during 2014. This is an increase of 38% compared to 2013, in which 212 fewer violent incidents were registered (554 total violent incidents were registered in 2013)."

Nearly 10,000 European Jews moved to Israel in 2015, which is twice the number that moved in 2013. Most of these—8,000—left France, which has experienced several high-profile attacks on Jewish communities in recent years. □

HEALTH ISSUES

Study: Over One-third of Americans Lack Sleep

Researchers at the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention discovered that more "than a third of Americans say they are not getting enough sleep," *NBC News* reported.

According to the CDC's weekly report, "Sleeping less than seven hours per night is associated with increased risk for obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, coronary heart disease, stroke, frequent mental distress, and all-cause mortality" (*ibid.*).

Human beings need sleep—it is crucial for physical, mental and emotional health. This need varies depending on age: adults require seven to eight hours, teenagers need nine to 10 hours, and school-age children require at least 10 hours of sleep per day.

Not getting ample rest can affect whether one can think clearly, reduce one's ability to react to matters that need focus and attention, and diminish the body's ability to produce hormones. Regular rest allows the body to repair cells, fight infections,

and build muscle mass. Sleep deprivation increases stress levels and reduces the body's capacity to stave off illness.

Sleep deprivation can manifest itself in lack of focus, which can affect job performance; moodiness and irritability, which can rupture personal relationships; and high blood pressure and heart disease.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends sticking to a consistent sleep schedule and avoiding caffeine, nicotine, exercise, or consuming large meals or alcohol before going to bed. The government agency also suggested finding a way to relax before sleeping (such as taking a hot bath), going to bed and waking up at the same time each day, and removing or turning off gadgets that produce noises or bright light (such as televisions, computers and cellphones).

Doctors suggest seeking medical advice if you are having trouble sleeping. □

Starvation in Syria

As many as 500,000 Syrians are suffering severe food shortages caused by blockades from government or rebel forces. The International Red Cross, the United Nations, and other humanitarian aid groups have begun large-scale operations to provide food for citizens living in these areas. □

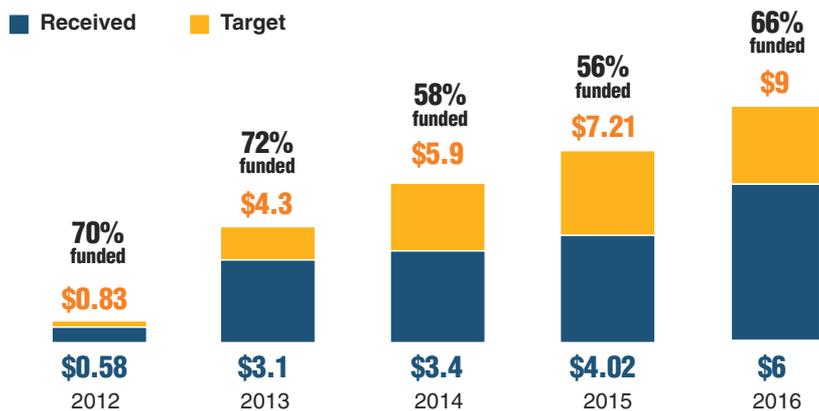
Gravity Unmasked

For the first time, scientists confirmed Albert Einstein's theory that gravity is the result of space-time bending from the mass of an object. The discovery, made at Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory in Washington, D.C., occurred when researchers detected a ripple in space-time, which is believed to have been caused by the collision of two black holes. □

Humanitarian Aid Shortfalls for Displaced Syrians

Each year, the United Nations sets a target for worldwide funding to support Syrians fleeing war. Funds received have not met any of those yearly goals.

Funding targets and shortfalls, in billions



Source: AP, FTS
Graphic: Staff, Tribune News Service



Youth Dissent

Almost one in 10 college freshmen are expected to participate in a protest this year—the highest level in nearly 50 years—according to an annual survey and report by the University of California, Los Angeles. The report cited tension over racial inequality and rising cost of tuition, as well as increased youth activism, as reasons for the trend.

The Washington Post reported that a string of significant protests last year, when students “took over the president’s office at Princeton, demanded the resignation of Ithaca College’s president, and forced out the chancellor and president of the entire University of Missouri system,” supports the finding. □

Religious Reunion

Pope Francis and Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill signed a declaration calling on the world community to unite against violence and defend persecuted Christians during the first meeting between the two heads of religion in over 1,000 years. In the declaration, which was translated and released on the Vatican’s website, the church leaders stated: “We are not competitors, but brothers, and this concept must guide all our mutual actions as well as those directed to the outside world. We urge Catholics and Orthodox in all countries to learn to live together in peace and love, and to be ‘in harmony with one another’ (Rm 15:5).” □



■ **RELIGIOUS REUNION:** Pope Francis and the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill, exchange documents during a historic meeting in Havana, Cuba (Feb. 12, 2016).

