

Pope Met Privately With Persecuted Christian Kim Davis During US Tour

Media is buzzing about the Pope's comments in support of conscientious objection and whether he knows about the Rowan County, Kentucky, Clerk of Court who was jailed for six days for refusing to issue same-sex marriage licenses.

The pope met privately with Kim Davis and her husband, Joe, at the Vatican Embassy in Washington, D.C., on Thursday, September 24, which was the birthday of Kim's father. Pope Francis spoke with Kim and Joe Davis in English.

During the meeting Pope Francis said, "Thank you for your courage."

Pope Francis also told Kim Davis, "Stay strong. He held out his hands and asked Kim to pray for him. Kim held his hands and said, "I will. Please pray for me," and the Pope said he would. The two embraced.

The pontiff presented Kim and Joe Davis each with a rosary that he personally blessed. Kim's mother and father are Catholic, and Kim and Joe will present the rosaries to her parents. Kim's mother was the elected Clerk of Court for Rowan County for 37 years until her retirement in 2014.

Kim Davis said, "I was humbled to meet Pope Francis. Of all people, why me? I never thought I would meet the pope. Who am I to have this rare opportunity? I am just a County Clerk who loves Jesus and desires with all my heart to serve Him."

Kim said, "Pope Francis was kind, genuinely caring, and very personable. He even asked me to pray for him. Pope Francis thanked me for my courage and told me to 'stay strong.'"

“The challenges we face in America regarding the sanctity of human life, marriage, and religious freedom are the same universal challenges Christians face around the world. Religious freedom is a human right that comes from God. These values are shared in common by people of faith, and the threats to religious freedom are universal. Kim Davis has become a symbol of this worldwide conflict between Christian faith and recent cultural challenges regarding marriage,” said Mat Staver, founder and chairman of Liberty Counsel.

Speaking with reporters on board the papal plane to Rome, Pope Francis told Terry Moran of ABC News that conscientious objection is a human right, even for government officials: “Conscientious objection is a right that is a part of every human right. It is a right. And if a person does not allow others to be a conscientious objector, he denies a right. Conscientious objection must enter into every juridical structure because it is a right, a human right. Otherwise we would end up in a situation where we select what is a right, saying ‘this right that has merit, this one does not.’ It (conscientious objection) is a human right. It always moved me when I read, and I read it many times, when I read the ‘Chanson de Roland’ when the people were all in line and before them was the baptismal font and they had to choose between the baptismal font or the sword. They had to choose. They weren’t permitted conscientious objection. It is a right and if we want to make peace, we have to respect all rights.”

The ABC News Chief Foreign Correspondent asked if that includes government officials as well, and the Pope reiterated that conscientious objection is a human right: “It is a human right and if a government official is a human person, he has that right,” Pope Francis affirmed.

After the above statement of Pope Francis was published, some in the media wondered if the pontiff knew of Kim Davis. “Not only did Pope Francis know of Kim Davis, he personally met with her to express his support,” concluded Staver.

Did the United Nations Just Introduce a New World Order?

Have you heard of “the global goals”? If you haven’t heard of them by now, rest assured that you will be hearing plenty about them in the days ahead.

On September 25th, the United Nations launched a set of 17 ambitious goals that it plans to achieve over the next 15 years. A new website to promote this plan has been established, and you can find it right here. The formal name of this new plan is “the 2030 Agenda”, but those behind it decided that they needed something catchier when promoting these ideas to the general population. The U.N. has stated that these new “global goals” represent a “new universal Agenda” for humanity. Virtually every nation on the planet has willingly signed on to this new agenda, and you are expected to participate whether you like it or not.

Some of the biggest stars in the entire world have been recruited to promote “the global goals”.

If you live in New York City, you are probably aware of the “Global Citizen Festival” that was held in Central Park on Saturday where some of the biggest names in the music industry promoted these new “global goals”. The following is how the *New York Daily News* described the gathering:

“It was a party with a purpose.

“A star-studded jamboree and an impassioned plea to end poverty rocked the Great Lawn in Central Park as more than 60,000 fans gathered Saturday for the fourth-annual Global Citizen Festival.

“The feel-good event, timed to coincide with the annual gathering of world leaders at the United Nations General Assembly, featured performances by Beyoncé, Pearl Jam, Ed Sheeran and Coldplay.”

And it wasn't just the entertainment industry that was promoting this new U.N. plan for a united world. Pope Francis traveled to New York to give the address that kicked off the conference where this new agenda was unveiled:

“Pope Francis gave his backing to the new development agenda in an address to the U.N. General Assembly before the summit to adopt the 17-point plan opened, calling it “an important sign of hope” at a very troubled time in the Middle East and Africa.

*“When Danish Prime Minister Lars Rasmussen struck his gavel to approve the development road map, **leaders and diplomats from the 193 U.N. member states stood and applauded loudly.***

*“Then, the summit immediately turned to the real business of the three-day meeting – implementation of the goals, **which is expected to cost \$3.5 trillion to \$5 trillion every year until 2030.**”*

Wow.

OK, so where will the trillions of dollars that are needed to implement these new “global goals” come from?

Let me give you a hint – they are not going to come from the poor nations.

When you read over these “global goals”, many of them sound quite good. After all, who wouldn't want to “end hunger”? I know that I would like to “end hunger” if I could.

The key is to look behind the language and understand what is

really being said. And what is really being said is that the elite want to take their dream of a one world system to the next level.

The following list comes from Truthstream Media, and I think that it does a very good job of translating these new “global goals” into language that we can all understand ...

- **Goal 1:** End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- **Translation:** Centralized banks, IMF, World Bank, Fed to control all finances, digital one world currency in a cashless society
- **Goal 2:** End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- **Translation:** GMO
- **Goal 3:** Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- **Translation:** Mass vaccination, Codex Alimentarius
- **Goal 4:** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- **Translation:** U.N. propaganda, brainwashing through compulsory education from cradle to grave
- **Goal 5:** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- **Translation:** Population control through forced “Family Planning”
- **Goal 6:** Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- **Translation:** Privatize all water sources, don’t forget to add fluoride
- **Goal 7:** Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- **Translation:** Smart grid with smart meters on everything, peak pricing
- **Goal 8:** Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

- **Translation:** TPP, free trade zones that favor megacorporate interests
- **Goal 9:** Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- **Translation:** Toll roads, push public transit, remove free travel, environmental restrictions
- **Goal 10:** Reduce inequality within and among countries
- **Translation:** Even more regional government bureaucracy like a mutant octopus
- **Goal 11:** Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- **Translation:** Big brother big data surveillance state
- **Goal 12:** Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- **Translation:** Forced austerity
- **Goal 13:** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- **Translation:** Cap and Trade, carbon taxes/credits, footprint taxes
- **Goal 14:** Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- **Translation:** Environmental restrictions, control all oceans including mineral rights from ocean floors
- **Goal 15:** Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
- **Translation:** More environmental restrictions, more controlling resources and mineral rights
- **Goal 16:** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- **Translation:** U.N. "peacekeeping" missions (ex 1, ex 2), the International Court of (blind) Justice, force people together via fake refugee crises and then mediate with

- more “U.N. peacekeeping” when tension breaks out to gain more control over a region, remove 2nd Amendment in USA
- **Goal 17:** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development
 - **Translation:** Remove national sovereignty worldwide, promote globalism under the “authority” and bloated, Orwellian bureaucracy of the U.N.

