

# Facebook Blocks Family-Friendly Video That Includes America's Christian Heritage

Facebook has rejected a new family-friendly Fourth of July video that recounts America's Christian heritage, because it doesn't follow the company's "advertising policies for advertising adult products or services."

The short animated video, produced by Heirloom Audio Productions founder Bill Heid, warns that the nation's future depends on returning to "God's revealed Word." The video is called *The Lost Secrets of Liberty*.

Heirloom Audio was set to launch an advertising campaign for the video on Facebook when the social media giant sent notice Wednesday that the ad was not approved due to "images or videos that show nudity or cleavage." Although the Facebook message didn't specify the problem, Heid assumed it was due to a non-graphic image of Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel painting included in the video.

"I applaud Facebook for having standards," Heid said. "However, I'm also deeply saddened by the tragic and unjustified banning of our new family-friendly Christian production. I created this Independence Day video for parents to watch with their kids so they could discuss the origins of America's liberty."

Heirloom Audio submitted an appeal to Facebook, but as of Thursday afternoon, the company declined to comment or respond to the appeal.

The video can be viewed or downloaded free at [http://www.heirloomaudio.com](#). A license is not needed to show it in public.

In the video, Heid discussed the meaning of “liberty” from the perspective of the Founding Fathers.

He also recounts little-known facts about America’s Christian heritage, such as:

- Ethan Allen demanding the surrender of the British at Fort Ticonderoga “in the name of the Great Jehovah and the Continental Congress.”
- John Adams declaring that the centralization of religion had as much to do with American independence as did taxation without representation.
- Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin promoting a scene out of the book of Exodus as the national seal.

“While we’re still free, and while we’ve still got time,” Heid said, “we’ve got to teach the next generation that our country can only be protected from tyranny, moral relativism and anarchy by finding the very context for freedom itself—found in God’s revealed Word.” {eoa}

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## **Christian Leaders Mock This Governor for His Belief in the Power of Prayer**

Earlier this month, Kentucky Gov. Matt Bevin addressed the violence that is plaguing the West End section of Louisville with one government program few would expect even the conservative evangelical Christian to propose:

Prayer teams.

In a program he has called "Reclaiming Our Communities," Bevin invited churches and other community groups to commit to "adopt" an inner-city neighborhood block to visit two or three times per week over the course of the next year. They would then "respectfully" walk the perimeter in teams of three to 10 individuals, praying for and get to know local residents.

"I truly believe we're going to see a difference in this city," he said to a group of 400 faith leaders and concerned citizens at Louisville's Western Middle School on June 1. "I personally believe in the power of prayer. I've seen it evidenced in our community and across others."

Almost immediately, liberal activists in those communities, including a number of Christian faith leaders, mocked Bevin's proposal. Joe Phelps, the pastor at Highland Baptist Church and one of the leaders of the EmpowerWest coalition of African-American and Caucasian clergy and churches, wrote that he was "embarrassed" by the governor's "non-plan."

"Gov. Matt Bevin's plan to address violence was a low day for Christianity in Kentucky's Commonwealth," he wrote in an op-ed for the *Louisville Courier-Journal*. "Moments after his plan was unveiled I was asked for a reaction and responded that the governor's tepid non-plan was an embarrassment to Christianity.

"These harsh words were spoken in frustration in the heat of the moment. But upon reflection, I stand by them. I'm embarrassed that non-Christians will assume the governor's plan, couched exclusively in Christian jargon, represents our only response to violence.

"It doesn't.

"Perhaps this is the extent of the governor's understanding of Christian faith. Or perhaps this is the extent of his capacity

to govern. Either way, I was embarrassed. I'm embarrassed that the governor, in his role as governor, lured hundreds of clergy to Louisville's Western Middle School to discuss his plan to end violence."

Harsh words indeed, particularly when they ignore more than half of Bevin's actual message. The prayer teams weren't the only method he wants to use to encourage an end to violence, but they were certainly the most unconventional.

In the same speech at Western Middle School, he also said:

Do we still need economic, political and law enforcement solutions? Of course we do.

This will not take their place, but we feel it will make a real difference.

