

# How Every Man Sets His Own Standards

Are you in control of your choices each day, or is somebody else?

Over the years, I have run into many men who quote something like the following: "I don't believe in Christianity because my father never believed," or "I don't believe in that kind of stuff because of what 'they' say."

Who are "they," and why are they saying these things, I ask? I tend to get frustrated when I hear these types of responses, because quite frankly, they are not responses; they are excuses. This is a man who is not in control of his beliefs, and he has allowed the influence of others who may have not known the truth to set the standard for his life.

How long will a man choose to live according to these lies or excuses before he decides to take matters into his own hands?

How much longer until he matures and decides to search out the real truth himself?

Before the days of Maturity, I lived my life according to the standards of others. I chose to base my beliefs off things I had simply heard and grew up learning. I used the excuses I mentioned above every time someone who actually knew the truth and was essentially trying to help approached me.

I found a strange comfort in this lie I was living when I was in the moment, but I also felt empty afterward. I didn't know what to do until my life started to fall apart, piece by piece.

I was quick to anger, I was quick to use sarcasm as a means of protection, and I was quick to defend my "standards" even

though I knew I had none at all. I was irritable in my marriage; I was unloving to my wife and went down a destructive personal path that almost destroyed our marriage.

A good Christian friend of mine finally got ahold of me and challenged my standards. He could see through my false protection measures and told me to step up and find out the truth myself. It was time.

Even a man without standards should be smart enough to recognize a man that has standards and a life that is living proof of it. As shallow as it sounds, this played a major role in my choosing to stop living according to the standards of "them" or "they" and find out the truth for myself.

Note that this should be an example to all men that the way we act and are seen by others can be enough to cause another man to change his life. This was more than two years ago, and I am still learning, growing and striving to be the best man of God I can possibly be each and every day. Let's choose to let Jesus be our standard!

So, who is setting the standards in your life? Are you living to please others, or are you living to please God? Share some of your personal experiences in the comments below.

**Manturity** is a blog built on establishing spiritual maturity in today's man. The goal is to assist men in building better marriages and help them in grow in maturity and explore different aspects of manhood. features new weekly blog posts, daily social media updates and a powerful resources page. Stay up to date with the Manturity blog communities on Facebook and Twitter.

For the original article, visit .

---

# Vigil Planned for Christian American Imprisoned in North Korea

Kenneth Bae, a U.S. citizen imprisoned in North Korea for crimes against the state, made a fresh appeal to the U.S. government for help and chronicled his declining health in a letter that reached his family on Wednesday, his sister said.

Bae was sentenced in early May to 15 years of hard labor after North Korea's Supreme Court convicted him of state subversion, saying the 45-year-old Christian missionary had used his tourism business to form groups to overthrow the government.

Bae has been held since he was detained in November as he led a tour group through the northern region of the country. His sentencing came amid acrimonious relations between Pyongyang and Washington over the reclusive state's nuclear aspirations.

"He said it is definitely getting harder for his body to withstand the day-to-day labor, but he is trying his best to be strong and hold on," Bae's sister, Terri Chung, told Reuters in an interview at her mother's home in a Seattle suburb. The letter was written July 14.

Bae spends eight hours a day, six days a week planting and plowing fields of potatoes and beans among other work at a prison for foreigners near Pyongyang where he is kept largely isolated, Chung said.

A naturalized U.S. citizen born in South Korea who most recently lived in China, Bae has back pain, an enlarged heart, hypertension and diabetes and his vision has started to blur, Chung said.

“His health is deteriorating and he asks us to have our government help to bring him home,” said Chung, who teaches English at a Seattle community college.

North Korea has in the past used the release of high-profile American prisoners as a means of garnering a form of prestige or acceptance, rather than economic gain, by portraying visiting dignitaries as paying homage to the country and its leader.

That pattern has complicated the response from U.S. lawmakers and the State Department, which has called for Bae’s immediate release on “humanitarian grounds” but has resisted sending high-profile envoys to negotiate, as it has done in the past.

Reports last month that former U.S. President Jimmy Carter was set to visit North Korea to negotiate for Bae were ultimately denied as false.