If you doubt any of this, you can find the official document for this new U.N. agenda right here. The more you dig into the details, the more you realize just how insidious these “global goals” really are.

The elite want a one world government, a one world economic system and a one world religion. But they are not going to achieve these things by conquest. Rather, they want everyone to sign up for these new systems willingly.

The “global goals” are a template for a united world. To many, the “utopia” that the elite are promising sounds quite promising. But for those that know what time it is, this call for a “united world” is very, very chilling.

Marco Rubio: ‘I’m supposed to model Jesus Christ’

Sen. Marco Rubio, R-FL, delivered the following remarks at the Value Voters Summit in Washington, D.C., on September 25. They have been edited for length and clarity. – Ed.

Well, thank you for having me. There’s four bottles of water here. Isn’t that a bit much?

Thank you so much. I'm really honored to be here with you today, with all of you who are motivated to participate in the public square because of our values. And this is important, because we've always had this debate about what role faith should play in politics. That's a silly debate. For starters, our country was founded on a spiritual principle, on the idea that every human being has rights that are given to you by God, not by your government, not by the king. It was a revolutionary idea.

And second, as a Christian, I am taught from the earliest days of my life that I'm supposed to model Jesus Christ, God made man, and that means I'm supposed to care for the less fortunate. That's supposed to mean that I'm supposed to try to be humble, that there's strength in weakness, that the meek shall inherit the earth, that my job is to care in love for my fellow man because there's never been a person who God didn't love.

People better hope that my faith influences the way we govern, because these are important values. And unfortunately, they're eroding in our country.

And I'm honored to be able to run for president. It's an extraordinary opportunity and one that I'm grateful for the blessing to be able to do.

Many of you probably know this by now, but both my parents were born on the island of Cuba to poor families. My mother was one of seven sisters who was born to a father who, because he was disabled by polio as a child, he struggled his whole life to find and keep jobs that allowed him to provide for his children. My father actually had it even tougher. His mother died when he was only nine. And the day after her funeral, at nine years of age, he had to go work in the streets of Havana with his father.

In 1956 they came to America, to the one place on earth where

people like them could have a chance. They earned enough money to buy a home and raise a family and retire with security.

I didn't inherit any money from my parents. But I nonetheless believe that I actually do come from extraordinary privilege, because I'm a citizen of the single greatest nation in all of human history – a nation founded on the fundamental belief that every person has a God-given right to go as far as their talent and their work will take them; a nation who says to us that even the son of a bartender and a maid could have the same dreams and the same opportunities as someone who is born into wealth and into power.

But I was also privileged because I was raised with something that's become increasingly rare. I was raised in a stable home by a mother and a father, a man and a woman who were married who loved each other, who loved their children, who were an active presence in our life, and who raised me and us to believe that if we lived with the right values and with the faith in an almighty God, there was nothing that we could not accomplish.

Today that American dream that my family achieved is slipping out of reach for far too many. Our economy has fundamentally transformed since my parents' time. In fact, it's very different than the one I grew up in. Rapid advances in technology have replaced old jobs with new ones, and globalization has forced us into competition with dozens of other nations for jobs and innovation.

And yet while our economy is transforming, our government policies are not. We have unfortunately a political class in this country that refuses to toss out its old and outdated ways of thinking when it comes to our economy, the way of thinking that says we need guardians in government to protect us from ourselves, that to help someone climb up the economic ladder, we have to pull someone else down, and that government, not the family, is the most important institution

in society.

Our outdated leaders fail to recognize the changes that it will take to seize the promise of this new economy. And as a result, that promise is passing us by. Today businesses are dying faster than they are forming. The cost of everyday life is soaring while wages remain the same. And too many parents feel as if the longer and harder they work, the further they and their children are falling behind.

I want to be clear about something. Even with our many challenges, America is still the best-equipped nation on the planet to meet the challenges and seize the opportunities of this new century. Ask yourself this: Is there any country on earth you would rather be? Is there any country you would trade places with? Or here's another way to think about it: When was the last time that you read about a boatload of American refugees arriving on the shores of another country?

But recent years have proven that our exceptionalism is not self-sustaining, that we didn't become special by accident, and we aren't going to stay that way without effort. We're not going to stay that way by looking to the same leaders and the same ideas that have led us to this point.

I believe what the American people are looking for at this moment in our history is clear. They are looking for leaders who understand the changes that have occurred in our economy, who understand the unique challenges that are facing our families in this century, who will come here to this city and fight the status quo that is holding us back, and in its place offer clear alternatives for the future.

Now, the political class sees this sentiment and they try to make sense of it all. But they can't, because never before, certainly in my lifetime, has the political class of our country, or the mainstream media that covers them, for that matter, been more out of touch with the American people than

they are right now.

Look at the deal with Iran, which is basically just a series of concessions to an enemy of the United States. The American people realize how bad the deal is. They oppose it by an overwhelming two-to-one margin. And yet Washington still can't and won't stop it. And the issues like this are numerous. They're so big. They're so consequential. These issues are so generational that people cannot help but ask, how can it be, how can it be that we sent a Republican majority to Congress and yet they're still not able to stop our country from sliding in the wrong direction?

And we'll see how things progress. Just a few minutes ago Speaker Boehner announced that he will be resigning. And with all due respect to people that serve in government, it is important at this moment with respect to him and the service that he's provided to our country – it's not about him or anybody else and I'm not here today to bash anyone – but the time has come to turn the page. The time has come to turn the page and allow a new generation of leadership in this country.

And that extends to the White House and the presidency as well. And that's why, after just four and a half years in the Senate, I decided that I would run for president, because I realized that none of the problems I got elected to solve are going to be solved if we keep promoting the same people to higher and higher ranks within our government.

Here's the simple truth: To set a new precedent in Washington, we need a new president in Washington.

We need a president who understands that this economic transformation we've undergone is a perfect chance to embrace and reinvigorate the free-enterprise economy, not to abandon it; a president who will fight Washington's special interests in both parties, not be coopted by them; who will take clear and even unpopular positions to confront the greatest threats

to our nation.

And most of all, what we need is a president who, on their first day in office, will put the left hand on the Bible and their right hand in the air and promise to uphold the entire Constitution, including the right of religious liberty, including the right to bear arms, and including the God-given and inalienable right to life.

Sadly, it's been almost eight years since we had a president like that. But if I have the opportunity to serve in the highest office in the land, I promise you that I will live by that creed and I will live by that pledge, because when I'm president I will empower our people rather than our government. And I will do that by recognizing that you cannot have a strong people without strong families.

The truth is that what happens in our house, in your house, what happens in my house, is, more often than not, just as important for the future of our country, if not more so, than what happens in the White House. But too often, especially in recent years, Washington has tried to compete with the family rather than support it.

