

# Could the Culture of Death Lead to World War III?

Some people believe mankind is progressing—growing wiser, getting better. But the authors of *The Race to Save Our Century* point out the last 100 years were the deadliest in recorded history, and the next century may be even deadlier.

Co-authors John Zmirak and Jason Jones lay out the reasons that genocide and total war, eugenics and totalitarianism were able to triumph over the principles of human civilization in the 20th century.

## Slaughtered 133 Million Citizens

“Poison gas, concentration camps; nobody in 1913—the era of Sherlock Holmes—would have imagined the evils of the 20th century. But there were reasons they came about,” Zmirak told *CBN News*.

“And they came about because modern secular philosophy had undermined the core principles of the moral law that the Judeo-Christian civilization had relied upon for centuries,” he said.

That allowed a culture of death to flourish, and a century where governments committed mass “democide” and murdered 133.1 million of their own citizens.

Americans who think their country is too civilized to commit such barbarism may want to consider how average folks all around them have killed more than 56 million of America’s most vulnerable citizens through abortion.

“Abortion I would say is the rock foundation of the culture of death,” Jones said.

Jones asserts that violence in the womb cannot help but spread

out beyond the womb.

### **Your Children Will Die in the Camps?**

“If we don’t see full legal protection for the human person from the moment of biological beginning through natural death, you can expect your children or grandchildren to die in the gulag, to die in the concentration camp,” Jones said

Jones doesn’t believe this just because of his study of history. He feels it deeply in his bones, because for Jones, this is incredibly personal.

As he put it to *CBN News*, his life didn’t bring him to the abortion issue; the abortion issue invaded his life.

It started two days before his 17th birthday with a visit from his high-school sweetheart.

“She came over to my house and woke me up with the words, ‘I’m pregnant,’” Jones said.

They then came up with a secret plot: In two days, Jones would join the Army and soon be supporting their little family.

But then while he was at basic training, his girlfriend called him, weeping uncontrollably before her dad grabbed the phone away.

“And then her father said, ‘We know your secret now and you can come home. It’s gone. We took Katie to get an abortion,’” he recalled.

### **‘He Killed My Baby!’**

Jones went wild and screamed at his commanding officer.

“Call the police. Call the police. He killed my baby!” Jones recalled yelling.

But Jones said the captain replied, “‘Private, why would I call the police? Don’t you know that abortion is legal?’ And, you know, I didn’t.”

That same day, the young Army enlistee made a pledge to his girlfriend that has steered his entire life.

Jones recalled saying to her, “‘Katie, I promise you for my child, that if it takes me the rest of my life, I’m going to end abortion in America.’”

And that is what he’s been working for since, producing and promoting pro-life movies like “Bella” and “Crescendo” and writing books like this one.

Jones and Zmirak believe the culture of death that allows abortion is the same one that leads to genocide, ethnic cleansing and governments murdering their own citizens.

But before that culture of death overwhelmed the world 100 years ago, Zmirak said most mankind believed like people today that civilization was on an upward trajectory.

### **One Assassination Led to Two World Wars**

“A hundred years ago, the world was at peace. In western Europe you didn’t need a passport to go from country to country. There was vast technological progress,” Zmirak explained.

“Everyone thought that the 20th century would be an era of peace, progress, international tranquility, and wealth. Then one archduke got shot in Austria and 20 million people died,” he continued. “And then 20 years later that war laid the groundwork for another war in which 60 million people died.”

Jones believes humanity could be headed down the same path now.

“From Ebola to the border crisis to Russia invading Ukraine to

the war in Israel to the ethnic cleansing of Christians across the Middle East, we see the same things happening today in our world that were happening 100 years ago with the Bolshevik Revolution, the Armenian genocide, and World War I," he warned.

In *The Race to Save Our Century*, these gentlemen propose several core principles they believe can save the world from a vast, bloody re-run.

"And there are five core principles that we think anyone, any rational good-hearted person of good will could accept," Zmirak said. "And they really correspond with the natural law that Saint Paul said is written on the human heart."

### **Acknowledging a Universal Law**

One of those principles is acknowledging there is a natural, God-given law, or as Zmirak put it, "the existence of a transcendent moral order that is higher than any secular law, which can tell you that segregation or abortion or apartheid is intrinsically evil regardless of what the Supreme Court or the dictator or the secret police says."

Zmirak and Jones declare the U.S. Supreme Court basically threw out this transcendent moral order and made man the ultimate authority when it said in a 1992 abortion case it was up to each human to decide what is life and death.