Phelps' excoriating rebuke of Bevin never included that part of his pitch, and in fact ignored that it was even given—suggesting perhaps he wasn't even in the room and didn't know about it. But his op-ed compounded the problem, because every faith-based outlet that has commented on the governor's proposal since the article was published has ignored it as well.

And there has been a lot of "piling on."

Now, whether they were mocking Bevin because of his belief in the power of prayer, or simply because he's a conservative, they would do well to heed Romans 13. To learn more about his program, visit [this website](#).

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# Have You Unwittingly Succumbed to This Hazardous, Occultic Trend?

People are always coming up to us and saying things like, "I'm a Leo. What does the Star Bible say about that?" Even some Christians still dabble in the evil, occultic practice of astrology.

Those "Leos" think that the astrological dates they see in the papers (for Leo, July 23 to August 22), are correct, but they are a little behind the times. About 2,000 years behind.

You see, the dates are supposed to represent the dates when the sun is moving through the constellation Leo. Astrology fans believe that somehow the constellation Leo exerts some magical power on humans born during this time, so that a "Leo" has some special characteristics. These characteristics then form the basis for daily "guidance" pandered by astrologers.

So the first problem with astrology is that the actual dates when the sun moves through the constellation Leo have changed. The dates you see in the newspaper were determined when Julius Caesar was alive, over 2,000 years ago. A process called the precession of the equinoxes has moved the Leo dates back so that Leo now begins on August 11, not July 23. Also, the sun takes 42 days to travel through the constellation Leo, so the Leo dates actually are August 11 to September 21. Thus, most people who think they are Leos are really Cancers (real dates July 21 through August 10). But for all this time, the astrologers have been telling people they are subject to the magical effects of Leo anyway. God has made fools of them.

The second problem follows from the first, whether you are one of those actually born in Leo (born August 11 to August 22) or are a Leo the Crab born in Cancer (June 23 to August 10). If

astrologers can't tell the difference between a Cancer and a Leo for 2,000 years, how can they know anything else? In fact, while astrology has been used to control people for over 4,000 years, it has no real predictive power and is a demonic practice condemned by God in the Bible. Stay away from it!

The stars tell the story of Jesus, like pages in the Bible. It makes no difference which page of the Star Bible you were born under. What really matters is being born again of the Spirit. You are not a Leo or a Leo the Crab. You are a Christian.

God says, "For I know the plans that I have for you, says the Lord, "plans for peace and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jer. 29:11).

Don't miss God's good future by listening to astrology. {eoa}

*Ron Allen is a Christian businessman, CPA and author who serves in local, national and international ministries spreading a message of reconciliation to God, to men and between believers. He is founder of the International Star Bible Society, telling how the heavens declare the glory of God, and the Emancipation Network, which helps people escape from financial bondage and co-founder with his wife, Pat, of Corporate Prayer Resources, dedicated to helping intercessors.*

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## **4 Prayers to Pray Leading Up to the Fourth of July**

As Independence Day nears, Abide, the Christian meditation and prayer app, conducted a worldwide survey to gauge how people pray for America's leaders. The survey revealed the most

frequent prayers for the president, vice president and the United States are for wisdom, obedience and humility, while terrorism was the leading national prayer topic.

“These results show that, all of us may have different opinions but we all want the best for our leaders and nation; we want them to be successful,” said Neil Ahlsten, CEO and cofounder of Abide. “Our country is founded on the idea that we can have different views but still support and encourage one another—regardless of culture, creed, gender or political persuasion.”

According to the survey taken by more than 800 individuals who practice prayer and Christian meditation, here are the top four prayers:

1. 90 percent of Abide users pray for the President and Vice president to have wisdom in making decisions that influence our country,
2. Nearly 60 percent pray for them to be obedient to God
3. 56 percent pray for them to have humility.
4. Other people surveyed expressed the desire for God to lead them in decisions.

“I pray for God to give both of them the wisdom and understanding to lead this country without bias,” said one Abide user. “I pray they make their decisions based on the facts that America is God’s own country and that we are all created equal by God, the author and the finisher.”

While Abide users may share similar prayer requests for our elected officials, their opinions of the president are more divided.

