

64 Churches Destroyed or Vandalized in China Province

On April 28, Zhejiang province officials bulldozed the 4,000-seat Sanjiang Christian Church in Wenzhou City despite a weeks-long protest involving hundreds of Christian attendees who formed a human chain around the church.

What appeared to be an isolated event has, on further investigation by International Christian Concern (ICC), been revealed to be a widespread and massive anti-church crackdown with 64 churches in Zhejiang province alone having been destroyed and/or their crosses (or steeples) torn down.

ChinaAid is reporting that authorities once tore down 50 crosses in one day in Wenzhou City. Another 85 house churches recently received government orders to stop gathering and may face closure by the government by the end of May.

The wave of church and cross demolitions occurred after Xia Baolong, the Communist Party secretary of Zhejiang Province, conducted an inspection tour of the province earlier this year and was disturbed by a forest of crosses in the skyline and the number of large church buildings that host thousands of worshippers.

“He found the cross on top of BaiXi Christian Church too ‘conspicuous,’” one ICC contact says.

The “anti-church” campaign has been carried out under the vague provisions of urban development and beautification laws. The stated intent of the campaign is to “aggressively demolish illegal buildings in accordance with the law.”

However, ICC’s investigation has revealed that even government-approved churches are facing demolition or cross removal, such as the forcible removal of the cross on the

steeple of BaiXi Christian Church in Wenzhou City on May 6.

The campaign is also almost exclusively targeting Christian sites. An ICC contact says, "The Zhejiang government has selectively enforced the law on only church buildings. Other 'illegal' structures did not receive demolition orders."

During an interview with ICC, a Zhejiang believer said, "President Xi Jinping won't be pleased by what the provincial party secretary, Xia Baolong, is doing because Xia is breaking people's hearts and making local citizens scared of the government's unpredictable policy. It is harming a harmonious society, which the central government says it is working hard to build."

Sooyoung Kim, ICC's regional manager for East Asia, says, "Xia Baolong, the local provincial party secretary, is blatantly undermining China's carefully crafted human rights image presented to the international community as he continues to implement his anti-church campaign to limit religious freedom and the gathering of Christians. He has ignored the desperate pleas of thousands of his own citizens and the glare and condemnation of the international media spotlight."

"Concerned Christians must call the Chinese Embassy and ask them to rein in Xia Baolong's attacks on churches in Zhejiang province. Ask them to enforce Article 36 of China's Constitution and to immediately cease the demolition of churches and the removal of church steeples and crosses."

This article originally appeared on persecution.org.

WATCH: Memorial Day Tribute

Remember those who laid their lives down for our country. Post and share with your friends and family.

Humanism: The Proverbial Frog in Boiling Water

Humanism is the enthronement and glorification of self. It is what the Western culture worships. It is diluting the church's progress and hampering her power and impact.

The dictionary definition of *humanism* is this: "the denial of any power or moral value superior to that of humanity; the rejection of religion in favor of a belief in the advancement of humanity by its own efforts."

After reading that definition, you might be thinking, "Hey, professing Christians in America and the West in general don't deny a superior power (God) and moral value or reject religion!" But remember that humanism is the prevalent thought in the Western culture, largely shaped by the mainstream media and not seen or discerned by the multitudes.

Due to its satanic origin and nature, it is deceptive. Humanism is the philosophy of our day that has infiltrated Christianity. It is very subtle, akin to the proverbial frog in boiling water. If you drop a frog into hot water, it will immediately jump out. If you put a frog in cool water and slowly heat it, it will stay and die because it does not

discern the sudden heat.

Although there seems to be a growing number of professing atheists in America, the majority of people in the West have not denied God, per se, or rejected religion—at least not in word or form, but in deed and in actions they undoubtedly have. Just the one example of same-sex marriage proves that.

What was unthinkable 50 years ago has now been legalized in a number of states. It is not the outright rejection of God or religion that signals a radical change in the Western culture but the change in the motivation of the hearts of the people. The wealth of any nation is the hearts of the people.

Humanism defined as a motivation of the heart is this: The end of all existence is the happiness of man. In other words, all of creation exists for the happiness of man. God reigns in heaven for the happiness of man. Jesus Christ came from heaven for the happiness of man. The angels exist for the happiness of man.