The Court wrote in *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania vs. Casey*: "At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe and of the mystery of human life."

So much for godly authority. If you decide a human is not a human, then they're not.

That leads to the need for this next core principle: accepting the infinite dignity and worth of each human person.

“We must reaffirm the founding truth of humanism—that every human being is important, unique, and dignified,” the authors say in the book. “He or she deserves the same reverence we demand for ourselves.”

“We see the rise of this beautiful civilization that we inherited,” Jones said, looking across history over the last two millennia. “But with the denial of the incomparable dignity of the human person, we will see everything that we take for granted disappear.”

### **‘The Wiper of Every Runny Nose’**

Among the other core principles to save humanity—and liberty—is trying to get back to small, decentralized government that’s close, responsive and accountable to its citizens—not the kind of government that butts into everyone’s lives, tries to solve every problem and meet every need.

Zmirak characterized such government as “The wiper of every runny nose.”

“Because when the government grows and steps into those roles, it invariably exerts control over people, and then you don’t have a free society anymore,” he said.

In the last century, vicious dictators like China’s Mao Tse-Tung and the Soviet Union’s Josef Stalin could squash the freedom of hundreds of millions and slaughter tens of millions. But the hi-tech world ahead will allow future tyrants close to total, computer-controlled domination of their citizens.

And it will give future warriors weapons that could actually exterminate all mankind.

“The next world war is going to be much shorter and immensely more violent. It’s unimaginable,” Jones stated. “To think of World War III is actually unimaginable.”

That's why Jones and Zmirak say we so desperately need a Race to Save Our Century.

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## **MLK's Niece Has 'Mixed Emotions' About Selma**

An invitation to a pre-release screening of the movie *Selma* brought mixed emotions to my heart, and tears to my eyes. As I sat in the theater, I was transported back to the time when my Uncle MLK, my Daddy AD King and so many civil rights icons were embroiled in the historical crosshairs that brought equity to the voting rights of Blacks in America.

It was during that same season that Daddy's and Mother's church parsonage was bombed in Birmingham; and the little girls, one a classmate of mine were killed in the bombing of the church. It was also the season of my first civil rights march, a "Children's March" where Daddy and James Orange and others taught me the tenants of nonviolent protests.

Even though I wasn't on the team of consultants who worked with the producers, I'm glad the film is in the atmosphere. While *Selma* is historically informative and entertaining, having lived through those days, I would have appreciated more historical accuracy.

I know that everyone can't be included in such projects, but on a personal note, I was saddened to find no mention of my Dad, who not only marched in Selma, but was also felled (and recovered) along with not only John Lewis, but with many others, including Hosea Williams and my dearly departed friend James Orange.

So many people have contacted me regarding the overtones regarding references to Uncle ML's responses to the attacks on his personal life. I have only this to say: Like all of the Bible heroes, Uncle was a human being, an imperfect man who served a perfect God. He and Daddy are in heaven now, in the company with David, Moses, Paul, Rahab, The Woman at the Well, The Woman caught in the act... Uncle ML was a devoted prophet and Man of God. Need I say more?

Overall I enjoyed the film, and I recommend the film for viewing.

*Alveda is author of King Rules, Founder of Alveda King Ministries, Director of African American Outreach for Priests for Life, and spiritual adviser for Restore the Dream 2015.*

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## **The Real Reasons Young Adults Drop Out of Church**

Despite all the fear-driven presentations you've heard, not every young person is walking out of the church the moment they finish high school and never coming back.

Here's what you need to know. The young adults who do drop out of church often lack a firsthand faith—a faith of their own—and a relationship with Christ that matters deeply in their own personal life apart from their parents' pressure.

I've heard some pretty remarkable statistics about church dropouts—I'm sure you have too. Such as: 94 percent (some say 86 percent) of evangelical youth drop out of church after high school, never to return. The problem? Those stats are urban legends. They've not been validated, and research has never

come to that conclusion.

Let's explore the actual statistics regarding young adult dropouts, and why they drop out:

## **The Truth: Some Young Adults Do Drop Out**

The reality is there are dropout challenges, but it's not 94 percent or even 86 percent of evangelicals. Real research shows that faith is rather resilient from one generation to the next—but that does not sell the books, I know.

A few years ago, LifeWay Research examined the issue, looking at some of the things that help young adults stick, stay and have a robust faith. We wanted to know what it takes for a student to continue his or her faith through high school, college, the career years and beyond. (It's discussed in *Essential Faith* by Sam and Thom Rainer.)