An Internet petition urging U.S. President Barack Obama to secure “Special Amnesty” for Bae has garnered more than 7,000 signatures and Bae’s family plans a prayer vigil in Seattle on Saturday.

Bae has acknowledged being a missionary and has said he conducted religious services in the North. He has said he was moved by his faith to preach in North Korea, ranked for years as the nation most hostile to Christianity by Open Doors International, a Christian advocacy and aid group.

The random trickle of correspondence from Bae and the muted response from Washington have taken a toll on his tight-knit family in the United States. Chung said the family has received five sets of letters and two sets of phone calls – to his wife, mother and sister – in the nine months.

Chung declined to share the precise content of her brother’s letters or to confirm whether they had been screened by North Korean officials. She hoped to learn more from tourists who had traveled with Bae on forays into Rason, a special economic zone in the northern part of the country for foreign

investors. Human rights activists in South Korea say Bae may have been arrested for taking pictures of starving children.

“I do remember him coming home from one of these trips in North Korea and talking about visiting orphanages and feeling just really compelled to help,” said Chung, sitting near a collection of family photos hung on the wall.

Chung, in exchanges brokered by the State department and a foreign embassy, has offered her brother bittersweet anecdotes about a Fourth of July celebration, a youth soccer tournament, and being so preoccupied with his arrest that the “tooth fairy” forgot for several days to swap money for her child’s detached tooth.

The family’s doctor sends medicine. Bae’s wife, in China, has sent toothpaste and shampoo. And his mother, Myunghee Bae, has sent clippings of bible verses.

The worst moment for Chung came when media producers asked her and her mother to confirm Bae’s identity in a still-image taken from prison interview footage before it was to be aired.

Bae, wearing a dirty, blue-gray prison uniform, looked “broken, diminished” and 30 to 40 pounds (14 to 18 kg) lighter.

“My mom just broke down into these sobs ... it was so gut-wrenching,” she said.

(Editing by Cynthia Johnston and Jackie Frank)

---

**AG            Missionaries            Target**

# Unreached People Groups in Latin America

“We try to connect the dots. That’s our process. Connect the dots, then maybe after a while we’ll have a whole movement.”

It’s how Richard Nicholson, regional director of the Latin America and Caribbean region for the Assemblies of God, describes their approach to matching the right people with the right kind of missions work.

“People have individual passions in ministries, and we try to get those people together and see what emerges,” he says.

But “connecting the dots” is more than a personal goal for Nicholson—in fact, it might as well be the motto for the whole AG World Missions ministry in Latin America and the Caribbean, starting with their plans for connecting the existing local church with the often remote unreached people groups spread across the more than 20 countries in the region.

For Nicholson, that approach begins with the belief that every human being has value to God, no matter how remote or uneducated. While that may not be a new concept, it’s a goal that, according to Nicholson, is sometimes met with indifference on the ground.

“Local churches sometimes think, ‘They only have a second-grade education, and they live in the jungle. They’re primitive, pagans—what’s the point?’” he says.

This is where Assemblies of God missionaries serve an important function as motivators and role models for the national church, particularly in those areas where local churches have not yet seen the value in pursuing the unreached.

“What we do by our actions, by our lives and by our willingness to go reach these people is that we attribute to those individuals honor and dignity and respect. So when we reach them, we say, ‘You are valuable to God, and thus you are valuable to me.’ That’s why we do what we do,” Nicholson explains.

### **Connecting to the National Church**

The ministry utilizes an approach to mission work taught by Assemblies of God missionary Melvin Hodges, who served as the regional director for the area of Latin America and the Caribbean from 1954-1973. He taught that the most successful way to work as missionaries in a foreign country is to share the life of the indigenous church and allow them to be self-supporting, self-sustaining and self-governing.

“Our ministry really took on muscle beginning in the ‘50s under the leadership of Melvin and his teachings on indigenous church principles,” says Nicholson, who has served alongside his wife, Cynthia, as regional director since 1997. “We’re married to the national church, and their success is our success.”

One of the ministry’s most fruitful strategies for connecting with unreached people groups in Latin America is church planting. Currently, there are approximately 200,000 Assemblies of God churches in Latin American and Caribbean countries, due in part to the efforts of Assemblies of God missionaries.