Again, you may be asking, “Is there anything wrong with being happy?” and “Does God not want us happy?” Happiness is honorable and desirable only when it is a byproduct of holiness and true submission to God and not a primary aim or a means to an end. God does not exist to make man happy.

True Christianity is the glorification of God. The end of all things is the glory of God.

Humanism is simply the deification of man. In the Western world, we don't worship idols of wood carvings and totem pole images, but we worship self, thus the reason our hard-drinking, drug-using, immoral celebrities are deified by the mainstream media and society. Even in their death, countless obituaries laud these celebrities' abilities and accomplishments while skipping over their extremely godless lifestyles. Most of these celebrities can't even sustain a brief marriage and can hardly remain briefly sober but

continue to rake in the extra bucks from their celebrity endorsements, which are carefully heeded by their adoring, senseless fans who worship them. Humans have a need to worship something, so it might as well be a better me or a superior you.

Even though at our very core we were created with an innate desire to be God-centered human beings, as a society our rejection of God as worthy of our worship has opened the door to increasingly foolish brands of polytheism, Eastern religions, mysticism and self-help gurus, all stroking the already inflated egos of our population and informing them of the latest religion that's all about *you*. These religions and philosophies have penetrated our Western culture and are eroding the influence and impact of Christianity.

As a further example of the progressively inordinate worship of self in our Western culture, let's examine the magazine industry to illustrate this evolution, especially throughout the last century.

Decades ago, there was a birth of a magazine in America called *Life* that was very popular. Later, a new magazine was published that superseded *Life* called *People*. Well, since *Life* is all about people, the new magazine title made perfect sense. Something then changed in our inner consciousness and the industry took advantage of it, which necessitated a third magazine publication called *Us*. Finally, as the motivation of the heart of American culture continued to spiral downward, alas, today you can walk through airports and observe on magazine racks in stores the latest new magazine called *Self*. Coincidence? I don't think so.

This illustrates the gradual, ever-so-subtle change in the motivation of the hearts of our Western culture and the evolution of it into such a preoccupation and an exaltation of self—an even stronger brand of humanism called narcissism, where people's bodies and nakedness are glorified.

We worship celebrities, singers, sex symbols, pop star divas and athletes, and these become our heroes and our gods, regardless of their oftentimes questionable character and corrupted lifestyle. We save the whales, the eagles, the bears, the trees and Mother Earth, but we kill babies. And yes, we encourage homosexuality and now same-sex marriage but outlaw school prayer. This is the rotten fruit of secular humanism, and it is killing Western civilization as generations past have known it and, as I've repeatedly stated, infiltrating, infecting and greatly weakening the church.

The first step to recovering and restoring godly character and power in the church is to simply develop an awareness of humanism and its deadly effects.

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Why the Government's 3-Parent Baby Plan Is So Dangerous

Christian Concern has warned the British government of the serious health, social and ethical dangers posed by its plans to introduce a new IVF technique that will result in the creation of children with three parents.

In its response to a public consultation, which closed on Thursday, the campaign group said the proposals could lead to "lasting emotional damage" to children and submit them to serious, irreversible health risks, which would pass from

generation to generation.

Ministers published draft regulations to allow the technique—known as “mitochondrial donation”—in February, saying the procedure will prevent mothers from passing mitochondrial diseases to their children. The technique involves transferring the nucleus of an egg from one woman who carries the disease to the egg of another woman with healthy mitochondria.

But Christian Concern warns that scientists have not yet shown that the technique is sufficiently safe for clinical use and could lead to health defects worse than mitochondrial disease itself.

Andrea Williams, CEO of Christian Concern, says, “The HFEA [Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority] itself has recommended that further research should be undertaken before proceeding with these proposals. The government should have waited for the conclusion of these further tests before publishing the Draft Regulations.”

The response from Christian Concern emphasizes that the controversial technique would “lead to complex, legal and social conflicts and create the potential for lasting emotional damage to both the child and the donor parent.”

It adds, “There are widespread concerns about the profound, adverse effects on a child’s physiological well-being, including the impact on his or her sense of identity, which could arise from a genetic, parental connection with three, instead of two, individuals.”