When asked what national issues they pray for most often, 53 percent of Abide users said they pray about terrorism, nearly 50 percent pray about the corruption of government officials and 43 percent pray for religious freedom. Prayers over the economy, health care costs and quality, immigration, abortion

and regulations on firearms and ammunition followed. Other responses from the survey indicated a desire for unity, revival and transparency, with some users expressing a prayer for peace.

Lastly, the app survey found nearly 40 percent of Abide users pray for the president and vice president weekly, and another 40 percent said they are personally hindered from praying for them. Some surveyors said they do not pray for them because they live in another country. Others expressed disagreement over policies and needing to pray over issues in their own lives as why they do not pray for our leaders.

“Independence Day is about coming together as a nation to celebrate our history and freedom,” said Ahlsten. “When we turn on the news and scroll through our social media feeds, we are constantly reminded of how fortunate we are to live in America. I think these answers show how much we all love this country and emphasize the importance of remembering God is in control.” {eoa}

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## **Prophecy: God Is Cleaning House With His ‘Trump Card’**

In a piece that complements Word to the World co-founder John Mark Pool’s article earlier in the day, Johnny Enlow has written Thursday that God is cleaning how with his “trump card,” President Donald Trump to prepare the way for His kingdom.

“It is all happening,” he wrote for Elijah List. “Crooked media is being exposed at the highest level ever. Crooked politicians are being exposed at the highest level ever. Even

crooked church leaders are being exposed, and that will increase. It is happening in rapid-fire succession.”

Noting that God is neither a Republican nor a Democrat, and there is a lot of cleaning up needed on both sides, the prophetic author said the president is the Lord’s “instrument of correction.” As God’s trump card, the president’s rise has been meant to be a sign the Lord is playing His “high cards” right now.

“He is taking out the enemy in many places where the enemy thought he held the high cards,” he wrote. “The two of trump will take out the ace, king or queen of anything—anytime.

Enlow said 2017 will be a lot like the Super Bowl, in which it seemed as though Tom Brady and the New England Patriots had been run over in the first half, only to come roaring back in the second as the Atlanta Falcons ran out of energy. He said the significant shift will occur on or around the Fourth of July—which is next week.

He wrote:

I believe we are about to see the shift that I said would happen around July 4th (our patriotic songs time) and you will see it much harder for the fowl birds of the “dirty birds” media to sack President Trump. They gave it their all in the first half of the year, but they are now beginning to get “gassed” because of the relentless moving forward of Trump and his administration.

Expect this July 4th shift to be significant even though the enemy will keep attempting against their “swamp being drained.” However, the swamp is going to be drained like an unplugged cesspool. There is still a lot of arguing because all haven’t clearly seen the players at the bottom of the swamp. Some crooks are hiding under other crooks, but even that is not going to work for very long.

It is a monumental overhaul that God has called for at this time and “you ain’t seen nothing yet.” Trump is simultaneously a lead instrument for the overhaul [and] also symbolic of the drastic overhaul coming to everything as we accelerate into reformation days. It is a time of aggressive change towards advanced kingdom purposes. God is on your side only if you are on His side. He loves you unconditionally, even if you are not on His side, but things are not going to go well for you if you stay on your side. It is time to shift to His side.

This will all set up a period of prosperity and restoration, Enlow added. And, there will be an increased presence and joy in the Holy Spirit, which he said will manifest as a new “soundtrack from Heaven” to accompany the reformation and restoration.

Click [here](#) to read his entire article at the Elijah List website. {eoa}

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## **Liberty Counsel Sues GuideStar Over False “Hate Group” Label**

Liberty Counsel filed a federal lawsuit against GuideStar over the false and defamatory “hate group” label it placed on GuideStar’s Liberty Counsel page. The lawsuit charges GuideStar with violating the federal Lanham Act, along with state law violations of Interference with Business Expectancy and Defamation. The suit seeks a permanent injunction, damages, and attorney’s fees and costs. The case of Liberty Counsel, Inc. v. GuideStar USA, Inc. was filed in the Federal District

Court for the Eastern District of Virginia in the Newport News Division.