“Some of the churches we have planted have celebrated their 25th and 26th anniversaries already, and they’re doing very well,” Nicholson says. “I’m very pleased at the results and outcome of our investment in those places.”

Joil Marbut is one of those missionaries. He lives with his family in Ecuador, serving under the Assemblies of God World Missions. His goal is to plant 100 churches among the Shuar

people along the Amazon River basin, and he is already nearly halfway there.

### **Investing in People**

In addition to church planting, Marbut has started a compassion ministry called Hope House, which provides a place for Shuar girls aged 11 to 20—particularly those who have been abused—to live, receive a high school education and learn a trade. He also organizes weeklong Bible schools for community leaders, who can then return home to teach their people what they've learned. Marbut's ministry in Ecuador also provides health care for the Shuar people, including water purification, medical clinics and health education.

Like Marbut, Assemblies of God missionaries in the Latin America and Caribbean region serve many previously unreached people groups through a variety of compassion ministries, including feeding programs, clothing programs and health care programs, depending on each area's specific needs.

The ministry's Latin America Child Care (LACC) program, which provides education, training and in some cases at least one meal a day for each child, is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year and has served approximately 1 million children since its founding.

"We've got people today who are judges and missionaries and police and senators who were part of our LACC program growing up," Nicholson says. "So we're very pleased at that strong ministry."

Nicholson says he and his wife often receive letters from people who have been impacted by their ministry, even 25 years later—like the woman who recently wrote saying that 25 years ago, she heard Nicholson preach in her village and he later prayed for her after she told him she could not have children. A year later, God responded, and her sons are now in their mid-20s.

“One of the best parts of what we do is feeling like we’ve invested in people, and now we’ve lived long enough and stayed at it long enough to hear how their lives have turned out,” Nicholson says. “It’s very satisfying.”

### **Ways to Get Involved**

Though the Latin America and Caribbean region of Assemblies of God World Missions is going strong, the ministry is always in need of help.

The primary way to help support this ministry is to pray—both for missionaries and for the program as a whole.

“We always welcome people to intercede and pray, especially right now when we are launching new initiatives to reach the unreached. That’s vitally important,” Nicholson says.

Another way to help is to support the ministry financially. If you feel led to invest in this ministry, please contact the Latin America and Caribbean offices at (417) 862-2781. If there is a specific area of service you are passionate about investing in, simply specify which area you would like your support to go to—for example, church planting, reaching unreached people groups or Bible schools—and your funds will be designated specifically for that cause.

Finally, the ministry is always in need of Bible students and people who have a background in theology to help with education training for missionaries.

Click [here](#) for more information on the Latin America and Caribbean region.

---

# Dr. Gupta, What Are You Smoking?

Dr. Sanjay Gupta, CNN Chief Medical Correspondent, penned a column on Thursday headlined, “Why I changed my mind on weed.” In fact, he’s admitting he’s actually tried marijuana.

Talk about going full circle. Gupta once stood against a medical case for marijuana and even wrote a *Time magazine* article in 2009 called, “Why I would Vote No on Pot.”

Now, he’s making a very public apology for that stance.

“I apologize because I didn’t look hard enough, until now. I didn’t look far enough. I didn’t review papers from smaller labs in other countries doing some remarkable research, and I was too dismissive of the loud chorus of legitimate patients whose symptoms improved on cannabis,” Gupta wrote.

“Instead, I lumped them with the high-visibility malingerers, just looking to get high. I mistakenly believed the Drug Enforcement Agency listed marijuana as a schedule 1 substance because of sound scientific proof. Surely, they must have quality reasoning as to why marijuana is in the category of the most dangerous drugs that have ‘no accepted medicinal use and a high potential for abuse.’”

Gupta has concluded neither of those things are true—that marijuana doesn’t have a high potential for abuse and there are very legitimate medical applications.

I don’t disagree that there are legitimate medical uses for marijuana, but to believe it doesn’t have a high potential for abuse is a deception.