In fact, it's tried to redefine family. It's persecuted and now even prosecuted those who do not agree with the new direction that those seek to take us. It has punished marriage, the foundation of family life, by taxing married couples more than singles. It has made it harder for parents to keep what they earn and it has challenged the values and supplanted the faith organizations that have provided the centuries of empowerment to our people.

I have a plan to reform our government in a way that empowers families to thrive in the modern economy. And a major component of this will be reforms to family leave policy that I'd like to introduce for the first time here today. Now, I said a moment ago that one of the reasons why I'm so

privileged is that I was born to two parents who were married and who were able to be a constant presence in our lives. This was an extraordinary and enormous advantage for me growing up.

And that's why now, as a parent, I struggle with the demands of public life – the public life that I've chosen. It pains me every time that I have to miss a volleyball game or a football game or a field trip, even though I know that I'm doing this for them. And this struggle is not unique to me. It's a problem that almost every parent in America faces today. And the reason this hurts is because we know the greatest gift parents can give their children is the time we spend together, the values that only parents can teach, the love only parents can provide, the encouragement only parents can offer.

And it cannot come via text or cellphone calls sometimes, at least not completely. It has to come through time spent together. And that's why one of the greatest threats to family today is that there are too many Americans who have to choose between being there for their children in times of great need or meeting the basic financial needs of their family. And like so many fundamental problems, this one can be traced back in part to the outdated policies from Washington, D.C.

Our current law mandates that employees offer 12 weeks of unpaid leave to workers with certain family or medical issues, like a newborn child in need of care, an elderly parent with declining health or a personal health crisis. But this has proven insufficient because taking unpaid leave is simply not a viable financial option for many American. Now, most of our current leaders, including Hillary Clinton, stick to this outdated way of thinking. They say that the only way to solve this problem is the way they think we can solve every problem: raise taxes, grow government, and place crippling requirements on private companies.

I don't need to tell anyone here why that wouldn't work. It's the same reason Obamacare hasn't worked. Our policies should

help workers, not cost them their jobs. And I believe we can fix this problem by creatively applying our free enterprise principles in a way that encourages businesses to choose to offer more family paid leave. To do this, we should provide a limited 25 percent, non-refundable tax credit to any business that offers between four and 12 weeks of paid leave. For instance, if you're offered \$1,600 in paid leave for four weeks while you take care of your newborn child, which would be the equivalent of about \$10 an hour, your employer could claim a tax credit of \$400.

This won't solve every scheduling conflict between work and family life. No policy can do that. But it will help ensure that our people don't have to sit behind a desk while the most profound moments of their lives pass them by. And it will help our businesses expand and create new jobs by allowing them to keep more of their money rather than send it to be wasted here in Washington.

Conservatives, by the way, are already fighting hard on this issue. Senator Deb Fischer has been a leader on family leave reform and I'm glad to join her in her efforts as one way to address the problem. Now, unfortunately, our current president prefers not to sign legislation that's common sense. So these efforts will likely be something that we will need to take up if, God willing, I'm president. Doing so will be a step towards reclaiming the American dream in this century, but it will only be one step.

Of course, people cannot be concerned about family leave if they don't have a good paying job to take leave from. So we need our next president to recognize an important fact that no one in Washington today seems to understand: Politicians don't create jobs. The American people create jobs. We need a president and we need leaders at every level of government who stop placing our people's faith in our government and start placing our government's faith in our people. So one way we'll know that I've done the right things as president, is that by

the end of my term we won't be talking that much about Washington. We'll be too busy discussing the extraordinary achievements of everyday Americans.

By the year 2020, this is what I hope we will be able to say: That we made our business tax code globally competitive, that we repealed and replaced Obamacare, that we placed a cap on regulations, and that we made our country the best place in the world to create jobs, and that as a result our people are creating thousands of businesses, millions of new high-paying jobs, and their innovations are once again driving the progress of the world.

In the year 2020, we want to be able to say that we reformed our higher education system, we made it more affordable and more accessible to every American. And as a result, our people are earning degrees that empower them to move from jobs that pay \$10 an hour to jobs that pay \$70,000 a year, that millions are beginning to emerge from the shadow of student loan debt, and that high schoolers are graduating with certifications to immediately enter good-paying careers.

In the year 2020, I want to be able to say that we've secured our borders first, that we've reformed our legal immigration system so that people come to this country based on what they can contribute to our economy, on the basis of whether they want to become an American, not simply live in America, not whether they have a family member living here. And that we've done what we needed to do to save Social Security and Medicare without having to make any changes for people currently on it. And that as a result of these changes, our people are growing our economy at a historic rate, our deficits are finally beginning to dwindle, and the national debt is being brought under control so that it no longer is threatening to take away everything that makes our country so special.

In the year 2020, I want to be able to say that we have defended religious liberty. That we have supported – that we

have worked hard to support the right of our people not just to hold traditional views, but to exercise them, to express them. That we've reformed the tax code to encourage marriage rather than punishing it. And that we made it easier for parents to afford the cost of raising their children, and that as a result our families have found financial security, that they're raising strong children with strong values, and that they're instilling in their kids all the hope in the future of America that our parents instilled in us.

That's what I want to be able to talk about in 2020 – the accomplishments of our people, not of Washington. But there's one more important point that needs to be made, one that transcends policy and politics altogether. No candidate for president can claim to stand on the side of our people if they do not believe that every person has a right to exist. And that's why the issue of right to life is more than political or policy related.

It is not a political issue – it is a human rights issue. It is a definitional issue about what kind of country we want to be. In a world where life is increasingly not valued, where people are summarily discarded, America must stand for the belief that all life is worthy of protection, because all life comes from God. And so by the year 2020, I hope we will be able to say that abortions after 20 weeks are illegal, that no taxpayer money is used to fund abortions here or abroad, and that Planned Parenthood doesn't receive a penny from the federal government.

My time is up, so let me just close by saying this: For many of us, for me, for most of you who that were born and raised in this country, it's sometimes easy to forget how special America is, because this is all we've ever known. But I had one more blessing. I was raised by people who knew how special America was because they knew what it was like to lose a country, because they knew what life was like outside this country, because they understood how different America was

from the rest of the world.

My parents, my grandfather, they taught me by word and by deed that what makes America great is not that we have more rich people than anybody else – every country has rich people. What makes America great is that the dreams that are impossible everywhere else are possible here. And why is that? Well, it's because of the choices that the people before us made.

Almost every other country in the world chose to have a government run their economy. In those countries, people who can influence the government, they're the ones that keep winning, and everybody else stays the same. The employee never becomes the employer. The small business can never compete with a big business. And no matter how hard your parents work or how many sacrifices they made, if you weren't born into the right family in those countries, there is only so far you can go.

But the Americans before us chose something very different. They chose individual liberty. They chose limited government that exists to protect our rights, not to decide them or to grant them. And yet there are still people in American politics, sadly in both parties, who cling to the belief that America is better off adopting the economic policies of the countries that people come here to get away from.

Now, look – this is a free society. People have a right to believe whatever they want. But I don't have that option. You see, I'm just a generation removed from a very different life. My parents came here with virtually nothing – no knowledge of English at the time, no money, no friends. The only thing they had was the strong determination to provide their children all the opportunities they themselves never had. And in America they were never rich or wealthy or influential, but their hard work opened doors for their children that had closed for them. Everything that I've accomplished – everything I will ever accomplish – I owe to God, to my parents' sacrifices, and to

the United States of America.