We looked at the faith of students who attended a Protestant church (mainline or evangelical) twice a month or more for at least one year in high school. Here's what we found: About 70 percent of young adults ages 18 to 22 stopped attending church regularly for at least one year. Is that a 70 percent dropout rate? With all the nuances and with all the caveats, we'd say so. That's a dropout rate, a much too high dropout rate.

Other research and studies among evangelical youth, however, indicate that number is almost certainly much lower (see the study mentioned earlier). And it should be noted that we found almost two-thirds of those who left in our Protestant study were back in church by the end of the study.

## **Why Do Young Adults Drop Out?**

We also asked young adults why they dropped out of church. Of those who dropped out, about 97 percent stated it was because of life changes or situations. That's a pretty substantial number. Among their more specific reasons:

- They simply wanted a break from church (27 percent).
- They had moved to college (25 percent).
- Their work made it impossible or difficult to attend (23 percent).

About 58 percent of young adults indicated they dropped out because of their church or pastor. When we probed further, they said:

- Church members seemed judgmental or hypocritical (26 percent).
- They didn't feel connected to the people at their church (20 percent).
- Church members were unfriendly and unwelcoming (15 percent).

Fifty-two percent indicated some sort of religious, ethical or political beliefs as the reason they dropped out. In other words, about 52 percent changed their Christian views. Maybe they didn't believe what the church taught, or they didn't believe what they perceived others in the church to believe.

Firsthand faith leads to life change and life-long commitment. More specifically, 18 percent disagreed with the church's stance on political or social issues, 17 percent said they were only going to church to please others anyway, and 16 percent said they no longer wanted to identify with church or organized religion.

## **What Can We Do?**

The reason that many church-attending young adults stopped going to church upon graduating from high school? Their faith just wasn't personally meaningful to them. They did not have a firsthand faith. The church had not become a valued and valuable expression in their life—one that impacts how they live and how they relate and how they grow.

Church was perhaps something their parents wanted them do.

They may have grown up in church, and perhaps they faced pressure from parents and even peers to be involved in church. But it wasn't a firsthand faith.

We cannot posture our student ministries to think like and act like a four-year holding tank with pizza. Instead, we need to prepare young adults for the spiritual challenges that will come and the faith questions they will face. Firsthand faith leads to life change and life-long commitment.

*This post was inspired by a conversation about Firsthand Faith, a book by Ryan and Josh Shook.*

**Ed Stetzer** is the president of LifeWay Research and LifeWay's Missiologist in Residence. For the original article, visit [here](#).

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## 7 Secrets to Losing Belly Fat

As we age, we tend to gain weight, especially in our abdomens. In addition to making it more difficult to fit into last year's swimsuit, belly fat can have a significant impact on our health.

That's because the fat doesn't just sit there, spoiling your silhouette. Belly fat and its companion, visceral fat—the fat that hides deep in your body—continuously create inflammatory compounds that wreak havoc in your body, increasing the risk of heart disease, diabetes, cancer and many other conditions.

Don't despair, though, because there are seven surefire ways to melt belly fat away.

**1. Exercise before breakfast.** A British study found that exercising before breakfast burns more body fat than exercising later in the day. As an added bonus, greater

amounts of artery-clogging fats in the blood that cause heart attacks are reduced in early morning workouts. Participants underwent three trials one to two weeks apart, involving walking briskly for an hour before eating breakfast, taking the same walk after eating breakfast, or not exercising at all. Although exercising increased the amount of fat their bodies burned when compared to not exercising, exercising before breakfast caused a greater loss of fat—up to 33 percent more than exercising after breakfast.

**2. Eat good fats.** A diet rich in monounsaturated fats (MUFAs), such as olive oil, avocados, nuts and seeds, can help melt away belly fat. Most experts agree that olive oil is one of the best for cooking and salads because of its high MUFA content, which lowers LDL (“bad”) cholesterol. In addition, olive oil contains compounds that signal to your brain that your stomach’s full, causing you to eat less and feel satiated longer.

**3. Jog instead of lifting weights.** Researchers at Duke University found that aerobic exercise is a much more efficient way to lose belly fat than resistance training or a combination of the two. A study of overweight adults ages 18 to 70 determined that aerobic training burned 67 percent more calories when compared to resistance training.