Marijuana is a gateway drug that leads to many other abuses, including alcohol, cocaine, crack, LSD, ecstasy and heroin. I

know because marijuana led me to all of those drugs—and more—and led many of my friends down the same path to addiction. (I wrote about this last year in an article called, “How God Delivered Me From the Demon of Pharmakeia.” Youth ministry movement leader Ron Luce also offers an excellent piece about how legalized pot is a buzz kill for teens.)

Gupta compares studies about adult dependency on marijuana to adult dependency on cocaine (10 percent compared to about 25 percent). Well, let me ask you: What drug did most of those cocaine users start off with? Marijuana. Gupta also compares the physical symptoms of marijuana addiction—such as insomnia, anxiety and nausea—to “life threatening” withdrawal from alcohol. Yet many teenagers smoke marijuana long before they drink a beer. Such comparisons, in any case, are beside the point. Marijuana has a high potential for abuse and comparing drug percentages of addicted adults doesn’t prove otherwise.

As a father, Gupta admits he wouldn’t want his children to smoke marijuana until they are adults: “If they are adamant about trying marijuana, I will urge them to wait until they’re in their mid-20s when their brains are fully developed.” Well, at least he admits that there are dangers for teens.

So I’m not completely against medical marijuana. But it’s a slippery slope when famed doctors like Gupta start penning articles headlined, “Why I changed my mind on weed.” There is plenty of research showing the dangers of marijuana—and Gupta didn’t give the full story on the stats in his article. Here’s the rest of the story:

The National Institute on Drug Abuse writes, “Long-term marijuana use can lead to addiction; that is, people have difficulty controlling their drug use and cannot stop even though it interferes with many aspects of their lives. It is estimated that 9 percent of people who use marijuana will become dependent on it.

“The number goes up to about 1 in 6 in those who start using young (in their teens) and to 25-50 percent among daily users. Moreover, a study of over 300 fraternal and identical twin pairs found that the twin who had used marijuana before the age of 17 had elevated rates of other drug use and drug problems later on, compared with their twin who did not use before age 17.

“According to the 2010 NSDUH, marijuana accounted for 4.5 million of the estimated 7.1 million Americans dependent on or abusing illicit drugs. In 2009, approximately 18 percent of people aged 12 and older entering drug abuse treatment programs reported marijuana as their primary drug of abuse; 61 percent of persons under 15 reported marijuana as their primary drug of abuse.”

So, Dr. Gupta, I hear what you are saying about medical marijuana. There is some truth to your argument, but you’ve now come dangerously close to endorsing marijuana use for all adults. Let me assure you, where there’s marijuana in adult homes, teenagers can easily access it and start smoking it. That’s what I did, and it almost ruined my life—and it did ruin the lives of some of my friends who are to this day addicted to heroin or dead.

**Jennifer LeClaire** is news editor at Charisma. She is also the author of several books, including *The Spiritual Warrior’s Guide to Defeating Jezebel*. You can email Jennifer at @ or visit her website here. You can also join Jennifer on Facebook or follow her on Twitter.

---

# Assemblies of God Deploys 15,000 Youth to Impact the World

“Deploy” was the theme of Wednesday night’s youth service during General Council 2013. Combined with the fine arts emphasis, Rod Whitlock, student discipleship director, said 8,000 fine arts students gathered to compete this week with a goal of discovering, developing and deploying their gifts for the kingdom.

Thousands gathered to worship and hear speaker Jeanne Mayo during this midweek General Council service.

After two presentations celebrating 50 years of fine arts, Chet Caudill, student missions director, showed the trailer for the new movie *Jimmy* that premiered on GMC this summer featuring Ian Colletti, a National Fine Arts Award of Merit winner last year. Colletti was joined by his father, Chris, a church planter, and Fabian Kalapuch, the New Jersey youth director who partnered with Colletti to turn the premiere of *Jimmy* at a local school into a \$5,000 fundraiser for Speed the Light.

Caudill announced that the DVD of *Jimmy* is available for purchase for \$15 in the exhibit hall this week, \$10 of which goes directly to Speed the Light.

“I love how God takes the gifts we have and multiplies them and uses them for His glory,” Caudill said, inviting Colletti to share what deploying his gifts for the kingdom looks like.