PHOTO: GREGORIO BORGIA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Mental Power

The human brain’s capacity to store memories is 10 times higher than previously thought, according to a study by researchers at the Salk Institute. The study, which was published in the biomedical journal *eLife*, stated that the average human mind can store one petabyte, or one quadrillion bytes, of information—the equivalent of 20 million filing cabinets filled with text or over 13 years of high-definition video. □



■ **POLITICAL SHIFT:** Members of Myanmar's parliament attend an inaugural session of the newly established lower house in Naypyidaw, Myanmar (Feb. 1, 2016).

PHOTO: YE AUNG THU/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Myanmar Turns Democratic

For the first time in over 50 years, Myanmar's first freely elected parliament held a session to begin selecting the nation's next president by April. The nation had a military-only parliament beginning in 1962, when a coup d'état overturned the democratic parliament. Despite the event, violence between government forces and democratic insurgents continues. □



■ **MEAGER HARVEST:** A Zimbabwean girl gathers some of the few remaining maize cobs in the family's granary in Bindura, Zimbabwe (Sept. 2, 2015).

PHOTO: JEKESAI NJIKIZANA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Zimbabwe's Drought

The number of Zimbabweans in need of urgent food aid due to severe national drought has reached one quarter of the population—over 3.5 million people—according to the World Food Program. President Robert Mugabe declared a state of disaster for the country to help speed up the flow of aid to needy communities affected by the crisis, now in its second year. □

Greater Target

Mexico's oil companies have been increasingly targeted by organized crime as cartels seek to make profit from stolen oil. Incidents of oil thievery increased nearly 44 percent in 2014 compared to the previous year, amounting to \$1.29 billion of stolen oil, according to a report from Mexico's state-run oil company Pemex. Fuel theft has also caused increased deaths and injuries caused by explosions and environmental damage caused by leaks and spills. □



PHOTO: CC BY 2.0/PETE

Potential Pandemic

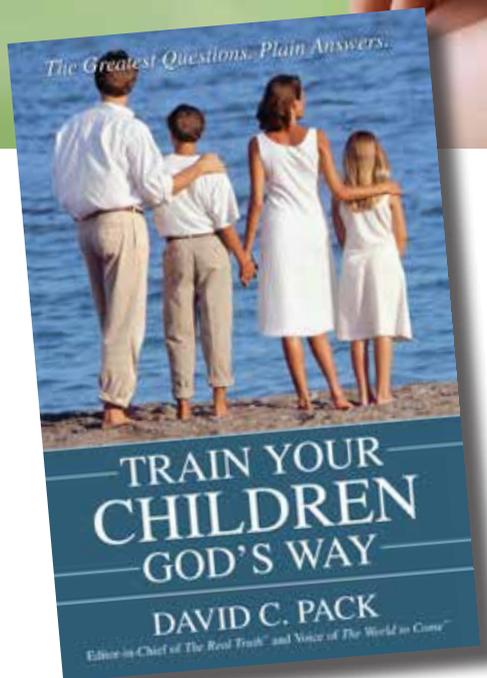
The United Nations warned that society is unprepared to respond to disease outbreaks, which could risk millions of lives in the event of another pandemic. The international agency reported on its website that "a virulent strain of an airborne influenza virus could spread to all major global capitals within 60 days and kill more than 33 million people within 250 days." □



Plastic Oceans

Earth's oceans will have more plastic than fish by weight by 2050 as the rate of plastic dumping is expected to accelerate from nine million tons per year to nearly 18 million by 2030, according to a report from the World Economic Forum. The United Nations Environment Program estimated that plastic, which takes hundreds of years to degrade, causes \$13 billion of damage annually to marine ecosystems. □

Children *Do* Have an Instruction Manual!



The world brims with ideas on how to rear children. Each year, 3,000 parenting books are published in the United States and there are half a million available on the Internet library Google Books. These guides can be difficult to interpret, as they offer a wide range of competing childrearing “rules.” They may contain interesting facts, quotes and points, but none bring the solutions that parents long for—and desperately need.

Man has not known that there is an INSTRUCTION MANUAL that contains all the information necessary to rear children the right way. This inspired Book—the Bible—strips away the confusion, division, competing traditions, and ignorance that have shrouded the truth about childrearing.

To learn what God’s Word says about parenting, order a free copy of *Train Your Children God’s Way* at reg.org/tuyc today. It pieces together principles from God’s Instruction Manual and provides the keys to successfully rearing children.