**4. Eliminate trans fats.** Although large amounts of trans fats have been eliminated from many foods, it’s still hanging around in some vegetable shortenings, cookies and snack foods. (Beware of the ingredient “partially hydrogenated oil.”) Research at Wake Forest University found that monkeys who were fed a Western-style diet that included trans fats gained 7.2 percent more body weight than those who were fed a diet of monounsaturated fats, such as olive oil. The number of calories and amount of fat in both diets was identical. Most of the weight gain was in the abdominal area.

**5. Reduce stress.** When you’re stressed, your body releases a

powerful hormonal mixture of adrenaline, cortisol and insulin, which not only increases your appetite and causes your body to produce more fat, but also usually sends the extra fat straight to your waistline. For an immediate reduction in stress, close your eyes and take long, slow, deep breaths for about five minutes. Your stress level will fall—and so should those belly-bursting hormones.

**6. Get enough sleep.** Not getting enough sleep can throw off your body's natural rhythm and cause you to produce a great quantity of fat-inducing hormones, similar to hormones created when you're stressed. One study found that people who got sufficient sleep gained less belly fat over a five-year period when compared to those who were sleep-deprived.

**7. Eat fiber.** Researchers at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center found that simply eating more soluble fiber from vegetables and fruits reduces visceral fat. They found that every 10-gram increase in soluble fiber eaten each day decreased the amount of belly fat by 3.7 percent over five years. Adding moderate activity decreased belly fat even further to 7.4 percent. Foods high in soluble fiber include apples, oats, peas and beans. Two small apples contain 10 grams of soluble fiber.

A study from Penn State found that people who ate a healthy diet that included all-whole grains lost more belly fat than people who ate the same diet but ate refined grains instead. In addition, their levels of C-reactive protein (CRP) were lowered by 38 percent, while levels remained the same in the group who ate refined grains. High levels of CRP are linked to heart disease.

*For the original article, visit .*

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# Misty Edwards Releases 'Little Bird' With Authentic Worship Style

While the name Misty Edwards may be synonymous with artistically-minded worship leadership, when it comes to the brand new release *Little Bird*, which comes on the heels of last year's critically lauded long player *Only a Shadow*, there's a decidedly different slant towards the singer/songwriter side of this immensely talented artist.

As one of her most personal records to date, Edwards boldly steps out as a solo artist without forsaking her worship roots. She fills the gap between the sacred and the secular, citing that there is no division between the two because "if a person is living before God's eyes, everything is sacred."

One of the reasons there is a new direction heard on *Little Bird* is that Misty wants to encourage others in the worship movement to think outside the box and not be limited to corporate expression.

"A lot of worship leaders feel limited and frustrated creatively, but we're called to so much more as Christians, even when it comes to our typical definition of worship," shares Misty. "I also wanted to channel the kind of music I personally listen to, so it's also a case of being authentic to what I like. I strongly believe there's a whole group of listeners who won't gravitate towards worship music because they have a taste for a different kind of creativity, and it was in my heart to reach those people."

Produced by multiple Grammy and Dove Award-winning producer Brown Bannister, in conjunction with the Grammy-nominated Paul Moak (The Blind Boys of Alabama, Mat Kearney), *Little Bird* offers an organic collection of deeply authentic songs

that reflect the themes of the frailty of life, God's grace and mercy and being captivated by eternity as part of God's plan.

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## **Legal Battle Over Gay Marriage in Florida Heats Up**

In the last 24 hours, Liberty Counsel has defended marriage in Florida by filing an amicus response in the *Brenner v. Scott* case in Tallahassee and by filing separate lawsuits against the Clerk of Court in Osceola County, and against the Mayor of Orlando and a Circuit Judge in Orange County. Liberty Counsel represents Florida Family Action Inc. in all three cases.

In the Brenner case, a federal judge in August ordered the Washington County Clerk of Court to issue a marriage license to a same-sex couple who are plaintiffs in the case, ruling with a stroke of a pen that Florida's Marriage Protection Amendment, passed in 2008 by nearly 5 million Floridians, was "unconstitutional."

The stay of that ruling is set to expire at the end of the day on Jan. 5, 2015, causing many activists throughout Florida to demand marriage licenses from other Florida clerks of court for Jan. 6 "weddings." In its court filing yesterday, Liberty Counsel advised the federal court that its August preliminary injunction does not require any Florida clerk to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples outside of Washington County, and that the court lacks jurisdiction over any other clerk.

"In sum, the Court may not expand the Preliminary Injunction

as an afterthought, to afford relief that no one requested, benefiting persons who are not plaintiffs, at the expense of clerks who are not defendants,” said Horatio Mihet, vice president of Legal Affairs and Chief Litigation Counsel for Liberty Counsel, in the filing.