“I’ve grown up in the church and always felt like I had a calling to be in ministry but not as a preacher,” Colletti said. “I felt like God was telling me to use acting to glorify Him. I was grateful to be part of this Christian film and to

use money for Speed the Light.”

After an impactful time of worship led by the band, Heath Adamson, national youth director, shared about the band on the stage, a result of the newly launched Influence Music, a new initiative of the Assemblies of God to bring the music of the AG to the global church.

Adamson introduced Josh Babyar, director of new media for the Assemblies of God, and asked him to share about Influence Music. Babyar introduced the band and described how Influence Music and its first project came about.

The goal was to “capture the sound of our movement,” Babyar said. “This isn’t just a band we hired. This is our band. These are all AG guys.”

The worship band is made up of Clayton Brooks, worship pastor of The Oaks Fellowship in Red Oak, Texas; Kurtis Parks, worship director for National Community Church in Washington, D.C.; Ryan Williams, lead worship and creative arts pastor at River Valley Church in Apple Valley, Minn.

Their new album, *One: A Worship Collective: We Believe*, hit No. 2 on iTunes’ Christian and Gospel category yesterday, the day of the release.

Babyar noted the passion of the fine arts students he’s seen throughout the week and said, “This room is full of world-changers” who are able to influence nations with something as simple as an iPhone.

“We need your help to take this album to the world,” Babyar said. “You have more power in your iPhone than put the man on the moon. We need you to go to iTunes and purchase it and share it with your friends” using the hashtag #webelievealbum.

Asking those in the crowd who have iPhones to hold them in the air, Babyar said it takes “just that many to help us take this

music to the nations.”

## **A Generation of World-Changers**

The service continued when Adamson announced the speaker for the evening, Jeanne Mayo, who received the Lifetime Influence Award this week from Influence Resources and the Assemblies of God. Adamson said this is the beginning of an exciting new partnership with Jeanne Mayo’s nonprofit organization, Youth Leader’s Coach, which trains and equips youth leaders with the necessary skills to make a difference in the lives of students. Mayo will lend her experience and expertise earned through 40 years of ministering to youth to develop a leadership training, coaching and mentoring solution for youth leaders and volunteers.

Mayo is one of the most highly-sought-after youth pastors today, which was evident by the way she immediately connected with the teens through humor and life-altering truth. Her message, “Bury Me Standing!” referenced a practice in ancient cultures where warriors were buried in an upright position, ready to battle upon resurrection.

“The world will never be changed by the mildly interested,” Mayo said. “The world will be changed by bury-me-standing people.”

She emphasized that this generation is quite possibly the one who will “welcome Jesus back to the earth,” making personal evangelism of the utmost importance.

“We’re at a challenging tipping point,” she said, issuing a challenge to feel the weight of the responsibility and sense of purpose upon this generation. “If you don’t have a purpose bigger than yourself, then you dangerously become your own purpose.”

Mayo challenged each individual present to live a life that will affect the kingdom of God, to “dream like you’ll live

forever, but live like you'll die tomorrow."

Students filled the altars during a time of response singing the "More of you, God" refrain and asking God to empower them with His Spirit as they prepare to be deployed for the greatest work of evangelism this generation has seen.

---

## **Poll Reveals Americans Don't Want to Live as Long as Noah**

How long would you like to live—100 years? Maybe 120? Would extended life spans be good for society, the economy and the way people go through their lives?

With populations aging and medical science progressing, questions like these are moving from the science-fiction category to the realm of long-term issues that ethicists and policy makers are starting to consider.

The Pew Research Center, a Washington-based think tank known for its surveys into political and social trends, published a report on Tuesday exploring views about "radical life extension" and its effects in the United States.

Entitled "Living to 120 and Beyond", the report said that "many Americans do not look happily on the prospect of living much longer lives." Among the findings:

- The median ideal lifespan mentioned in the poll of 2,012 people was 90 years, about 11 years longer than the current average U.S. life expectancy of 78.7 years.
- Some 56 percent said they would refuse medical treatment to extend their lives, 38 percent would take it and the

rest didn't answer. But 68 percent thought that other people would seize the opportunity. Only 41 percent thought living to 120 would be good for society.