Additional concern was raised about the difficulty of preventing further genetic modification of children to “enhance” other traits such as intellect and appearance—in other words, the creation of “designer babies.”

The Wife Must Submit, and So Must the Husband

In marriage, God requires us to submit to Him first and then to each other. For those whom this truth irritates, this post is specifically for you. Now that I have your attention, let's ask some questions.

In the many marriage conferences I have attended over the last few years, I always hear about the longstanding debate where the wife must submit to her husband. This, of course, always brings up some tension, mainly among the ladies in the crowd. The men nod their heads, of course, but are quickly sustained.

I also hear a lot of confusion on this topic with couples who are struggling in their marriage. Typically, the husband is trying to drive home the point that she must submit to him, not even knowing where it's written or how to actually define it, and the wife will naturally fight against his wishes, she, again, not knowing the rules on submission or love. So what are the rules?

What Does the Dictionary Say?

- Submit: "to give over or yield to the power or authority of another"
- Love: "a profoundly tender and passionate affection for another person"
- Respect: "to hold in esteem or honor"

These definitions sound like the type of relationship we all need to have with Jesus. Agreed? Now, what about our marriages?

What does the Bible say about submission and love?

The standard for this information can be found in Ephesians 5:21-33. The big verse that stands out for **wives** and submission is verse 22: "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord." The next big verse that stands out is verse 24, which says, "Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything."

The big verse that stands out for the **husbands** and love is verse 25: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her." The next big one is verse 28: "In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself."

These verses bring up the exact points that wives are to submit to their husbands and husbands are to love their wives. Note that there is no hierarchy mentioned here in these verses. There are different roles mentioned, but they are equal. This might be the key point.

To put these verses in a better perspective, I made this infographic below to help you understand those Scriptures. Review the graphic and then review your marriage and relationship with Jesus. What are you waiting for?



The infographic helped me understand the connections between our roles in marriage and our roles in our relationship with Jesus. All at the same level, the wife must submit to her husband just as the church submits to Jesus, and the husband must love his wife just as Jesus loves the church. Do you agree with this graphic? Expand on your thoughts in the comments.

Is that it? Are husbands exempt from any form of submission?

Absolutely not. In fact, if you read all of the verses in the

Ephesians passage above you, would see that the first verse says, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." Another hot verse on submission can be found in James 4:7, which reads, "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

These verses make it clear that both men and women, married or not, must learn how to submit to God. If you take the initiative to be submissive to God and understand what it means, you will be able to better apply the principles in your own relationship or marriage. Starting to make sense?

So, what is the bottom line? It's simple: Both spouses must learn the details on submission and love. Jesus sets the example for us in the Scriptures, and you must learn to live them out in your own marriage.

In the case of submission, yes, the wives must learn how to submit to their husbands according to the Scripture. But in the same sense and on the same level, husbands must learn how to love their wives according to the Scripture.

If you are personally living out the principles in your walk with Jesus, it will be much easier to live out these principles in your own marriage. As we are all the body of Christ, we are all one flesh. As a married couple, we are and have become one flesh.

So, here's your challenge:

- Husbands, ask your wife today how you can love her better.
- Wives, ask your husband today how you can submit to or respect him better.

What aspect of love or submission do you struggle with in your own marriage? Feel free to share your thoughts in the comments below.

Maturity 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. Maturity.com features new weekly blog posts, daily social media updates and a powerful resources page. Stay up to date with the Maturity blog communities on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/maturity) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com/maturity).

For the original article, visit maturity.com.

Sovereign Grace Founder CJ Mahaney Speaks Out on Sexual Abuse Case

C.J. Mahaney, founder of Sovereign Grace Ministries—and current pastor of Sovereign Grace Church of Louisville, Kentucky—is finally speaking out in the wake of a sex-abuse scandal that rocked the evangelical world.

Two years ago, Covenant Life in Gaithersburg, Maryland, was hit with a civil lawsuit related to sexual abuse. Mahaney was one of the overseers of the church. During the past 24 months, Mahaney stood in silence in the face of accusations that he helped protect child predators. Now he's working to set the record straight.