The new lawsuits against the Osceola County Clerk of Court, Armando Ramirez, Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer and Circuit Judge Robert LeBlanc were filed in response to the officials’ dereliction of their official public duties. Osceola Clerk Ramirez is actively soliciting same-sex couples to apply for marriage licenses to be issued “one minute after midnight” in Kissimmee on Jan. 6, in blatant violation of his sworn oath to uphold Florida’s marriage laws.

In Orlando, Mayor Dyer and Judge LeBlanc have both agreed to officiate and promote public mass wedding ceremonies on Jan. 6, despite having no legal authority to solemnize the marriages of same-sex couples.

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## **Break Your Addiction to Food in 2015**

We play at weight loss, kind of like a game. Can I eat this and not gain weight? So we get on the scale the next morning and we haven’t gained an ounce. So we keep eating and eating. In a week we step on the scale again and find our game has caught up with us. We lost the game and added lots of extra pounds in the process with no way to get rid of the fat.

We are now captives to our own game and we don’t know how to stop. We are stuck in a rut we made for ourselves. We always know where a rut will take us. Sometimes such as a shortcut

across a beautiful yard, it seems like the quickest destination. However, if we get stopped by a security guard it can take us much longer.

Ruts begin to define us. We stay in them because they have become comfortable. However, if we wish to change ourselves into better, more environmentally conscious individuals, we are going to have to reprogram our brains to not take the rutted shortcut that seems the easy way out. We have to change our minds.

Changing your mind can be challenging, but just like that brain teaser puzzle you got for Christmas, it can be fun to figure out. You can play a game with yourself to convince and change your mind.

Maybe you want to lose weight for the new year, but you love sweets. So you challenge yourself and say, "You can have one sweet thing this week." And every day you make a choice. Will this be the day I eat my treat?

You decide to wait and you put it off as long as you can. You convince yourself it's not worth wasting your one moment of treat on this particular item. And before you know it, you've gone weeks without it and you realize, this is not that hard. This works for some, yet it's still a game that can have reverse consequences.

For me, I have to completely change my mind. I have to say no to all processed sugar. I say yes to fruit and no to processed sugar. That's the game I play with myself. It can be a fun game to play, especially when I begin to see the pounds melting away. It's also fun to realize I don't have to listen to that other person who seems to be talking in my brain. I can switch to a higher, more amazing mind gear when I get in touch with what God is showing me.

I understand, though, that many have tried to convince themselves to change and they understand they need to change,

but there are deep, deep emotional ruts we are stuck in and the process seems impossible. Ah, but I know a God who says with Him the impossible is possible.

When you are stuck in a deep rut, the truth is you need some help getting pulled out. That's what Sweet Change Weight Loss Coaching and Accountability Group is all about. We help you figure out ways to change your mind, to get unstuck, to look at weight loss differently. Many of us are like that stubborn old uncle who will never see things our way.

At times there seems like we have two brains and one of them acts like that stubborn old uncle. There's the stuck old uncle who doesn't want to change and there's the real you who cognitively knows you are going to die quicker if you keep eating that way and sitting on your behind all day long without moving except to get another piece of cake or bag of chips and a super-size drink. We have to kick the uncle out or at least silence him. It seems cruel because he is part of us. However, he is doing us no favors.

Sweet Change Group is so awesome in that those in the group are on the journey with you and dealing with their old stubborn old uncles. I'm there to help you think about your choices and encourage you to look at things differently, tap into the power of God and the resources He has blessed you with to take you to your destiny.

The truth is God wants this more than you do. Why? Because before time He planned your destiny. "Your eyes saw me unformed, yet in Your book all my days were written, before any of them came into being" (Ps. 139:16). We are pretty good at messing it up though. We want our destiny, but we also want our cake too. We have to learn how those two things do not go together. We cannot have both.

Change is not easy. We talk a lot about that over at Sweet Change Group. I'd love for you to experience the group and see

how it's not like any weight loss program or group you've ever been a part of. So, now through Jan. 3 I've reinstated the lowest monthly rate on Sweet Change for only a two-month commitment.

After two months we're sure you'll want to stay, but you can opt out any time after that. It's my way of introducing you to this amazing group of women who are going forward on their journey with others (peers), another (a coach who's been successful on the journey, that's me) and the Other, God Almighty. With that crew on your side, you've got a head start on your weight loss and healthy living lifestyle change.

