

Seek the Welfare of the City

By Bill Johnson



Despite the many travails that surround us - and there are many - God is gracious and merciful to us His people. May God help us to learn to draw from Him and to do His will.

America is embattled and there are forces that mean it to be so. I don't believe that God is pleased with those who tend to evaluate circumstances without a full look at what, as many are saying, is America's most ominous time since the 1940s.

Recently my friend Jim Simpson (author of "Who Was Karl Marx") encouraged me to listen to a message by Pastor Stacey Shiflett out of Dundalk, MD (Calvary Baptist Church). His message is entitled *Modern-Day Molech* (youtu.be/UztGqEusNGQ), a convicting message based on Leviticus verses 20:1-5, which follows: "The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 'Say to the people of Israel, Any one of the people of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn in Israel who gives any of his children to Molech shall surely be put to death. The people of the land shall stone him with stones. I myself will set my face against that man and will cut him off from among his people, because he has given one of his children to Molech, to make my sanctuary unclean and to profane my holy name. And if the people of the land do at all close their eyes to that man when he gives one of his children to Molech, and do not put him to death, then I will set

my face against that man and against his clan and will cut them off from among their people, him and all who follow him in whoring after Molech.'"

According to Christianity.com, "*Molech is usually depicted as a bull-headed anthropomorphic deity, which was heated until glowing like flames. Then, as the pinnacle of worship, an infant would be placed in his hands while his devotees listened to the infant cry as it burned to death before their eyes. However, some Israelites apparently did so, which grieved the Lord tremendously.*" Pastor Stacey Shiflett names a number of modern day Molechs to whom American moms and dads are sacrificing their children. **SEE Steve Huston's powerful article on page 3.**

We are now two months away from what some say could very well be the last legitimate election we will ever have. In some cases, fraud has been recognized and addressed. There are Soros financially-backed Secretaries of State in place in battleground states declaring that all has been done rightly when hard, objective evidence shows otherwise, i.e. Dominion machines, drop boxes, no ID, early and late voting. Election integrity, though, is hard because the human heart is hard, and there is much corruption and chaos in the land - and many have been deceived and co-opted.

Other countries have been down this path before where once they had relative freedom and a measure of prosperity until they succumbed to Marxist ideology. Some have reported that London has fallen. Venezuela, once a nation of peace and prosperity, has been brought to its knees economically as corruption and voter fraud has brought massive unrest to this once stable country.

Look around. Are we paying attention to the expanding unrest, criminality, child mutilations, abortions, sex trafficking, persecution of Jews? In terms of the upcoming election, not voting or doing a "write-in vote" is akin to doing nothing - turning our eyes away from the degradation. However, there are numbers of people who for a variety of reasons are stuck, confused over whether to vote or not vote and particularly conservative voters who seemingly just cannot or will not vote for Donald Trump. In the midst of laboring over this significant issue, I read the following quote from Christian author/professor Robert Gagnon. "*A [Facebook] friend commented: 'Trump is running a mean and idiotic campaign. Something is wrong with him. I'm voting for neither.'*"

"*My [Gagnon's] response: '... Your failure to cast an effective vote against a ticket whose two chief idols are abortion and oppressive 'LGBTQ' policies and court appointments, which effectively amounts to*

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The DNC Proves Vance's Point

By Chris Johnson



In the days after J.D. Vance was announced as Donald Trump's running mate, a comment the new VP candidate had made several years prior made up the bulk of Democrats' response. "...it's just a basic fact — you look at Kamala Harris, Pete Buttigieg, AOC — the entire future of the Democrats is controlled by people without children. And how does it make any sense that we've turned our country over to people who don't really have a direct stake in it?" Vance had told this to Tucker Carlson in 2021 in response to backlash to a speech he had given at a conservative conference on the declining birthrate in our country.

Pointing out that parents who will have to watch their children endure the consequences of their political decisions might have a different perspective than a self-centered, power hungry politician or activist of course rubbed Democrats the wrong way, leading feminist celebrity icons like Jennifer Aniston and Glenn Close to speak out against Vance.

In response to the hoopla being raised about his three-year-old comments, J.D. Vance appeared on former FOX News host and 2016 presidential debate moderator Megyn Kelly's podcast. Here's what he said, "*I'm actually glad the left has attacked me over this because I think it started an important conversation about how our society became so profoundly anti-family. The simple point that I made is that having children — becoming a father; becoming a mother — I really do think it changes your perspective in a pretty profound way. This is something, of course, we have recognized for hundreds of years in this country and that human civilization has always recognized.*"

"It's not a criticism of people who don't have children... This is about criticizing the Democratic Party for becoming anti-family and anti-child."