- Some 79 percent said life extension should be available to all, but 66 percent thought only the rich would have access to it and another 66 percent feared scientists would offer the treatment before fully understanding its health effects.
- Black and Hispanic Americans are more positive than whites about extending life, although the survey could not explain why. Religious views, gender and education did not seem to play a significant role in responses to the national survey.

### **Endless Life 'No Paradise'**

Pew's Forum on Religion and Public Life conducted the survey as part of its focus on emerging issues with religious and ethical implications, researcher Cary Funk told Reuters.

"Once we started talking to people whose job it is to think about ethical issues and the future, this came up over and over again," said her fellow researcher David Masci.

The report stressed medical science is not yet able to offer radical life extension treatment and noted that three-quarters of those polled did not think average people in 2050 would be able to live to 120 or longer.

Only 10 percent said having more elderly in the population would be bad for U.S. society, although 53 percent thought it would not make the economy more productive.

The report said extending life spans would challenge the concept of lifelong marriage and could confuse relations within families when "people may not look or act much older than their parents, grandparent or even great grandparents."

It cited ethicists who asked whether postponing death until a distant future would make people appreciate life less.

While all faiths confront the issue of death, the report said none had yet taken a position on radical life extension.

But researcher Masci found that former Pope Benedict, who unexpectedly retired in February citing his old age, addressed the issue in a Holy Saturday sermon back in 2010.

Benedict, now 86, observed that modern medicine sought to delay death as much as possible and asked whether radical life extension would be a blessing.

“Humanity would become extraordinarily old, there would be no more room for youth,” he said at the Vatican. “Capacity for innovation would die and endless life would be no paradise. If anything (it would be) a condemnation.”

---

*Reporting By Tom Heneghan; Editing by Michael Roddy*

© 2013 Thomson Reuters. All rights reserved.

---

## **Ethicist Shaun Casey to Oversee Religious Engagement for State Dept.**

Amid persistent criticism that the U.S. marginalizes religion and religious people in its foreign policy, Secretary of State John Kerry tapped ethicist and campaign adviser Shaun Casey on Wednesday to lead the State Department’s new Office of Faith-Based Community Initiatives.

Casey is a professor of Christian ethics at Wesley Theological

Seminary in Washington, D.C., and advised President Obama's campaign and other Democrats on outreach to religious voters.

Kerry praised Casey as someone who understands how the U.S. can engage religious communities around the world to foster peace and development.

"In a world where people of all faiths are migrating and mingling like never before," Kerry said, "we ignore the global impact of religion at our peril."

Casey said he and Kerry have long shared a view about the role of religion in the world, that it neither "poisons everything" nor can "save and solve everything."

"You knew that the reality was somewhere in between," Casey said, addressing Kerry under the chandeliers of one of the State Department's most opulent halls.

Casey, who will take a temporary leave from Wesley to assume his State Department post, said he hopes to "build strong relationships with religious actors abroad to collaborate on a variety of fronts, from conflict prevention and mitigation to promoting human rights to fostering development."

A small but vociferous group of religious advocates—including scholars and clergy—have long pushed the U.S. to take a more robust stand in defending the rights of religious minorities abroad.

"I would put this under the rubric of wait-and-see," says retired Ambassador Randolph Bell, who runs the First Freedom Center, a Virginia-based religious freedom watchdog group.

While the best policy directly and emphatically insists on religious freedom abroad, Bell says, "If this can lead to an increase in the salience of these rights, let's give it a chance."

Knox Thames, director of policy and research at the U.S.

Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), an independent watchdog panel chartered by Congress, sounds more hopeful.

“It’s a positive and timely step that should increase the State Department’s ability to effectively engage religious actors, as issues of religion and state are more relevant than ever” after the Arab Spring, Thames says.

“Hopefully this office can help position the U.S. to convey our values and the importance of religious freedom during this time of global transition.”

The State Department has an ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom, currently Suzan Johnson Cook, although critics have said she and her predecessors have been sidelined in the department’s vast bureaucracy.

USCIRF has repeatedly taken the State Department to task for going soft against foreign governments that restrict religious freedom and refuse to protect vulnerable religious minorities.

Since 2001, the White House has had a similar office—the Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships—that has been headed by a succession of directors with strong religious credentials.