For me, my parents' story is the essence of the American Dream. It's a story that's rare in the world, but so common here. Because the truth is, it's all our stories. Here in this nation, we are all but a generation or two removed from someone who made our future the purpose of their lives.

And so now it is our turn. This election is a generational choice about what kind of country, what kind of America we are going to leave for our children, and what kind of country we will be in the 21st century.

The final verdict on our generation is going to be written by Americans who have not yet been born. Let us make sure that they write that we made the right choice – that in the early years of this century, faced with troubling and uncertain times, there were those who believed that the great American story had run its course, but we did not agree. Fear did not lead us to abandon our liberty. We fought for and held onto those things that made us exceptional. And because we did, there was still one place on Earth where the individual was more important than the state. There was still one place on Earth where where you come from does not determine how far you get to go. Because we made the right choice, because we did, we didn't just restore the American Dream, we expanded it and extended it to reach more families and more people than ever before. And because we did, for at least one generation more the American miracle lived on.

So thank you for the chance to speak to you today. God bless all of you. Thank you.{eoa}

Oprah Puts Emotions on Display Talking About Love of God

“Today, I feel the fierce love of all that is God ... so deeply, so strongly and so purely in my heart that it lifts and carries me and sometimes I actually feel weightless in the love that is God because I feel it in all things.”

That’s how Oprah Winfrey started off a “spiritual practice” video. The brains behind OWN is launching a new TV event called *Belief*, and the video offers a first look at the series.

“I actually awaken to birds twittering in the morning now—the original tweets—and because I’m not so focused ... because I’ve reached a point in my life where I actually pay attention to every breath and my spiritual practice is that I awaken and the first thought is ‘thank you’ and the next thought is ‘I’m still here in this body and my heart’s desire is to want to live and be in this body full present to everything, to all beings, to all things; to not miss this experience of being here, now in the planet we call earth.”

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Here’s the question: Is she talking about the same God we serve? Some Christian media sites are positing the video with headlines suggesting Oprah was getting choked up over Jesus. But she doesn’t mention Jesus, at least not in this video.

Remember when Oprah Winfrey created a firestorm among believers by suggesting that Jesus is not the only way? Apparently, her drift away from the Way, the Truth and the Life started decades ago when her Baptist pastor referred to

God as a jealous God (see Ex. 20:4-5).

Earlier this year, Oprah shared deceptive prayer practices that are leading many astray during a Stanford University Memorial Church service. Oprah led over 1,000 members of Stanford in some sort of New Age meditation exercise.

“Close your eyes for a moment, will you please, and breathe with me,” she told them. “And if you will, put your thumb to your middle finger and gather your other fingers around, and let’s feel the vibration and pulse of your personal energy as you take three deep breaths with me.”

Oprah went on to share with them a secret to prayer, or at least her version of prayer.

“Open your heart and quietly to yourself say the only prayer that’s ever needed: Thank you, thank you, thank you,” she said. “You’re still here. You get another chance *this day* to do better and be better, another chance to become *more* of who you were created and what you’re created to fulfill. Thank you. Amen.”

No mention of the name of Jesus. I’m not picking on Oprah, as some may think. I admire what she has accomplished, the influence to which she has attained, the many thousands of people she has helped, and more. But the bottom line without Jesus it won’t count for anything in the end—and I hate to see others led astray despite anyone’s kind intentions.

As I’ve said before, I appreciate the encouragement that Oprah has given many over the years, but her alignment with New Agers like Chopra, the graphic depiction of sexual perversion on her television network, and her open door for heretics like Rob Bell to trash the Bible on her program trouble me. These are not the moves of a woman who knows how to pray and tap into the wisdom of God.

I am impressed to make intercession for Oprah. Think about it.

If she would come right out and proclaim to the world that Jesus is Lord and that there is no other way to heaven, millions could get saved. My prayer for Oprah comes out of Ephesians 1:17-21:

“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give Oprah the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, that the eyes of her understanding may be enlightened, that she may know what is the hope of His calling and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance among the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward those who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He performed in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principalities, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.” Amen.

10 Keys to Hearing God's Voice

I walked into my favorite grocery store. I was tired. I hadn't eaten that day and it was close to 5 pm. I had just made the decision to eat sugar-free and gluten-free that morning. I was going to the store to buy something healthy to fix for supper.

I had not thought about the looming obstacle I would encounter. I knew it was there. It's always there right as I head down the main aisle. Today, it seemed to be larger and more intimidating than ever—the bakery case.

My downfall has always been the combination of sugar, flour and cinnamon. The large cinnamon rolls called to me. The voice

in my head was urgent and loud, "You haven't eaten today. You need to eat something. You need energy. You might drop dead if you don't eat."

I listened to the voice and added my own rationalities. "I do have a long evening ahead and I haven't eaten. I do need energy. I could grab these now and start that healthy eating thing tomorrow." I was telling myself this as I took a plastic baggie, grabbed the tongs and had my two choices in the bag.

Gods' Voice

As I was tying the bag, I heard another voice in my head. This one was soft and quiet. It simply said, "What are you doing?"

The still, small voice arrested me. I had been on autopilot listening to the voice of the tempter who sided with my fleshly desires. All of sudden, I knew what I was doing was everything I had vowed I would not do.

I put the bag back in the bakery case and went to choose my skinned and deboned chicken breasts, salad ingredients, broccoli and fruit. That was in 2011. That was the last time I willingly listened to that overt voice.

The Tempter's Voice

For years, I listened to it all the time. See, the voice of the tempter always has an element of truth to it. What he tells me is half-truth, half-lie. In the past, he hadn't needed to be too subtle. He just put the bait out there and like a hungry, naive fish, I'd bite and gobble it up and more and more and more. He would sit back with a smug smile. Mission accomplished.

Part of the reason I always listened to him was that it sounded so logical to me. My rational mind agreed with him because my flesh wanted something sweet and carb-laden with all the unhealthy fats.

What the tempter didn't take into account was that this time I really meant it. I had made a firm decision. I was going to listen to the voice of God. I had invited God to tell me when I was making a wrong decision.

How God Speaks

Because I had asked Him to, God spoke to me. It was different than the voice of evil. Instead of asking me to mindlessly do something, God asked me to think about what I was doing.

God believed in me. He believed if I would use the brain He gave me, I would recognize the lie and go with the truth.

This one instance, and many others throughout the years, taught me a lot about distinguishing the voices speaking in my head. I only want to listen to the voice of God. These days, I can tell which voice is His.

10 Things About God's Voice

1. He will lead me to the whole truth, not a half-truth.
2. He will not violate Scripture, but fulfill it.
3. He will lead me toward my destiny, not away from it.
4. He will redirect me according to His ultimate will.
5. He will cause me to think rather than act on impulse.
6. He will lead me away from fulfilling fleshly desires and towards fulfilling my ultimate kingdom purpose.
7. He is loving, kind, understanding, soft and gentle.
8. When I argue with Him, He doesn't argue back. He simply states a truth.
9. He is always speaking to me and speaks my language.
10. I know His voice.