This pill from Vance is hard to swallow for us pro-lifers, especially when the top of the ticket orchestrated the defanging of the Republican platform on the issue of opposing abortion and banning it at the federal level.

Yet Vance's interview with Megyn Kelly signals that rather than wanting to be seen as the "anti-abortion party," this new iteration of the GOP under Trump and Vance wants to be seen as the *pro-family* party: "*The Democrats in the past five to 10 years have become anti-family. It's built into their policy, it's built into the way they talk about parents and children, and it's time that we call that out,*" he said. "*It's one thing to recognize there are people who don't have children through no fault or choice of their own, but it's something else to build a political movement invested, theoretically, in the future of this country when not a single one of them actually has any physical commitment to the future of this country.*"

The state of parenthood and families in the U.S. ought to be recognized as a "crisis," and he wants the Republican Party to run on dealing with that crisis. "*We should send the signal to the culture that we are the pro-family party, and we're going to back it up with real policy. We're the party of parents, we're the party of kids, and we want to fight for parents and children to have good lives.*"

In contrast, the Democrat platform promises to "vigorously oppose state and federal bans on gender affirming healthcare" — that translates to things like hormone therapy and transgender surgeries, including on children who will live out their lives suffering the consequences of their childish whims. hilariously, the DNC neglected to read through their own platform before hitting "publish" on the first day of the convention. It still reads as if Biden is the nominee, but we can be sure that Harris' plans are no more family-friendly: "*President Biden, Vice President Harris, and Democrats are committed to restoring the reproductive rights Trump ripped away. **With a Democratic Congress, we will pass national legislation to make Roe the law of the land again.** We will strengthen access to contraception so every woman who needs it is able to get and afford it. We will protect a*

woman's right to access IVF. We will repeal the Hyde Amendment. And in his second term, President Biden will continue to support access to FDA-approved medication abortion, appoint leaders at the FDA who respect science, and appoint judges who uphold fundamental freedoms."

Even more to J.D. Vance's point - Planned Parenthood, which knows they will be welcomed with open arms, showed up at the Democratic National Convention last week. They came with a mobile unit to provide vasectomies and abortifacient drugs — and they were reportedly booked solid for the 2 days they were there. Could it get any more anti-child and anti-family than that? In this culture war, this political conflict, the next generation are the ones suffering casualties.

Trump and Vance's attempt to rebrand the GOP as "pro-family," rather than "pro-life," has its own group of casualties, tragically. While the left, led by actress Jennifer Aniston, attacked the VP candidate for his assumed support for a ban on in-vitro fertilization (IVF) which freezes batches of embryos and most often abandons those remaining after an implantation takes, Trump and Vance have voiced vigorous support for the procedure.

IVF may be used to grow families, but it also results in the death of human beings at the very beginning stage of their development. So, while it may be a pro-family position, it is not pro-life. Being anti-family and pro-life, or pro-family and anti-life, are incompatible positions, but there's no need to choose between being pro-life and pro-family. The Republican Party *should* lean into the messaging that kids are a blessing; traditional families are the foundation of a healthy society, but that also means acknowledging that killing babies is *always* a wicked thing. Unbelievably, this may be a culturally unpopular position, but we must not back away from it or be afraid to stand on that truth.

We're no longer fighting to end Roe v. Wade, but to keep it from coming back — and stronger. Still, we must not stop fighting to **gain ground** against this human rights atrocity. Call it pro-life, pro-family, anti-abortion, etc. but we can't stop pushing until the human sacrifice is ended.

Molech's Modern-Day Manifestations

By Steve Huston



Finally reaching the mountain's ridge, the young Israelite father looks beyond the babe he holds in his arms, down into the darkness of the valley. As he begins the descent to his destination, his ears are assaulted by the shrill cries of babies and the screams of children mixed with the loud thunderous banging of drums and clashing of cymbals. The sounds around him reflect the storm within; he halts momentarily, questioning his own ability to offer such a precious sacrifice. Yet, with each footstep drawing him nearer to Molech's alter, the human cries grow fainter, drowned out by the cacophony being created by the high priests of this false god. The reality of death and loss is hushed by the ceremonies surrounding them; the warning of Jehovah, the one true God, is shoved deep into the recesses of his mind, only to resurface after the false promises refuse to fulfill this father's hopes and he recognizes that his sacrifice is only loss.