“GuideStar and its political ally, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), are intent on destroying pro-family organizations. The ‘hate group’ label is false and dangerous,” said Mat Staver, Founder and Chairman of Liberty Counsel. “GuideStar’s CEO, Jacob Harold, is using GuideStar as a weapon to defame, harm and promote his liberal agenda by using the SPLC to falsely label good nonprofit organizations as ‘hate groups.’ The only purpose of providing the SPLC false and dangerous ‘hate group’ label is to inflict reputational and financial harm to Liberty Counsel. GuideStar has lost all credibility. GuideStar will now have to answer for its reckless, defamatory and harmful political labeling,” said Staver.

GuideStar’s website states it is the “world’s largest source of information on nonprofit organizations.” It further claims “we gather and disseminate information about every single IRS-registered nonprofit organization. We provide as much information as we can about each nonprofit’s mission, legitimacy, impact, reputation, finances, programs, transparency, governance and so much more.”

GuideStar used the SPLC false and dangerous “hate group” designation by placing its logo and rhetoric, which states “This organization was flagged as a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center,” on Liberty Counsel’s page. GuideStar placed the same ‘hate group’ label on 46 nonprofit organizations, including Alliance Defending Freedom, the American Family Association, the Family Research Council and others.

After receiving a letter last week from 41 nonprofit organizations, most of which GuideStar falsely labeled, GuideStar issued a statement and temporarily removed the label from the pages of the nonprofit groups, but the statement said

that GuideStar would continue to provide the SPLC “hate group” information upon request, and further declared that GuideStar is considering other ways to provide the information to the public.

Staver continued: “GuideStar has not retracted its ‘hate group’ label and continues to provide false, defamatory and harmful information it pushes as fact to the public. The damage by GuideStar is far reaching because this false and defamatory labeling has been spread through scores of media sources and the internet. It also appears on the GuideStar Wikipedia page.”

Harold, GuideStar’s president and chief executive officer, is a liberal activist like the SPLC.

According to his bio, Harold has written extensively on climate change and has further training in grassroots organizing from Green Corps. He has also worked for Rainforest Action Network, Greenpeace USA and Citizen Works. In addition, Harold’s Twitter account shows he is a climate change advocate, and he retweeted a GuideStar-published piece that uses pro-LGBT and pro-transgender language. Harold was a host for a NARAL Pro-Choice D.C. men’s event in 2014, and he blogged for Huffington Post. He also donated to the Obama campaign in 2011 before joining GuideStar in 2012. His wife is also a pro-abortion advocate. Harold tweeted a picture of himself at the so-called “Women’s March” in January 2017, holding a protest sign obviously directed against President Donald Trump. This march overtly promoted abortion.

The SPLC’s caustic and false rhetoric is dangerous because it creates a “Hate Map” listing so-called “hate groups.” Mark Potok with the SPLC admitted in an interview: “Our criteria for a ‘hate group,’ first of all, have nothing to do with criminality or violence or any kind of guess we’re making about ‘this group could be dangerous.’ It’s strictly ideological.” Mark Potok is on video in a public meeting

stating, "Sometimes the press will describe us as monitoring hate crimes and so on. I want to say plainly that our aim in life is to destroy these groups, to completely destroy them ..."

The SPLC has now admitted James Hodgkinson, the D.C. shooter who gunned down Rep. Steve Scalise, two staff members and two U.S. Capitol Police officers, "liked" the SPLC on Facebook. In 2015, the SPLC wrote an article pushing the idea that Rep. Scalise promoted white supremacy and supported a "hate group" founded by former KKK member David Duke. The SPLC article clearly tries to infer that Rep. Scalise is a so-called "hater" and supporter of a "hate group."

The SPLC is also linked to the attempted mass murder in the 2012 shooting at the Washington, D.C. office of the Family Research Council (FRC). Floyd Corkins II was stopped by the FRC security guard, who was shot in the process. Corkins confessed to the FBI that he intended to commit mass murder and was motivated by the so-called "Hate Map" on the SPLC website that listed FRC as a "hate group."