For starters, earlier this week, [Mahaney left the Gospel Coalition](#), a central hub for the Reformed evangelical movement. His move came days after a criminal trial wrapped up last week that questioned what pastors knew about the sexual abuse going on at Covenant Life.

Mahaney's statement reads:

"For nearly two years now, I have remained silent about a civil lawsuit brought against various parties including myself. During that time, many have urged me to respond publicly and address the accusations against me.

"These pleas have only intensified over the last week in light of reports of testimony in a recent trial. I look forward to the day when I can speak freely. For now, the simple and extraordinarily unsatisfying reality—for myself and others—is that in the face of an ongoing civil lawsuit, I simply cannot speak publicly to the specifics of these events.

"Even with those constraints, however, let me be clear about this: I have never conspired to protect a child predator, and I also deny all the claims made against me in the civil suit.

"I am deeply grieved for those who suffered abuse while part of Covenant Life Church, as well as those beyond the church who were abused—and I continue to pray for justice to be served on their behalf and for God's healing grace in their lives. I'm saddened, too, by the confusion and damage that has resulted from public comments and speculation about these events. Still, my trust remains in the Lord, who comforts the brokenhearted and promises in his justice and in his time to right every wrong."

WATCH: 'The Voice Kids' Contestants Stun Crowd

Singing 'Hallelujah'

Three young contestants on Germany's *The Voice Kids* recently delivered a stunning performance of Leonard Cohen's classic "Hallelujah."

Patrizia, Simon and Helen—ages 12, 12 and 11, respectively—wowed judges and the audience with their emotional rendition of the popular 1984 song last month, and the YouTube video has gone viral with more than 1.2 million views.

Watch the video below.

Is it Time for Your Church to Join the 'Muscular Christianity' Movement?

Theodore Roosevelt was the 26th president of the United States, and he's known for many famous quotes that are still referenced today, including ones relating to "muscular Christianity."

Prior to becoming president, Roosevelt served as the second in command with a group in the 1st United States Volunteer Cavalry known as the Rough Riders. The Rough Riders were called into action in the Spanish-American War, and it was during this war that Roosevelt said, "Do what you can where you are with what you have."

Roosevelt's quote serves as an excellent strategy for churches looking to add fitness ministry. Churches from around the

world contact us every year inquiring about adding fitness as an outreach ministry for their congregation and community.

Church fitness ministry is extremely rewarding and fulfilling, and it's an outreach that any church can launch to promote wellness, regardless of its size. It's fantastic if your church has the budget and space to launch a full-blown fitness center with the latest strength-training equipment and cardiovascular exercise machines.

However, this is not the reality for most churches. Most churches looking to begin a fitness ministry need to start off on a much smaller scale, but the key here is starting! Famous evangelist Dawson Trotman once said, "The greatest time wasted is the time getting started."

A few ways your church can start fitness ministry on a small scale, with little to no budget, includes hosting some group exercise classes two to three days per week. Fitness and fellowship go hand in hand, and group exercise classes are a great way to keep each other encouraged and motivated. Classes can be held in a multipurpose room, meeting room or gymnasium at your church.

Hosting group exercise classes, fitness boot camps, obstacle courses, TRX, indoor cycling classes and small group personal training are great ways to make use of extra space in your church. Have a certified instructor* (perhaps one or more of your church members meets this criteria) lead the classes, and make sure all participants obtain medical clearance from a physician prior to beginning any church-sponsored exercise program.

If your church lacks any extra space to hold group exercise classes on the church grounds, seek out an alternative location. Schools, cafeterias, meeting rooms, hotels, outdoor parks and playgrounds, or even a warehouse space can all be suitable to host small group exercise classes.

Members in your church could have a relationship with a facility or business that may be able to allow your church group to utilize some space to exercise each week. You can also seek out a local fitness center or YMCA to host your church group or provide a special church group discount rate for weekly and monthly exercise classes. Most of these workouts can be held indoors or outdoors, weather permitting.

The key is to foster a fun, energizing and creative way to encourage your church members to exercise every week.

Get your church fitness ministry going, and please contact us with any creative ideas your church has formulated that may help other churches in launching their own fitness ministry!