What if this time next year, you could well on your way to freedom from foods you crave controlling your life? It is possible. It really is. Go here to get more information.

It's really not a game, though. It's death or life stakes we're talking about here. We can't keep playing with our health. We have to make some hard decisions. If you've read either of my books, my blog posts or follow me on Facebook, you know I don't pull *any* punches. I shoot straight. The truth is weight loss is not easy, but it is the easiest hard thing I've ever done when I follow what God shows me.

Trying to win at the weight loss game is a lost cause when you continue to try in your own strength. But when you accept you have a weakness, an addiction where certain foods are concerned, you take the first step out of bondage. And then if you surrender what you crave and accept God's strength and power, you will find amazing things happen in your life.

So, what's it going to be? Isn't it time to invest in yourself and take a Sweet Change journey. You are worth it. Aren't you?

**Teresa Shields Parker** is an author, blogger, editor, business owner, wife and mother. Her book, *Sweet Grace: How I Lost 250*

Pounds and Stopped Trying to Earn God's Favor *is available on Amazon in print, Kindle and Audible [HERE](#). This story is from her blog, .*

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## **The Top 10 Church News Stories of 2014**

A Sudanese woman sentenced to die for her faith, church disputes and friction between religious freedom and LGBTQ causes made news throughout 2014. Below are IRD's top church news stories for the year.

**1) Christian Woman in Sudan Sentenced to Death on Charges of Apostasy, Adultery:** A Christian woman sentenced to death by a Sudanese court after refusing to recant her faith was eventually freed after widespread outcry. Mariam Yahya Ibrahim was charged with apostasy and adultery for marrying a South Sudanese Christian man and gave birth to a daughter while in shackles.

**2) Supreme Court Rules for Hobby Lobby in Religious Liberty Case:** The U.S. Supreme Court ruled against Obamacare's HHS mandate compelling religious employers to subsidize insurance for contraceptives and abortifacients. The case split religious groups, with oldline churches largely endorsing the mandate while Catholic Bishops, Orthodox Jews, Evangelicals and Christian Colleges identified the mandate as an assault on religious liberty.

**3) Presbyterians Divest from Israel:** Amid spiraling membership, overtures to redefine marriage to a relationship between any "two people" and ending denominational investments with companies that do business with Israel were adopted at

the Presbyterian Church (.) General Assembly in June. Overtures required church agencies to divest themselves of holdings in Motorola Solutions, Hewlett Packard and Caterpillar, which all sell non-lethal equipment used by the Israeli military.

4) World Vision Reverses Employee Policy on Same-Sex Marriage: World Vision USA, the Christian international humanitarian organization, reversed a policy announced only two days prior to change its conduct policies to permit employees in same-sex marriages. World Vision's president and board chair apologized and reaffirmed the group's policy of "sexual abstinence for all single employees and faithfulness within the Biblical covenant of marriage between a man and a woman."

5) Supreme Court Prayer Ruling Protects Freedom of Religion and Speech: U.S. Supreme Court justices ruled that legislative bodies such as city councils can begin their meetings with prayer. The court ruled 5 to 4 that Christian prayers given before meetings of the town council of Greece, New York, did not violate the constitutional prohibition against government establishment of religion.

6) Christian Leaders Stand in Solidarity with Imperiled Religious Communities: More than 150 American Christian leaders, including IRD, issued a call to action in response to a crisis facing ancient faith communities. Prominent American Christian leaders released a "Pledge of Solidarity & Call to Action" on behalf of Christians and other religious communities in Egypt, Iraq and Syria who are increasingly threatened in the lands they have inhabited for centuries.

7) Methodist Same-Sex Disobedience: The clergy credentials of defrocked United Methodist Pastor Frank Schaefer were restored after an initial conviction of violating the denomination's ban on same-sex marriage was overturned on a technicality by a regional appeals panel. A New York bishop dropped clergy trials for same-sex ceremonies, with retired minister and past

dean of Yale Divinity School Thomas Ogletree facing no punishment for conducting a same-sex wedding.

**8) Harvard Black Satanic Mass:** Plans for a Satanic black mass at Harvard University drew criticism from the Catholic Archdiocese of Boston. The Harvard Extension Cultural Studies Club partnered for the event with the Satanic Temple of New York, which eventually relocated the ceremony off campus. Harvard's president called hosting the black mass "abhorrent" for mocking Catholicism, while she defended Harvard's commitment to "free expression" and attended a packed Catholic Eucharistic Holy Hour on campus.