Destiny-Bound

Beginning to fulfill my destiny really began with learning to take care of my body by eating properly. I couldn't go toward the purpose and plan God had for my life when I was morbidly

obese and could barely walk. His desire was that I would become healthy so I could move to the next part of His plan for my life.

The evil one knows this. He always hits at my weakness. As with everyone, my weakness will be something fleshly. For others it might be drugs, alcohol, sexual addiction, pornography, gambling, cigarettes, over-spending or any number of things. These become things that pull God's children away from focusing on the main thing: God.

Jesus said it this way. "The thief does not come, except to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). Satan's No. 1 mission is to steal, kill and destroy my destiny. So if he can, he will lead me off-course.

Every time he would do this, I would have the nagging suspicion the voice speaking to me wasn't God. However, I rationalized it because it was just what I wanted. After all, didn't God want me to be happy? This kind of rationalization would always propel me to listen to the wrong voice, even though I knew it was wrong.

My I-Want

My mind is not bad. When I became a Christian, I received the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16). Learning to exercise it is another thing. I must be tuned in to God's station so my mind is really functioning in conjunction with the Spirit of God. I must be desiring to be led by God rather than by my own desires.

When I want my way, I can have it because I have free will (Gen. 2:16-17; 3:6). I can be just like Eve. My I-want voice can scream louder than the voice of God. The devil will agree with what I want. However, if I want to hear it, God's voice will whisper softly to me. That whisper will speak louder than

every other voice combined if I let it.

I choose whom I want to listen to. I really know the voice of God. I know what His purposes are. I know how to discern His voice. I just choose whether or not I want to follow it.

His Sheep Hear His Voice

Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" (John 10:27). Why do sheep follow the voice of the shepherd? Because they trust him. He protects them. He feeds them. He finds water for them, shelter when needed and soft places to lie down.

When I really began to understand God wanted only good things for me, not disaster (Jer. 29:11), I asked His advice. I longed for His voice. I began to live my life based on what He said to me

The Sound of His Voice

I began to hear Him everywhere—in the soft giggle of a child; in the soaring flight of a hawk; in the tired, ragged woman asking for a quarter; in the silence; in the click of the computer keyboard; in the voice of musicians and preachers of the gospel; in God's Word; and yes, in the gentle voice I've come to know and love speaking in my mind, heart and spirit. It's a voice that fills all of me. There is no voice like it.

"He said, 'Go and stand on the mountain before the Lord.' And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind split the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind, an earthquake came, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake, a fire came, but the Lord was not in the fire, and after the fire, a still, small voice. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood in the entrance to the cave. And a voice came to him and said, 'Why are you here, Elijah?'" (1 Kin. 19:11-13).

“So, God speaks to you?” the journalist queried the well-known pastor. “Is it an audible voice?”

The pastor looked him in the eyes and said, “No, it is much louder than that.”

How Does God Speak to You?

If God is speaking to you about your health being a major roadblock to His plans and purposes for your life, run don't walk and sign up today for Sweet Change Weight Loss Coaching and Accountability Group. It is my heart's desire to help you get free of the bondages of extreme weight. No hype here. Just truth. I can tell you unequivocally this is one time I do know what I'm talking about. You know if I am speaking to you. Here's the link: . Don't wait. Your destiny is calling.

What You Can Learn From 2 Businessmen Who Impacted a Nation

A lot is said these days about Christian businessmen and ministry in the marketplace. Entire ministries have grown up focused on this. We featured this topic as the cover story in the most recent issue of *Ministry Today* magazine.

This is a story about a different type of marketplace ministry—more than simply witnessing to your friends, which is the extent of which many business people in the marketplace will practice their faith.

This is about Graham Power, a South African businessman with whom I have become friends and who has made a huge impact on

nations for the kingdom of God.

A couple of months ago, I attended a networking conference with him and learned about his “Unashamedly Ethical” program—now in 107 countries, including Jamaica—through another Christian businessman named Robert Levy, whom I describe below.

Graham is one of the most interesting men I have ever met. He came to faith in Christ in middle age, yet he has accomplished more than most Christians who grew up in the church have. He launched the Global Day of Prayer, involving millions of Christians over the past decade praying in many countries on Pentecost Sunday.

In 2010, he launched “Unashamedly Ethical” from Africa, a continent known for its vast corruption. He told me the program is based on 2 Chronicles 7:14—that God will heal the land if people will humble themselves and pray and turn from their wicked ways—which means living clean, ethically and with godly values.

Graham has preached this message around the world for the past five years, including at a recent Lausanne Conference. That led to an invitation to Jamaica, a nation of 2.7 million people.

It was there he met Robert Levy, who became a successful businessman raising chickens. He exports chickens worldwide. Because of United States laws about importing poultry from other countries, his business in this country is to provide eggs for chickens to hatch. It is a lucrative business—worth well over \$100 million a year.

To give you an idea of the kind of business he runs, here is Levy’s mission statement on his website: “Our beliefs are the core of who we are. They drive our vision and sustain our business. With God’s guidance, we give our best effort to meet the needs of our customers, employees, contractors and the

community every day. We are committed to service, fairness and the building of goodwill.”

Robert arranged for Graham to speak to Jamaican church leaders about the importance of having the “courage to commit” to the unashamedly ethical standards. His speech received an overwhelming response. He also met with business leaders who responded similarly. Finally, he met with Jamaican Prime Minister Portia Simpson-Miller and her cabinet, both of whom decided to support the unashamedly ethical program.

“God worked in the most marvelous way,” Robert told me. “There was such an anointing on Graham.”

He added that Powers won Jamaican governmental leaders over when he apologized as a white South African for apartheid and what his people had done to blacks in his country.

Graham told me he considers corruption to be “the greatest weapon of mass destruction facing mankind,” adding that it “grows like a cancer.”

Yet God has raised up an African businessman to speak to a world prevalent with corruption and to bring biblical ethical standards to the marketplace and government.

The results in Jamaica were so astounding they were trumpeted in a four-page section in the national newspaper. Talk about having an impact in the marketplace!

The report said in part:

“In the early 2000s, one man decided enough was enough and took a stand against corruption and the rapid moral decay taking place across the globe. He spearheaded a movement for clean living and life led by ethics and the values of the Christian faith. He is Dr. Graham Power, who launched the Unashamedly Ethical campaign in 2010.

✘ “During the period Feb. 11-16, Dr. Power met with Jamaica’s church, State and business leaders and urged them to join the movement against the cancer of corruption that is plaguing the island by pledging to uphold ethical values.

“Over 5,000 companies and more than 100 nations have accepted the Unashamedly Ethical challenge—Jamaica being among the most recent signatories, with over 500 responses in less than a week.

Here’s how to make the commitment to live Unashamedly Ethical:

“I commit:

1. To be entirely truthful in all I say.
2. To be faithful to my family relationships.
3. To do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but to look out for the interests of others.
4. To refuse to elicit, accept or pay any bribes and to encourage others to do the same.
5. To be diligent without being harsh, and striving to be just and fair.
6. To be a peacemaker.
7. To do my work wholeheartedly.
8. To submit myself to just and ethical governing authorities.
9. To remember the poor by investing generously and sacrificially in the broader community.
10. To collaborate with my peers to impact our community and nation.