Misplacing his trust, he places his son into the hands of the monstrous idol Molech. This father, representative of so many others, will witness his son writhe in pain while he burns, but will not hear his cries. He will return home both empty-handed and empty-hearted.

This is one possible scenario, describing those who would break the command given in Leviticus 18:1. *"And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the Lord."*

Today, as in the scenario above, many mothers make the arduous journey to "Molech" in their minds, as they decide to kill the child which grows within them; neither their false hopes nor this child will ever come to fruition. Thanks to technology, these barbarous acts take place within the silence of the womb. No one hears the cries

that are present, except the Heavenly Father, theirs and our Creator. As a society that has for too long been asleep begins to awaken to these silent cries—when we start to come to our senses—there is the "shout out your abortion" crowd, and the loud misnomer of "women's reproductive health care/rights," to act as the priest's beating drum so that many cannot hear the silent cry of the child and go back to their sleep of apathy.

From a young age, we inherently recognize the dignity of human life from conception to natural death. Sadly, large portions of our society are being taught to reject this inspired, inner absolute truth. The Left goes to unbelievable lengths, deceiving many into believing that this absolute truth is relative, it depends on the situation or the person. They twist truth and attempt to redirect the rightful object of your compassion – the baby's life – to any number of other things. They would even have us believe that their desire to murder this innocent person – up to the moment of birth – is their right. "Civilized decency" doesn't allow me to describe in detail what is done to these souls; and one could be arrested if they tortured a dog in the same manner.

BUT THERE ARE OTHER MODERN-DAY MANIFESTATIONS OF MOLECH AS WELL!

Some in Jewish tradition believe that the phrase "pass through the fire to Molech" refers to children who were made to walk between two large fires; this was a form of consecration, a dedication to this false god. Some may have been scarred physically, but all of these children were scarred emotionally and spiritually.

In similar fashion, we have many modern-day manifestations of Molech. With little regard for consequence, many parents are either making or allowing their most precious gift and responsibility from God, their children, to walk "through the fire to Molech." In essence, it's a form of consecration to this false god.

It would seem that any child who makes it through the birthing process without being handed over to Molech must then strive to

not drown in a sea of confusion. Progressive "righteousness" is an insatiable religion that has attempted to proselytize from every corner of our society. Their path that "passes through the fire to Molech" brings confusion by changing definitions, calling good evil and evil good, shaming through made-up words, and sub-humanizing any who would stand against their "religious" agenda.

Two years ago, Pastor Stacey Shiflett of Calvary Baptist Church (Dundalk, MD) gave a stirring message in which he listed some modern-day manifestations of Molech. As I share some of his and my own observations, I pray our hearts will break over these who are broken and our consciences would be searched even as they are searching for something that will bring peace to their pain. Our nation is feeding Molech in so many ways.

Undocumented Immigration: While writing this article, a report was given by the DHS Inspector General stating that over 290,000 children have come across the southern border illegally under the Biden administration who are unaccounted for. ICE has *"no assurance they are safe from trafficking, exploitation, or forced labor."* Only God knows their names, where they're going, if they're safe or if they're sex slaves.

Children Services/Courts: I've seen several documentaries which spell out the abuse which too often takes place throughout this system by placing foster children in immoral and ungodly homes. This has only gotten worse as Christian families are being overlooked in lieu of those who vie to place these helpless children in LGBT foster and adoptive homes.

Government Schools: At younger and younger ages children are being sexualized and the normalization of perversion and immorality is thrust upon them. They are taught to disregard, despise, and blaspheme the one true God while being taught to worship many false gods, including the god of self. Even though there are isolated instances of "traditional" teaching, the curriculums are still inundated with LGBT,

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Molech's Modern-Day Manifestations

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Marxist, and ungodly ideologies. Our Christian heritage is demeaned while communism is praised. It's a demonic agenda which attempts to feed the false god Molech.

Social Media: "If you let your child get on social media...[it] will rob them of their innocence, [it] will rob them of their mental and virginity...It's unbelievable how messed up they'll be...The glorification of sin [on social media] is a modern-day Molech. The vulnerability to sexual predators is unimaginable." (Pastor Shiflett)

Sodomite, Transgender, and Bestial Agenda: Telling our children, before they even truly understand what being a boy or girl is about, that they might be something other than what God created them to be, even an animal. Hormone-blocking drugs, gender mutilating surgeries, and litter boxes in the classroom are nothing more than manifestations of Molech.