**9) Activists Seek to Divide U.S. Evangelicals and Israel amid Gaza Conflict:** Conservative Christians witnessed a new movement of young activists seeking change enthusiastic support for Israel. Proclaiming a "pro-Israel, pro-Palestine, pro-peace" stance, activists at Bethlehem's "Christ at the Checkpoint" conference connected to Wheaton College, suburban Chicago's influential Willow Creek megachurch and World Vision sought to shift U.S. Evangelicals away from historically strong support for Israel.

**10) Nigerian Schoolgirls Abducted by Boko Haram:** Over 200 Nigerian schoolgirls remain captives of the militant Islamist group Boko Haram. Word of the girls' plight spread quickly through the #bringbackourgirls hashtag. Escaped girls told of forced marriages and conversions to Islam. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, Boko Haram's leader threatened to sell the girls "in the market" and referred to them as "slaves."

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# Do You Need a Prophetic Word?

“Where there is no prophecy the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law” (Prov. 29:18, RSV).

Prophecy provides revelation of the purposes of God. It is the revealed will of God for your life. “Where there is no prophecy the people cast off restraint.” “Casting off restraint” is letting go of your goals and focus in life. You become passionless, living an undisciplined, mediocre life. Without prophetic revelation, we lose a grip on life and become like a wild person. Without prophecy, we become like savages, never grasping the potential God has placed within us. Prophecy can inspire within us a sense of purpose that brings focus, determination and discipline into our lives.

The prophetic word will align our lives with the law, which is the decree of God. Without prophetic vision, we will be untrained in the ways of God, living our lives without the discipline of God.

We are called to be disciples of Christ. A disciple is a disciplined learner. The prophetic ministry will equip you with the advantage of living under the discipline of God.

The disadvantage of not having prophecy released in your life is that you will live your life in a vacuum. One translation of Proverbs 29:18 states, “Without prophetic vision the people run wild” (GW). In other words, they live life taking risks with no control or direction, leaving them uncultivated, out of rhythm and out of reason.

The prophetic word brings order and structure to your life. God wants your life to mean something—your money, your efforts. The prophetic word of God causes you to live your life for something greater than yourself.

Life and time are speeding along so fast for all of us. We

should be able to look back over our lives and say that we have accomplished the purpose God created us for. We should want to be able to confidently say, "I was here."

The prophetic word will allow you to live for eternal purpose and not the temporal. It changes your value system. Once the revealed purpose of the Lord is known, you set your affections on things above, transcending this temporal world. There are people who live their lives never knowing or obeying the prophetic purpose of God. The graveyard is one of the richest places in the earth. People live and die on the earth with so much potential for greatness. They never impact the world around them.

Don't let your gravestone epitaph read: "It was like they were never here." "They settled for too little." "They never discovered the riches and treasures that were inside of them." "They lived for the temporal, fading purposes, never living out God's eternal purposes."

Life before Christ can be so devastating and confusing. It's like having the wind knocked out of you. The prophetic word provides spiritual oxygen for life and destiny. Prophecy is the breath of life being released back into you. When God breathed into Adam, He released life and prophetic purpose into him. We must understand that God will always give us pictures, maps and directions to show us how we should be living our lives. His will for our lives is knowable. This is revealed by prophecy. Everything in the earth is trying to take us away from the original purposes of God for our lives. It dangles every kind of glitter in front of us. Its ultimate goal is to lead us down paths of destruction.

God, in His love and mercy, sends prophets and prophetic people with insight and direction. We must then make a decision to follow and align our lives with the revealed prophetic word. We must go to the cross. I am not talking

about suffering, but rather where your desires are in conflict with God's desires—you must be willing to put those desires to death on the cross.

The moment you choose to align your life with the prophetic purpose of God, the Lord is watching and sends every resource you need to accomplish His prophetic purpose in your life. You're not in this world by chance. Embrace the prophetic anointing that gives you an advantage to live a rich and full life.

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## **Did Christian Parents Drive Their Child to Suicide?**

The headline alone is painful to read: "Transgender teenager, 17, leaves heartbreaking suicide note blaming her Christian parents before walking in front of tractor trailer on highway." The story itself is even more painful to read, while the loss of life is absolutely tragic.

Is there blood on the hands of these Christian parents?

What makes this story all the more heartrending is that the teenager, born Joshua Alcorn but who used the name Leelah to identify as a female, left a suicide note that was scheduled to be posted in the event of his death. (If you are a

transgender advocate and are already furious with me for using the male pronoun for Joshua-Leelah, please hold your fury long enough to finish reading the article.)