Has this inspired you? What awesome God-inspired goals can you achieve for God? If you’re a business person, you can use

Graham Power as a role model to make a difference in your world.

If you'd like to learn more about Unashamedly Ethical you can register online at .

Please share this with friends and leave your comments below.

The 9 Most Damaging Things Planned Parenthood Admitted to Congress

Planned Parenthood CEO Cecile Richards testified before the House Oversight Committee this morning—the first appearance on Capitol Hill for Planned Parenthood since investigative journalists began exposing their abhorrent practices of selling parts of butchered babies.

Richards' testimony was full of the same deception and spin that has been continually spouted by Planned Parenthood's allies in Congress, the Obama White House and the mainstream media.

You can read her spin for yourself here in her written testimony submitted into the Congressional Record.

As Planned Parenthood continues to spread their galling abortion distortions on the Hill and beyond, we have compiled real facts and figures to hold them accountable for their misleading testimony.

Here are nine important takeaways from today's testimony:

1) Planned Parenthood CEO Cecile Richards confirms that some Planned Parenthood affiliates sell the body parts of aborted babies.

In her testimony, Ms. Richards states, "Planned Parenthood is proud of its limited role in supporting fetal tissue research."

Once again, Planned Parenthood is admitting to everything in the videos. Just as Ms. Richards did in her letter to Congress, she confesses to numerous things Planned Parenthood often tries to hide.

She has had numerous opportunities to refute the video footage of top-level Planned Parenthood executives negotiating prices of butchered baby body parts. She has not refuted this footage one time.

She has hidden behind stale talking points about legal loopholes, broad laws and so on. But she hasn't denied that it happens.

In fact, she apologized for *something* about the videos, although in her testimony today, she once again was unclear about exactly what she was apologizing for.

2) Planned Parenthood clinics perform zero mammograms. None.

Congresswoman Mia Love and several of her colleagues questioned Ms. Richards about how many mammograms are performed annually by Planned Parenthood.

Cecile Richards once again reiterated: No Planned Parenthood clinics have mammogram machines.

Zero.

Despite the claims of President Obama and other celebrity allies of Planned Parenthood, their clinics don't provide mammograms.

3) Planned Parenthood receives taxpayer subsidies and throws big parties.

The House Oversight Committee released a report this morning exposing Planned Parenthood for “lavish” travel and theme parties with names such as “Gathering of Goddesses and Gods.” The message from Chairman Chaffetz was a simple one – Planned Parenthood is able to raise a lot of money so why do they need federal subsidies?

Why do we give hundreds of millions every year when Planned Parenthood seems to have no money problems at all?

4) Planned Parenthood refuses to admit how much money they make on abortions.

Congresswoman Mia Love asked Ms. Richards how much of their revenue comes from cancer screenings. Richards replied that they make no profit from their cancer screenings as they merely receive reimbursements for the cost.

So Rep. Love asked how much of their revenue comes from abortions?

Numerous members of Congress asked this question and Richards said she would do her best to get the numbers. But later, while being questioned once again, she admitted she might not be able to get those numbers.

Why not? Could it be because it would prove that a significant amount of Planned Parenthood’s revenue centers on abortions and not on other services provided?

5) Planned Parenthood cancer screenings are on the decline, while abortions are on the rise.

Congresswoman Love stated that there have been marked reductions in cancer screenings and breast exams. She pointed to reports showing a 53 percent reduction in cancer screenings and 42 percent reduction in breast exams. At the same time,

Planned Parenthood annual reports show increasing numbers of abortions performed over this same time period.

6) Planned Parenthood uses their organizational structure to avoid tough questions.

In her testimony, Cecile Richards once again stated that she didn't know numerous things. She reminded the Committee that abortions are performed by the affiliates and not the national office. She again reminded the Committee that Planned Parenthood has broken up their organization and, therefore, she didn't know a number of things about their lobbying efforts as well.

This is on purpose. They do this in such a way as to avoid having to answer the hard questions.

Questions such as:

- Why is our federal government sending hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars to Planned Parenthood each year?
- How much does Planned Parenthood spend lobbying and pressuring lawmakers to keep health codes for abortion clinics low while claiming that the reason they need so much money is because they are like any other hospital or health care center?
- How much money do you make by killing hundreds of thousands of babies each year?
- How much do you charge for each body part you sell of those butchered babies?

There are dozens of other tough questions, such as: "How much money does Planned Parenthood transfer from their 501(c)(3) to their 501(c)(4) for political activity?" Chairman Chaffetz reported that it's at least \$22 million over the past five years.

Planned Parenthood loves to say that federal money doesn't

cover abortions. One wonders if they really think we are dumb enough to not understand the fungible nature of money.

Taxpayer money to Planned Parenthood allows them to cover overhead expenses such as rent, salaries of abortionists and other costs. This is more money they can spend on murdering unborn babies.

7) Planned Parenthood provides fewer services than federally qualified health centers.

Planned Parenthood's supporters love to pretend that defunding Planned Parenthood would be bad for women's health and health care for poor communities.

But Ms. Richards once again confirmed today that Planned Parenthood clinics provide significantly fewer services than federally qualified health centers, and those centers provide all of the same non-abortion services provided by Planned Parenthood, including birth control, manual breast exams and STD testing.

Cecile Richards once again confirmed that Planned Parenthood does not provide emergency first-responder care, well-child services, mammograms, immunizations, radiological services, nurse on staff and more.

For every Planned Parenthood clinic, there are 20 community health centers ready to provide all the non-abortive services currently being given by Planned Parenthood. It is a blatant lie to claim these communities would be left unserved if Planned Parenthood loses its federal funding.

8) Planned Parenthood officials visited the Obama White House 151 times in the last six years.

This fact shared by Congressman Jim Jordan speaks for itself.

9) Planned Parenthood fights higher medical standards while claiming they are exactly like hospitals and other health care

centers.

In her submitted testimony, Ms. Richards states, "Planned Parenthood operates just like all other health care providers or hospitals that provide medical care to Medicaid patients."

Then why does Planned Parenthood continually fight against higher medical standards and why have many of their top officials been caught on tape complaining about laws intended to protect women and children that hold them to a high standard of care?

And why is Planned Parenthood taking their fight to the Supreme Court to challenge common-sense regulations in Texas and other states that simply intend to hold abortion clinics to the same health standards as other surgical centers?

Could it be because these regulations would eat into the profits they make off the murder of babies and subsequent sale of their body parts?

Planned Parenthood, you can't have it both ways.

You can't claim that you offer necessary health services and then state that you don't in order to avoid being held to the same high standards of care that every woman deserves.

All in all, Ms. Richards' testimony served to reiterate one thing: Planned Parenthood is proud that they stop the beating hearts of innocent children and harvest their body parts.

They continue to call those of us who expose Planned Parenthood's practices liars and warriors against women, but have yet to deny the simple truth that they receive payment for the harvest of babies' organs.