Entertainment/Media: The above points seem to manifest themselves in many movies or television shows. As our children feed on these, they are being fed to Molech. Take great care in what goes before your children's eyes and into their minds. This would include video games. One grandmother recently wrote to me, "I see my grands being eaten up by the Xbox..." Satan's hunger for the hearts and minds of our children knows no bounds. Not every video game is bad, but consider what your children are learning from them.

Artificial Intelligence: This is an ever-growing concern with its many uses, from search engines to kindergarten "companion." These Large language models (LLMs) are Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems; they exert an increasing influence on society and culture. According to an article on RealClear Wire: *Every Leading Large Language*

Model Leans Left Politically. With AI intertwining its Leftist digital fingers around nearly every aspect of our children's lives, it's feeding our children to Molech.

We are aware of these problems and how they either have the potential to or are moving our children "through the fire to Molech." **But are we aware to what extent we are neglecting God's warning in Leviticus 20:4-5?** How much do we in "any ways hide [our] eyes from the man" who "giveth his seed unto Molech"? Have we grown used to it? Are we apathetic regarding the physical, emotional, and spiritual plight of the children around us? Do we participate as an example in leading them to Molech?

The progressive drum-beating and cymbal-crashing cannot be allowed to drown the cries of these image-bearers of God. We must do what we can to keep our children – nationally and individually – from "pass[ing] through the fire to Molech." We must speak the truth IN LOVE dispelling the deceptions of this age, or else we, ourselves, are nothing more than a "clanging cymbal."

John Wesley said, "Making an open stand against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness which overspreads our land as a flood is one of the noblest ways of confessing Christ in the face of His enemies." And Joseph Parker warned, "The man whose little sermon is 'Repent' sets himself against his age, and will for the time being be battered mercilessly by the age whose moral tone he challenges. There is but one end for such a man – 'off with his head.' You had better not try to preach repentance until you have pledged your head to Heaven."

We have been entrusted with the care of the souls of our children. We must cherish our children and our God-given responsibility for them. Instead of turning a blind eye to the snuffing out or the suffering of these image bearers of God; instead of allowing this culture of death to bang their drums so loudly that the silent cries are not heard; we must pledge our head to Heaven, being a voice of righteousness and being a light that points away from Molech and to our Heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ!

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state-sponsored child abuse, perpetuated by an attenuation of your civil liberties and by an illegal policy advancing illegal immigration to turn red states blue, the most radical Leftist ticket in the history of this country, is a manifestation of sin, not righteousness. You are concerned about 'mean'? A Harris/Walz presidency will prosecute peaceful pro-life protestors and doctors who blow the whistle on children's hospitals that are giving cross-gender hormones and mutilation surgery to minors. They are also for schools lying to parents about their child's transgender ideation and transformation, encouraged by a one-sided forcible brainwashing into 'LGBTQ' ideology. Your standards are completely skewed. [Gagnon authored the acclaimed book The Bible and Homosexuality.]

In closing, Leviticus 20:1-5: *God judges that man who turns his eyes away from the depravity ... As citizens, voting is something we can do. The apostle Peter says Christians are "exiles on the earth" (1 Peter 1:1). Therefore, are we not to take seriously the prophet Jeremiah's exhortation to the Jewish people living in exile in Babylon: "Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare, you will find your welfare" (Jeremiah 29:7)?*

American Decency Frontline
Vol. XXXVIII, Issue IX
Published monthly by
American Decency Association

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What's Past is Prologue

By Lisa Van Houten



In the epitome of irony, the opening statement of the Democratic Party platform reads: *“Our nation is at an inflection point. What kind of America will we be? A land of more freedom, or less freedom? More rights or fewer?”* It’s laughable that Democrats - who have weaponized the DOJ and the FBI against pro-lifers, parents, and their political opponents; seek to censor conservative speech; and have just anointed the most leftist presidential ticket in American history – claim that they will protect freedom. However, they do have one thing right; we *are* at a crossroads and our liberty may very well hinge on the outcome of this election.

“What’s past is prologue,” Shakespeare told us, and looking at the past record of Kamala Harris and Tim Walz gives a frightening picture of what America could easily look like if they hold the reins of power. The only freedom Harris and Walz are interested in is the “freedom” to murder the unborn up to the moment of birth (and after) and the “freedom” to allow children to mutilate their bodies in a delusional quest to change their gender.