In the note, Joshua explains how he began feeling that he was a girl at the age of four, writing, "When I was 14, I learned what transgender meant and cried of happiness. After 10 years of confusion I finally understood who I was.

"I immediately told my mom, and she reacted extremely negatively, telling me that it was a phase, that I would never truly be a girl, that God doesn't make mistakes, that I am wrong."

Did the mother respond in the right way, or did her lack of understanding lead to Joshua's death?

Joshua says that his parents sent him to Christian therapists who allegedly told him that he was "selfish and wrong," and on his 16th birthday, "when I didn't receive consent from my parents to start transitioning, I cried myself to sleep."

He added, "I'm never going to be happy. Either I live the rest of my life as a lonely man who wishes he were a woman or I live my life as a lonelier woman who hates herself."

Not long after composing this note, on Sunday night, Dec. 27, he walked into the path of a tractor trailer and ended it all.

There has been an immediate outpouring of support in his memory (along with condemnation of his parents), while a new Facebook page has been launched, called "Justice for Leelah Alcorn," receiving more than 12,000 likes almost overnight. The page links to a petition on entitled, "Enact Leelah's Law to Ban Transgender Conversion Therapy." By the evening of Dec. 30, it had received almost 20,000 signatures.

As conservative Christians who believe in the Scriptures, how do we respond to a tragedy like this? And should we oppose the

concept of “transgender conversion therapy”?

Without a doubt, we must recognize that issues of transgender identity often run very deep and cannot be trivialized or taken lightly. Although I have often been dubbed “transphobic” because of my strong opposition to many aspects of LGBT activism, often focusing on transgender issues, at the same time, I have constantly drawn attention to the depth of struggle experienced by many who identify as transgender.

I interacted at length with one man who now identifies as a woman, asking him why he would destroy a 37-year marriage and become alienated from his own children. He explained to me that after decades of trying to resolve his issues, it was either suicide or sex-change. He opted for the latter and says he is very glad he did.

Another man, whose story I know well, decided to come out as a woman in his mid-to-late 60s, also affecting his marriage. (I’m not sure how things stand today with his children.) He explained to me that I had no idea the pain he lived with all his life. I don’t believe he was making any of this up.

And there are the many stories of children trying to hide or even mutilate their genitals, growing increasingly agitated as they come into puberty.

Surely, this cannot be taken lightly, nor can we look to glib clichés or superficial fixes. And parents need to do their best (with the help of professionals when possible) to spot signs of depression and potential suicide. In other words, handle with extreme love and care.

But that is not the end of the story.

I personally know individuals who once identified as transgender and who no longer do, and they are so thankful to God that they found a better way. They emphatically discourage parents from affirming their children as transgender (while

even more emphatically urging those parents to show unconditional love to their kids). Should we ignore what they have to say? (For more on this, see the important, recent article, "Trouble in Transtopia: Murmurs of Sex Change Regret.")

Some of these individuals remained suicidal even after having sex-change surgery, and in some notable cases, which I mentioned in my article "Sex Change Regret," some have committed suicide after coming out as the opposite of their biological sex.

Don't their deaths count as much as the death of Joshua-Leelah?

Why are people so free to condemn Joshua's parents when they wouldn't dare criticize doctors who performed (or recommended) sex-change surgery on someone who then killed himself or herself, unhappy with their new identity? Shouldn't all these suicides give us pause for thought?

According to a major, 30-year study of "sex-reassigned" persons in Sweden, and as cited in an op-ed piece in the Wall Street Journal by Dr. Paul McHugh, formerly chair of the Johns Hopkins psychiatric department, "their suicide mortality rose almost 20-fold above the comparable nontransgender population."

And so, while the suicide of Joshua-Leelah is absolutely tragic, and while I understand the passion of those who want to ban so-called transgender conversion therapy, I respectfully submit that wisdom and compassion call for a better path, one that invests more time and energy into looking for the root causes of transgenderism, as we encourage therapists and counselors and psychologists to listen and learn even more, with the goal of finding non-surgical ways to help them find wholeness.

In short, rather than having an emotional, gut-level response

(which is quite understandable, given this heartbreaking story), let us seek to do what is right and best. That is the way of love.

**Michael Brown** *is the author of 25 books, including Can You Be Gay and Christian?, and host of the nationally syndicated talk radio show The Line of Fire . He is also president of FIRE School of Ministry and director of the Coalition of Conscience*