Enough is enough, Ms. Richards. It is time Planned Parenthood is held accountable for their actions and for the \$500 million in federal funding they receive annually. The American people deserve facts, not stale talking points and strawman

arguments.

The women and children whose lives are destroyed by Planned Parenthood deserve the truth of what is happening inside those clinics to be exposed once and for all.

This is why we are fighting in nearly a dozen pro-life cases around the country, including defending a board member of the Center for Medical Progress—the investigative journalists exposing Planned Parenthood’s abhorrent practices of selling aborted baby body parts.

This is why we continue fighting on Capitol Hill to protect every life.

And this is why we want to defund Planned Parenthood and send that taxpayer money to clinics that actually provide comprehensive health care.

Join us today. {eoa}

For the original article, visit .

Radical Islam Surges as ‘Obama Doctrine’ Fails

In Syria, rebels surrender supplies and ammunition to al Qaeda-linked insurgents. In Iraq, the battle by American-backed government forces against Islamic State is at a stalemate. In Afghanistan, the Taliban seize a provincial capital for the first time since their ouster in 2001.

Less than a year and a half after President Barack Obama used a West Point speech to lay out a strategy for relying on local

partners instead of large-scale U.S. military deployments abroad, there is mounting evidence that the so-called "Obama Doctrine" may be failing.

Despite the U.S. investment of at least an estimated \$90 billion in these counter-terrorism efforts, Obama has found few reliable allies to carry the load on the battlefield – and he seems to have few good options to fix the situation.

Obama also appears hemmed in by his deep aversion to seeing America drawn back into unpopular Middle East wars after pulling U.S. forces out of Iraq in 2011.

Russia's sudden moves to seize the initiative in the Syria and Iraq crises in recent weeks have stunned U.S. officials and laid bare the erosion of Washington's influence in the region.

Faced by the mounting setbacks, Obama will probably only make modest changes in strategy, according to current and former U.S. officials. That strongly suggests that Obama will leave some of the world's most intractable conflicts to his successor when he leaves office in January 2017.

"Things aren't looking good in these places and they're not getting get much better anytime soon," said Douglas Ollivant, former senior U.S. National Security Council official on Iraq for Obama and his predecessor George W. Bush.

"That's the problem of working through partners. They're not always capable."

Options could include stepping up support for Kurdish fighters in Syria, cooperation with Russia to seek an end to the conflict there, and a slowdown of the planned U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. The administration is also weighing a proposal to scale back its failed \$580 million program to train Syrian rebels to battle Islamic State, U.S. officials said.

The Obama doctrine has floundered partly due to weak national governance in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the failure of moderate Syrian opposition groups to overcome their rivalries.

Still, many critics put the blame squarely on Obama for what they see as an overly cautious approach that has given the perception of a White House lurching from crisis to crisis.

The image of Obama as a sometimes passive world leader has been fed by perceptions that he has allowed the civil war in Syria to fester and has not acted forcefully enough to halt Islamic State's onslaught there and in neighboring Iraq.

Fresh concerns about Obama's Afghanistan policy have been ignited by the fall of the northern city of Kunduz to Taliban fighters this week.

U.S. officials say the Taliban's sudden gains against Afghan forces add a new dimension to discussions about whether to upend current plans and instead keep a sizeable force in Afghanistan beyond the end of 2016.

Obama and his aides have staunchly defended his approach even as problems have escalated on multiple war fronts.

"We've never been under the illusion that our strategy of partnerships would be a short-term fix," a senior administration official told Reuters. "In fact, we've always been clear this will need to be a long-term commitment."

The official took Obama's critics to task for failing to offer good alternatives.

"Is the solution to every Iraq and Syria to insert 150,000 U.S. troops? That is not something this president will do, nor is it something the American people want," the official said.

"CORE INTERESTS"

Undergirding Obama's overall strategy is a speech he gave to

graduating West Point cadets on May 28, 2014.

There he carefully circumscribed the rationale for use of U.S. military force – only “when our core interests demand it” – and made clear his effort would be to “partner with countries where terrorist networks seek a foothold.”

That has proven far from a fool-proof method in the fight against Islamic militancy.

On Syria, the failure of the U.S. effort to build a rebel fighting force became clear this month when the Pentagon acknowledged just four or five of the fighters were in combat.

The White House insisted that Obama was not to blame since he had always been reluctant while others, including Republican critics, had pressed him to approve the training program.

“The train and equip program was never anything but a box-checking exercise by a White House eager to be seen as ‘doing something’,” said Frederic Hof, a former State Department adviser on Syria now at the Atlantic Council. “‘The devil made me do it’ is this administration’s response to policy failure.”

Russia’s swift build-up in Syria stands in contrast to what Obama’s critics say is a reluctant, slow-moving U.S. military strategy in Syria.

“In an absence of American leadership, the vacuum is going to be filled by bad people,” said Republican U.S. Senator John McCain, a frequent critic of Obama’s foreign policy, referring to the gains made by militants across the arc of conflicts.

In Iraq, the Shi’ite-led government, locked in sectarian tensions with the country’s Sunni minority, is still struggling to make headway against Islamic State. The security forces are trying to rebuild after melting away last year in the face of a militant offensive that captured Mosul, the

country's second-largest city.

U.S. officials privately have voiced frustration with the pace of Iraqi operations, including preparations for a campaign to retake the Anbar provincial capital of Ramadi, which Islamic State seized in May.

U.S. officials have pointed to more positive results from military support given to Kurdish peshmerga forces in Iraq as well as Syrian Kurdish fighters on parts of Syria's border with Turkey. Another bright spot, they say, is progress made with local partners fighting the violent extremist group Boko Haram in west Africa.

However, in Afghanistan, the loss of Kunduz dealt another blow to Obama's policy and raised questions whether Afghan forces will be able to secure the country on their own, despite the \$65 billion invested by Washington to build them up.

Critics say a 2016 withdrawal plan may be premature.

Some analysts suggested that even though U.S. warplanes had begun bombing Taliban targets in an effort to take back Kunduz, the U.S. military may not have provided enough support early enough, particularly for airlifting in troops.

Even if Kunduz is recaptured from the Taliban, "the damage is done," said James Dobbins, Obama's former Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan and now a senior fellow at the RAND Corp. think tank. "Everybody living there now knows they're vulnerable." {eoa}

(Additional reporting by Patricia Zengerle and Warren Strobel; editing by Stuart Grudgings.)

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One Simple Declaration: 'We Believe'

Standing on the shores of the Dead Sea last Sunday evening for the opening event of the 2015 Feast of Tabernacles, it was inspiring to witness the most diverse annual assembly of Christians anywhere in the world.

Over 4,500 pilgrims from nearly half the world's nations assembled in colorful national array for a desert meal at the Ein Gedi oasis and then a dynamic worship experience to launch the annual Sukkot gathering of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem.

But for a film crew with a mainstream news channel, the same scene was not making much sense. Earlier in the day, members of the crew had visited the Church of Holy Sepulchre in the Old City of Jerusalem, the first morning of their first trip to Israel. It was so quiet and somber there, but this was so loud and joyous. It was dark there and filled with tension, but color and light filled the desert.