* *Faith & Fitness Magazine* and ChurchFitness.com always encourage churches to staff their fitness ministry with knowledgeable, well-trained and qualified employees and volunteers. Hiring all-stars assures the best fit for your team, members and the job.

GET MORE! Go to the original [Faith & Fitness Magazine article](#) for many useful links to additional resources on this topic.

Rob Killen is the church fitness department editor for *Faith & Fitness Magazine* and a 20-year veteran in the health and fitness industry. Rob received his bachelor's degree in education from Wayland Baptist University in Texas and his master's degree in public administration and nonprofit management from George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. Rob regularly consults with health clubs and has a passion for helping churches looking to develop fitness ministries. For any assistance in planning or growing your church fitness ministry, Rob can be reached directly through ChurchFitness.com.

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Pro-Life Student Punched, Lands in ER With Broken Nose for Protesting Abortion

The disagreement between pro-life activists and pro-abortionists is not new, but the latter have recently become more violent.

Kristan Hawkins, president of Students for Life America, sent the following letter in an email to supporters on Thursday evening, detailing how a high school student was assaulted when handing out pro-life materials.

“I just got off the phone with one of our 17-year-old high school leaders in Alabama who is in the Emergency Room.

“Thankfully, he is going to be OK ... but he has a broken nose.

“And all because he was standing for life!

“Ke’Ontai was at a neighborhood park passing out our ‘Abortion Is Not Social Justice’ postcards we sent him, when one man started arguing with him about when life begins. He shouted at Ke’Ontai that his wife had just had an abortion because ‘that’s what they needed to do.’

“And when Ke’Ontai tried to give him some post-abortion counseling material, the guy yelled that he didn’t want it, pushed Ke’Ontai down and started punching him in the face.

“After telling him to file a police report, I asked Ke’Ontai if he needed anything from our team.

“His reply stunned me. Ke’Ontai told me that he has forgiven

the man who assaulted him and just wants pro-lifers across the country to pray for the man and wife.

“Our high school coordinator, Missy, and myself have had a conversation with Ke’Ontai about handing out postcards with a buddy in the future. I want you to know that Ke’Ontai won’t be letting this assault stop him.

“Ke’Ontai is a courageous young man ... one that I am proud to say we helped train and equip. Now he is more motivated than ever to do all that he can in his school and community, especially his predominately African-American neighborhood, which, according to their own outrageous admissions, is targeted by Planned Parenthood.

[“Today, can you send Ke’Ontai a short message thanking him for standing for life and encouraging him to keep going strong?”](#)

“Our team has been working with Ke’Ontai for over a year now. He tried to start a Students for Life group at his high school and was blocked several times, but that didn’t even stop him. He continued on and started a community group instead and has already reached hundreds of teens with the truth about abortion.

“Ke’Ontai will be joining our team this summer at our Virginia headquarters for advanced training. I can’t wait to print out and [give him all of your messages in person!](#)”

Virgin Teenage Boy Blows Open Casual Sex Myth With ‘Glue’

Argument

An 18-year-old schoolboy has criticized the culture of casual sex, saying it brings unhappiness rather than satisfaction.

Phin Lyman told his school magazine why he is abstaining from sex and described his concern over the level of peer pressure on young people regarding casual sex.

He rejects the idea that he is missing out: "I really believe I am not. The people sleeping around are the unhappy ones."

Lyman studies at Wellington College, a co-educational day and boarding school in the United Kingdom's Berkshire.

He notes, "I would say 90 percent of people are drunk when they lose their virginity.

"It doesn't make them happy and it upsets me to see it."

According to *The Times*, which reported the story, he said, "I believe that sex is an incredibly strong symbol of love between two people.

"Think of it as glue. Once you have sex with someone, you're connected to them emotionally and physically.

"If you tear that bond the rip leaves open scars where the glue once was.

"That's why 'casual sex' never works in the long term."

Lyman explains there have been occasions when he struggled to maintain his position on the issue: "There have been times I have been in a position where I could have gone and had sex with someone. I have had to step back and say 'No, I am going to regret it.'"

He comments, "One of the reasons I decided to go public is I am at the top of the school now and I can look down and see

there is so much pressure on younger pupils to have sex.”

He also remarks that many boys are educated about sex through online pornography.