Harris (purposefully) failed as border czar, but has taken on the role of abortion czar with zeal, making abortion a top issue of her campaign and even becoming the first presidential candidate to campaign at an abortion facility. As governor, Tim Walz signed the most radical legislation that allows for unlimited abortion and even approved a bill to let babies die who survive an abortion. Walz is so pro-abortion that, as he himself proudly stated, *“My record is so pro-choice Nancy Pelosi asked me if I should tone it down.”*

Harris, who often makes appearances with drag queens, holds positions which align with what Walz already implemented in Minnesota. Walz issued an executive order ensuring that children must be allowed to receive irreversible genital-mutilating surgeries and dangerous cross-sex hormones.

Walz made Minnesota a “sanctuary state” for minors from other states to come to for transgender “treatment” without parental permission. Walz also signed a law allowing the state to seize custody of a child whose parents refuse to go along with their child’s gender confusion.

Harris-Walz’s other authoritarian policies are straight out of the Marxist ideology Harris’ father taught at Stanford and the socialist policies Walz has repeatedly praised, after having visited Communist China 30 times. Walz even chose to get married on the 5th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre so he, as he stated, would “have a date he’ll always remember,” then honeymooned in China.

Harris has long supported the leftist agenda such as banning fossil fuels, continuing her administration’s open border policy, as well as advocating for taxpayer-funded healthcare and a pathway to citizenship for illegals. Walz is in lockstep with Harris, having already implemented much of her agenda in Minnesota. He’s mandated that public utilities generate 80% carbon-free electricity by 2030 and 100% by 2040. He also gives taxpayer-funded healthcare and free college tuition to illegal immigrants and allows them to receive driver’s licenses (which also makes it easier for illegal aliens to fraudulently vote, having a state-issued I.D.).

While her campaign and the propaganda media are striving to paint Harris as a moderate, Kamala herself has not disavowed her past agenda. Her very first policy position as presidential candidate was to lean in to her socialist beliefs, calling for Soviet-style price controls - basically a government takeover of the economy. Such government control of the food industry, which communist regimes have instituted, has always led to mass shortages, hunger, and unrest. Helen Raleigh, an immigrant from communist China, responded: *“Government-imposed price control is a terrible idea because it makes the economy worse by causing shortages. Everyone who survived socialism/communism knows this: if the store shelves are empty, it doesn’t matter how low the government claims the price of bread is.”*

Rather than recognizing that high prices are the result of the sky-rocketing inflation that her administration caused, Harris is shifting the blame, claiming the food industry is engaged in “price-gouging” - yet the profit margin of grocery stores is only 1.8%. Government bureaucrats telling grocery stores how much they can sell milk for would have a crippling effect on our entire economy – from farmers all the way up the supply chain to consumers. Even the liberal Washington Post acknowledged: *“It’s hard to exaggerate how bad this policy is.”* Yet the instinct of Kamala Harris is for absolute government control. This aligns with her other socialist positions such as socialized healthcare, putting the federal government in control of all healthcare decisions. We’ve seen how well that’s worked in countries which have gone down this socialist road – a steep decline in the quality of care and a dramatic increase in wait time for treatment.

Under Kamala Harris, we won’t have more freedom, but less – including the 2nd Amendment guarantee of the right to bear arms. She has advocated for an unconstitutional mandatory gun confiscation program and a ban on semiautomatic rifles through executive order. It’s important to note, as one commentator stated: *“From the USSR to China to Venezuela, first they come for the guns, then they come for you.”* Don’t think it can’t happen here. In 1970, Venezuela was a democracy and one of the richest countries in the world. In 1998 the Venezuelan people elected socialist Hugo Chavez. In 2004, private healthcare was replaced with socialized healthcare; 2009, private gun ownership was banned; 2014, opposition leaders were imprisoned; 2016, food/healthcare shortages became widespread; 2017, their Constitution and elections were suspended; 2019, unarmed citizens were massacred by their own government. It took only one generation of “progressive” leadership to turn a free and prosperous country into a socialist cesspool.

Harris and Walz don’t believe in more freedom for Americans. What they do believe in is power and government control of the people. And if Americans don’t learn from the history of nations who lost liberty and received tyranny, we may be doomed to repeat their fate.

As We Develop Digital Devices, Are We Devolving Our Society?

By Chris Johnson



With the fast-paced nature of modern life, it's easy to lose sight of how much of our day-to-day experiences are new to humanity. What we eat, what we drink, how we work, the medicines we take, what we do for fun, the sounds we hear, the light waves we see, our vehicles, the materials our homes are made of, the materials our clothes are made of, etc. etc. – the thousands of years of mankind preceding us never experienced and wouldn't be able to imagine.

In the millennia of human history, a change to any one of those things would have been considered momentous. In 2024, we are so used to these conditions of our environment changing, that we get impatient when they don't.