The current head of the White House office, Melissa Rogers, former general counsel to the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, on Wednesday welcomed Casey as a public servant who understands the “potential for religious communities to spark both positive and negative movements.”

Casey, the author of *The Making of a Catholic President: Kennedy vs. Nixon 1960*, was named by Religion News Service in 2006 as one of a dozen Democrats who were helping the party make inroads among religious voters.

**Lauren Markoe** covered government and features as a daily

*newspaper reporter for 15 years before joining the Religion News Service staff as a national correspondent in 2011. She previously was Washington correspondent for The State (Columbia, S.C.).*

---

## **Israel and Palestine: Here We Go Again**

Israel and the Palestinian Authority were back in Washington last week as the long-dormant peace talks resumed, prompting some observers to ask, “Why are these peace talks different from any other peace talks?”

I think it can be fairly stated that no people have spoken about peace so often, written about it so extensively, but experienced so little of it in recent history. Israel’s intense thirst for peace coupled with the Jewish state’s lack of it is indeed one of the great paradoxes of modern times.

Peace is, at its core, an essentially biblical concept, deeply rooted in the ancient religious texts of Israel. The word *shalom* is found 376 times in the Torah, or the Tanach—the Jewish Bible, known to most of the world as the Old Testament.

The word is used in many different contexts with a variety of meanings. However, the sheer number of times the word *shalom* appears in the Bible makes it abundantly clear that peace is a central biblical and universal value that all nations are advised to pursue, but specifically the nation of Israel, who presented the Torah’s lofty concepts to the entire world.

“Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it” (Ps. 34:14, NIV).

With the return to the peace table, Israel seems to be acting according to its biblical instructions by seeking peace. The problem with this perception is that the biblical guidelines don't encourage peace negotiations that are based on faulty premises, such as handing over Israel's God-given land to an armed band of terrorists.

Secretary of State John Kerry has called for Israel to accept the establishment of an additional Arab (primarily Muslim) state based on the indefensible pre-1967 borders, which would place Israel's Ben Gurion International Airport easily within range of enemy missiles.

According to this proposal, in exchange for freeing terrorists now and eventually surrendering its high elevations, the mountains of Samaria and the Judean hills (often referred to as the West Bank), Israel would receive written promises of peace from the Palestinian Authority, backed by the Obama administration.

This "land for peace" formula has been the standard for some 40 years of summits, talks, negotiations and shuttles that seem to go nowhere and have only increased the ravenous appetite of Israel's enemies, resulting in a sharp increase in terrorism and the frequency of war.

The new talks are destined for a similar fate, despite the promotion and despite the hype. Apparently, we will continue to play this dangerous game for a few more years, until we start listening to the following words that were spoken long ago in anticipation of today's events:

"For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, saying, 'Peace, peace'—when there is no peace" (Jer. 8:11, NKJV).

"Peace is that brief glorious moment in history when everybody stands around reloading." —Thomas Jefferson

**David Rubin**, former Mayor of Shiloh, Israel, is founder and president of the Shiloh Israel Children's Fund, established after he and his 3-year-old son were wounded in a terrorist shooting attack. He is the author of three books, including his new book, *Peace for Peace: Israel in the New Middle East*, available on or at .

---

## **Pastor John Hagee Shares Personal Journey Into Christian Zionism**

Pastor John Hagee, founder of Christians United for Israel, sat down with *Stakelbeck on Terror* for a wide-ranging discussion about his organization's rapid growth, his personal journey into Christian Zionism and the gathering threats against America and Israel.

---

## **In the Face of 'Preachers of LA,' Has the Church Become a Reality Show?**

Beginning this fall, a major television network will begin airing a new reality show called *Preachers of L.A.* Before you

continue reading this art se  
view this trailer.



Though every ounce of my being is tempted to respond in condemning judgmentalism, I will obey God's command and judge not.

As with everything else, Christianity has changed in this new millennium. The question we must all ask is, Is it for the better or for the worse? Never before has the church earned such a poor reputation as we have in this generation. It appears as if the current church in America has two gods—the god of attendance and the god of money. We are seen as superficial, arrogant, self-serving, unloving and unholy.