The film crew took in the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem's (ICEJ) Feast of Tabernacles celebration through the eyes of secular people with little understanding of today's evangelical Christianity. Thousands of Christians from dozens of countries across the globe thronged before them, singing, dancing and worshipping Jesus. There were no ethnic or cultural barriers. No inhibitions.

Yet, their questions were intriguing. Who brings all this together? How do you keep everyone on the same page?

"We don't!" came the simple, yet honest response. "We simply

invite them to come and each year for 36 years, they've come!"

Suddenly, the music swelled again as the worship team led the gathering in a contemporary version of a very ancient creed: "We believe in the crucifixion; we believe in the virgin birth; we believe in the resurrection, and that He is coming back to earth!"

What holds all these people together, the camera team asked again? And as they did, the question was being answered before our eyes:

"We believe!"

There were many tribes, many tongues and many nations. One Lord. One God. One Bible. One Creed. And, there was a shared love for Israel and the Jewish people.

This is how the 36th annual Christian Celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles began, with one simple declaration that in Jesus we all become one. In His presence, all barriers of ethnicity fade away.

As the evening ended and the crowds streamed to the buses that would take them up the steep, mountainous climb to Jerusalem, the worship team kept singing: "Make me a house of prayer." These were the same words that Jesus cried out upon his final, triumphant entry to Jerusalem: "For my house will be called a house of prayer for *all nations*," (Isaiah 56:7).

The first night in En Gedi, thousands glimpsed just that: The gathering of the nations together in Christ, with one purpose and in one accord. A few in the crowd just stood there on the outside looking in. But no one left untouched by the sight. And even the most ardent skeptic was struck by the simple declaration that has brought us all together: *We believe!*

The ICEJ's Feast gathering has now moved up to Jerusalem for the rest of the week of Sukkot, with the diverse array of

Christian pilgrims partaking in communion together in the Garden Tomb on Monday morning, ahead of the Opening Gala in the city's massive new Arena on Monday evening.

Over the coming days, the Christian visitors will be welcomed by Israeli President Reuven Rivlin, hear messages by prominent Christian speakers, and then march through the streets of Jerusalem to express their love and support for Israel.

And, they will keep singing and lifting worship to the God who has united them as one people.

To keep up with the Feast 2015, follow the live streaming at .

John Piper: Sex Belongs to Christians

In 1 Timothy 4:1-5, Paul confronts certain ascetic false teachers who believed that sex in marriage and eating foods freely were at best for second-class Christianity. Paul called these false teachings demonic.

First, the false teaching, as Paul summarizes it in verses 1-2 and the first part of verse 3:

“Now the Spirit clearly says that in the last times some will depart from the faith and pay attention to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their consciences seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods.”

Then, Paul's response, starting in the middle of verse 3:

“... which God has created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and not to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.”

For those who know the truth of the gospel and who revel in the word of God concerning the all-satisfying glory of God, and who pray (Hallowed be your name!) and dedicate everything to God, the sex of marriage and the pleasures of food are made holy—that is, they are set apart from the sinful use of the world and made pure and precious and beautiful by participation in the goodness of God.

Unembarrassed by the Bible

We are not supposed to be embarrassed by the forthright sensuality of sexual love in marriage as the Bible portrays it—sometimes graphically.

“Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth. Let her be as the loving deer and pleasant doe; let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and always be enraptured with her love. Why should you, my son, be intoxicated by an immoral woman, and embrace the bosom of a seductress? For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and He ponders all his goings” (Prov. 5:18-21).

It is no shame that “a man’s ways are before the Lord” as her breasts fill him at all times with delight. This is why God made her that way and him that way. In fact, that this delight in her is “before” the Lord—in the presence of the Lord—points to the truth that all our joy in what God has made is meant to be a delight in God. There is something of His glory in all the glories of the world.

We are not meant to revel in His creation instead of Him

or more than in Him but because of Him, and because there is something of Him in all that is good and beautiful. The heavens are telling the glory of God. We are to see it. And worship him. So it is with the breasts of our wives. The breasts are telling the glory of God, the goodness of God, the beauty of God and more. We are to see it. And worship Him.

Let the Song Stun You

The Song of Solomon is in the Bible, among other reasons, to make sure that we take seriously the exquisite physical pleasures between a bride and a groom as a picture of Christ and his church. The point is not that we nullify the physical pleasures of this Song by seeing it as a full-color image of Ephesians 5:22–33. The point is that we let the Song stun us that God would design such a relationship between man and woman – from the beginning – as the image of the covenant-keeping pleasures between Christ and his church.

“Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle, that graze among the lilies. Until the day breathes and the shadows flee, I will go away to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense. You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you” (Song 4:5–7).

“Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle. Your neck is like an ivory tower. Your eyes are pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim. Your nose is like a tower of Lebanon, which looks toward Damascus. Your head crowns you like Carmel, and your flowing locks are like purple; a king is held captive in the tresses.

“How beautiful and pleasant you are, O loved one, with all your delights! Your stature is like a palm tree, and your breasts are like its clusters. I say I will climb the palm tree and lay hold of its fruit. Oh may your breasts be like clusters of the vine, and the scent of your breath like apples, and your mouth like the best wine.

“It goes down smoothly for my beloved, gliding over lips and teeth” (Song 7:3–10).

This is part of what Paul had in mind in 1 Timothy 4:3–5, when he said, “God created [food and sex] to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. ... It is made holy by the Word of God and prayer.” Sex is for “those who believe and know the truth.”

The Pleasures of Sex Are for Christians

We might lose sight of this, since Hollywood has ripped the curtains off the sacred marriage bed and turned a luxuriant, holy pleasure into a cheap spectator sport. We might be tempted to think that, since sex is so sinfully misused and is so universally undermining to the all-satisfying beauty of Christ’s holiness, maybe we Christians should have nothing to do with it.

Paul says the opposite. It is the world that has stolen what belongs to believers. Sex belongs to Christians. Because sex belongs to God. “God created it to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.” If it is used by those who do not believe and know the truth, it is prostituted. They have exchanged the glory of God for images. They have torn sex from its God-appointed place in the orbit of marriage. But they do not know what they are doing. And the price they will pay in this life and the next is incalculable.

The pleasures of sex are meant for believers. They are designed for their greatest expression by the children of God. He saves His richest gifts for his children. And as we enjoy His gift of sex, we say, by our covenant faithfulness to our spouse, that God is greater than sex. And the pleasures of sex are themselves an overflow of God’s own goodness. This

pleasure is less than what we will know fully in Him at His right hand. And in it, we taste something of His very exquisiteness.

When the preciousness and pleasures of Christ are supreme, all dimensions of sex, including experiencing pleasure, seeking pleasure, giving pleasure, and abstinence from pleasure, will all find their biblical and Christ-exalting expression.

Everything God made is good. Everything is for the sake of worship and love. And this is true both in the feasting and the fasting. In the sexual union and in abstinence. Sex is made for the glory of Christ – for the Christ-exalting glory of covenant-keeping faithfulness in marriage, and for the glory of Christ-exalting chastity in singleness. It is always good. Sex is always an occasion to show that the Giver of sex is better than sex. {eoa}

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