When I replaced my 2004 pickup with a 2013, one of the biggest things I was excited about was the ability to connect my phone to my vehicle with Bluetooth. When my wife got a newer vehicle last year, I had to learn to stop reaching for the ignition, and look for the start *button*. I drove a newer model vehicle lately and found that shifters have been replaced with little paddles for Drive, Reverse, Neutral, and Park.

When we went appliance shopping a few years ago, we ran across a "smart fridge" equipped with cameras inside so you wouldn't have to open the door just to look for something. The tablet built into the door allowed you to make lists that would sync to your phone.

My brother, who's a contractor, was telling me recently about the \$8,000 toilet he'd installed in a client's bathroom. The seat is warmed and automatically goes up and down so that it can be touch free, and doubtless there are many other bells and whistles none of us ever knew we needed in a toilet as well.

How about cell phones? It wasn't that long ago that batteries could be removed and cracked screens easily replaced, or that Blackberries and Palm Pilots were the only names in "smart phones."

Rarely, however, have we looked back at these momentous changes and developments to see whether they've impacted our lives for the better or for the worse. We simply adapt and await the next development.

But perhaps, after decades of technological advancement and development, we're finally in a position to look back and consider which versions actually served us best. Recently, a video was going around the social sites of a pickup truck Toyota was introducing on the world market. It has no frills – no touch screens, no Bluetooth, no digital displays – and it was being absolutely drooled over. For many pickup truck drivers, their vehicle is a tool and they miss the simple usability of previous generations of vehicles.

There's also a rising demand for new, stripped-down mobile phone options, like the Lite phone, or the Unlocked phone which offer curated capabilities so that users can avoid the distractions and addictive nature of Android and Apple smart phones.

Just as most of us probably don't see the need for cameras in our refrigerators, or self-lifting toilet seats, or to revolutionize the shifter levers in our vehicles, perhaps it's time to consider that we might not need everything our digital devices have developed to offer us either.

Perhaps being constantly available, endlessly distractable, and unable to disconnect along with finding it nearly impossible to prioritize is not beneficial to humanity.

That's definitely what schools who institute bans on digital devices are finding, at least. *"I got so used to quiet hallways the last few years. They were just staring at their phones. When it started coming back, it was noticeable. And it was awesome. It reminded me of what the hallway used to be like — a loud conversation, kids engaged with each other. And that has nothing to do with instruction, but has a lot to do, in my*

opinion, with the psychological state of the school." That's how one Bethlehem, New York teacher described the change when the policy was implemented.

A City Journal article entitled *Anxiety and Democracy* digs into how that "psychological state" might also affect the wider society. *"Members of the youngest generation are increasingly isolated and lonely. ... A 2024 poll by the American Psychiatric Association found that 30 percent of Americans aged 18 to 34 said that they were lonely every day or several times a week.*

"Our growing isolation might be contributing to a decline in social trust, as Harvard's Robert Putnam has surmised. As we 'bowl alone,' inviting neighbors to fewer block parties and spending less time volunteering..., our trust in our fellow citizens diminishes..." As that Bethlehem teacher realized when students were forced to interact with each other, it's much easier to see people as people when you're looking them in the eye rather than replying to a post on social media. But tragically, so much of our social lives and our political debate has moved to the digital world, where it's easy to dehumanize the other side of conversations as "accounts" rather than "people," and say things we'd never say face to face.

As we've often said, our political problems have to be dealt with from the bottom up. It's going to require individual, spiritual change, and one of the ways that spiritual change will manifest is when we remember how to treat each other – and ourselves – as "Images of God."

I don't think those smart refrigerators ever really took off, and I don't see wide demand for smart toilets, either. To quote Jeff Goldblum's character in Jurassic Park, "Your scientists were so preoccupied with whether or not they could, they didn't stop to think if they should."

But the same can be said for much of what our mobile devices offer as well. For all the "convenience" they claim to offer, have they actually improved our lives?

Dare to Stand Alone

By Lisa Van Houten



The rapid loss of free speech in once free nations such as Great Britain - where citizens are increasingly jailed for posting an opinion online which the government doesn't like - begs the question: How long until Americans are jailed for exercising their First Amendment rights? The answer is, it's already happening. Just ask the hundreds of J-6 prisoners, unconstitutionally persecuted by our government. For example, the J-6 "praying grandma" was just convicted. She walked through an open door of the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021 and spent all of ten minutes praying in an area normally open to tourists before peacefully walking out.

Here in Michigan, Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson is urging residents to report their neighbors for spreading so-called election "misinformation," claiming it's "the most potentially damaging threat to our democracy" and is "hacking the minds of American citizens." Instead, Benson directs people to check out notoriously leftist sites such as Snopes and PolitiFact for "trusted" information.

Now fellow Democrat, Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel, is threatening to prosecute a Michigander for posting a comment online about a local election. Nessel sent a threatening letter to this citizen, stating: "[Y]ou are hereby ordered to CEASE AND DESIST the use of online platforms to continue spreading false or misleading information regarding the Ross Township polling locations. Failure to comply with this notice may result in criminal prosecution." The post in question came from a woman concerned because the polling locations in her township had suddenly changed and the law requires that officials inform the public 60 days beforehand. For this she is being threatened with prosecution. Such strong-arm tactics are intended to intimidate citizens and stifle free speech.

In another example, the Biden-Harris ad-

ministration continues to unleash the hounds of the Department of Justice to prosecute peaceful pro-life activists who lovingly encourage pregnant women to save their babies. Last week, another group of pro-lifers was convicted of "engaging in a civil rights conspiracy" and violating the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act for standing and sitting in front of the door of an abortion center in Sterling Heights, MI on August 27, 2020.

In an unprecedented move, the DOJ has been adding the conspiracy charge, which was designed for the Ku Klux Klan, in order to increase the prison sentence of peaceful pro-life protestors. Those just convicted face 10 years in prison and up to \$250,000 in fines for exercising their First Amendment right to peacefully protest, and, as they stated, respond to God's call in Proverbs 24:11 to, **"Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter."**

For years, most of these same pro-lifers who were just convicted have peacefully stood outside abortion centers, seeking to persuade women to keep their babies and offer them help. Until now, they've never been charged. Only after the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade did the Biden administration begin to aggressively target pro-life activists. In July 2022, the DOJ formed the Reproductive Rights Task Force, to target supposed FACE Act violators. Since then, the DOJ has gone back years to find pro-lifers to prosecute. Notice that the actions of these seven just convicted occurred four years ago. Sen. Mike Lee (R-UT) wrote, *"The Biden administration is using the FACE Act to give pro-life activists and senior citizens lengthy prison terms for nonviolent offenses and protests—all while turning a blind eye to the violence, arson, and riots conducted on behalf of 'approved' leftist causes. Unequal enforcement of the law is a violation of the law and men and women who try to expose the horrors of abortion are being unjustly persecuted for their motivations."*

In a recent speech, Donald Trump sharply criticized this persecution of the "many peaceful pro-lifers who Joe Biden has rounded up, sometimes with SWAT teams,

and thrown them in jail" – vowing to "get them out of the gulags and back to their families where they belong." Among those just convicted is an 89-year-old woman who knows quite a bit about gulags. She is Eva Edl, who survived the Gakova death camp under Tito's reign of terror in communist Yugoslavia, before escaping and eventually immigrating to the United States. She has since devoted her life to protecting the unborn. **"I feel very strongly, because of my background, that human life is sacred,"** Eva stated. **"Government does not have the authority to permit what God forbids. And murder is forbidden by God."**

"Let me liken it to something," she said. "When we were rounded up to be killed, we were placed in cattle cars, and our train was headed toward the extermination camp. What if citizens of my country would have overcome their fear and a number of them stood on those railroad tracks between the gate of the entrance to the death camp and the train? The train would have to stop. And while the guards on those trains would be busy rounding up the ones that were in front of the train, another group could have come in, pried open our cattle car and possibly set us free. But nobody did. So, when we place our bodies between the woman and the clinic, we buy time to get our sidewalk counselors the opportunity to speak with women and hopefully open their hearts with love for their babies and let their babies live. After all, we offer them everything there is, including adoptions. I've offered to adopt babies on the spot ... we're standing between the killer [the abortionist] and the victim."

If sentenced to ten years, Eva will likely die in prison after having escaped a communist death camp. Yet, Eva said that it was her faith in Jesus that has carried her through and that God uses trials (both figuratively and literally, in her case) as a refining fire. **"We need suffering in our lives in order to be purified and not feel sorry about ourselves. Hammer away, Lord, at that anvil."**

If tyranny continues to grow in this land of freedom, and we one day face persecution and prosecution for boldly standing for what is right as Eva has done, may we exhibit the same courage and faith.

Matters of the Heart

By Steve Huston



Many a pastor or Biblical counselor has encouraged a parent: “Strive to capture your child’s heart.” That may be sound advice, seeing that our loving Heavenly Father desires to capture our heart, settling for nothing less than the whole of it. Lest you’re tempted to think that “capturing the heart” is simply obedience, which many parents would settle for, I assure you it’s not. So, what does the Bible mean when it talks about the “heart?”

We might recall that in Deuteronomy 5 God reissued the commands originally given in Exodus 20. In the sixth chapter, God reminds the Israelites of their **relationship and responsibility** to Him; commands them to love Him with **ALL their heart**, and with all their soul and with all their might; and instructs them on how to pass His commandments on to their children. These commands are to reside in their hearts and to be lived out in every area of their lives. In verse seventeen, God commands them to “diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes, which he hath commanded thee.” The word “keep” does not mean to simply obey; it is a call to guard and protect this way of life which sets them apart from the people and nations which will surround them. It’s a call for them – and us – to love God (worship, adore, and, yes, obey Him) in a manner which is reflective of how He has loved us. He has made us his “peculiar people” (uniquely special to Him) and, in the same sense, we are to make Him our “peculiar God,” (He is to be uniquely, solitarily our God – no other gods above Him). We guard against anything that would lessen God’s Word in our estimation or our special relationship with Him.

Is this why God uses the marriage relationship as an example? Most are familiar with Paul’s illustrative wording in Ephesians chapter 5, but such a heart relationship between God and His people is used in the Old

Testament as well: “*And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me Ishi (Husband); and shalt call me no more Baali (Master)*” (Hosea 2:16). **It’s a matter of the heart** – Now Israel by words, affections, and obedience, shall own God as their husband and delight to call Him so.

Jesus reminds us that this is still the demanded expectation: “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with **all thy heart**, and with **all thy soul**, and with **all thy mind**, and with **all thy strength**: this is the first commandment” (Mark 12:30). Paul, as mentioned above, puts it in the loving, self-sacrificing, mutually giving relationship that it’s meant to reflect.

Is it any wonder that Solomon, the wisest of men, warned: “*Keep (Guard) thy heart with all diligence: for out of it are the issues of life?*”

Holiness commentator Joseph Benson instructs: “The Hebrew is, *Above all keeping, keep thy heart*, that is, thy mind and thoughts, thy will and affections, which are the more immediate cause of men’s actions.” Benson goes on to warn: “*Out of it are the issues of life* – The life or death of the soul proceeds from the heart: an upright, enlightened, renewed, devout, and watchful heart gives birth to those holy dispositions, words, and actions which manifest spiritual life, and lead to eternal life: on the contrary, a heart insincere, unenlightened, unrenewed, and corrupt, without knowledge, without grace, produces those tempers, words, and works, which imply spiritual death, and lead to eternal death. From the heart proceeds all evil, Matthew 15:11-19. Guard it therefore most carefully, with every kind of diligence, and above all other cares.”

God is love; what a gracious, good, and holy God we serve. To think that He demands our heart – a heart of flesh He willingly bestows – so that we might enjoy the loving grace, protecting and providing Hand, and wholeness that our divine Bridegroom gives to us as we willingly and lovingly submit to Him.

It’s truly a matter of the heart.

The Heart

By Bill Johnson



HEART. In my devotional reading recently, my attention has been drawn to the heart. My interest was heightened through an extended section that Oswald Chambers had given to the heart in his book, The Complete Works of Oswald Chambers.

Chambers writes: *If we give ourselves over to meanness and to Satan, there is no end to the growth in devilishness; if we give ourselves openly to God, there is no end to our development and growth in grace. Our Lord has no fear of the consequences when once the heart is open towards Him. No wonder the Bible counsels us to ‘guard our heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life’; Solomon prayed for ‘an understanding heart,’ and Paul says that the peace of God will ‘garrison our hearts.’*

When we receive the Holy Spirit we are in the condition of the disciples after the Resurrection: their eyes were opened and they had the power to discern. Before they received the Holy Spirit they could not perceive correctly, they simply recorded physically; they saw that Jesus was a marvelous Being Whom they believed to be the Messiah; but after they had received the Holy Spirit, they discerned what they had seen and heard and handled, because their hearts had been put right; the whole ‘shop’ inside had been renovated and re-stocked by the Holy Spirit.

I share this with you because it lines up with my testimony from being saved and changed back in 1970. He was training me to be diligent in what I chose not to look at and/or to look at. Through my devotions and a growing love of memorizing Scripture focused on God and His holiness, I was learning in my affections toward God to guard my heart with diligence – not out of duty but out of a love for God.