Laird Wilcox, founder of the Wilcox Collection on Contemporary Political Movements at the University of Kansas's Kenneth Spencer Research Library and a leading expert on "extremist" organizations, has identified the false, misleading and destructive nature of the SPLC's "hate group" designations.

Mr. Wilcox has noted that the SPLC has gone into "ideological overdrive and has developed many of the destructive traits that characterize moral crusaders, including the demonization of critics and dissenters." Mr. Wilcox stated that the "hate group" designations reflect a "kind of selective attention and biased reporting" that "simply illustrates [the SPLC's] unscrupulousness."

He continued that it is "pretty hard to deny that the SPLC is a political operation that is trying to tar right-wingers and conservative Republicans" (emphasis added). Wilcox also noted

that “[t]he dirty little secret behind the SPLC is that they actually need racial violence, growing ‘hate groups,’ and more racial crime to justify their existence and promote their agenda.”

Wilcox concluded, “When you get right down to it, all the SPLC does is call people names. It’s specialized a highly developed and ritualized form of defamation, however—a way of harming and isolating people by denying their humanity and trying to convert them into something that deserves to be hated and eliminated.” He also noted that the SPLC’s “victims are usually ordinary people expressing their values, opinions and beliefs—and they’re up against a very talented and articulate defamation machine.” Laird Wilcox has observed of the SPLC that “[m]oralizing crusades that demonize and stereotype the opposition can be very damaging, even when they claim to be working on behalf of what objectively seems to be a ‘good’ cause—and the more venerated the cause the more excessive and extreme tactics are seen to be justified. Movements to right wrongs are very dangerous when they let the end justify the means.”

Alexander Cockburn, a columnist for the liberal publication *The Nation*, has labeled the SPLC and its leaders as “the archsalesmen of hatemongering.”

Cockburn noted that the SPLC represents nothing more than “hate-seekers scour[ing] the landscape for hate like the arms manufacturers inventing new threats, and for the same reason: it’s their staple.” Other commentators researching the SPLC’s “hate group” label have found that there is a “serious objection to the SPLC’s hate list” because of “the loosey-goosey criteria by which the [SPLC] decides which organizations qualify as hate groups.”

The SPLC has been charged with “being willing to slap the hate label on groups that may merely interpret data differently from the SPLC.”

Foreign Policy Magazine has been harshly critical of SPLC's "hate group" label, noting, "The problem is that the SPLC and the ADL (Anti-Defamation League) are not objective purveyors of data. They're anti-hate activists." Foreign Policy concluded that the methodology used by the SPLC is fundamentally flawed, and that "[i]f there is any lesson in all of this [hate group labeling], it's that the study of domestic American extremism shouldn't be the exclusive province of activists."

Other commentators have noted that "[w]hen an organization as prominent and powerful as the SPLC turns its guns on you, it can cost you your job, your livelihood—even your standing in the community. Not because you have done anything wrong. Not because what they say about you is true, but because a focused vilification campaign forces others to avoid you out of fear. You become what they call 'radioactive.'"

The Philanthropy Roundtable has noted the SPLC's "hate group" designation is "not a Consumer Reports Guide. It's a political tool." The Philanthropy Roundtable also noted that the SPLC is a "notoriously partisan attack group" and that its "hate group" designations are intended solely as a fundraising tool and that the "hate group" designations "spread stigmas just by innuendo" and that the SPLC has an "utter lack of any reasonable criteria for who goes on its lists." The Philanthropy Roundtable concluded that "[i]t is entirely fair to disagree with any of these charities or individuals—but utterly unfair to insist they are hate criminals" merely because the SPLC disagrees with them. It also concluded that the SPLC is a "bullying organization that aims to intimidate and even criminalize philosophical opponents" and that "the SPLC's tactics lead directly to hate and violence."

In 2016, the United States Department of Justice's Disciplinary Counsel for the Executive Office for Immigration Review (the "DOJ Disciplinary Counsel") sharply rebuked and

reprimanded attorneys representing the SPLC and its allies for employing the SPLC's "hate group" label to denigrate a conservative advocacy group and its attorneys engaged in advocacy in front of the Executive Office for Immigration Review. The DOJ Disciplinary Counsel concluded that employing the SPLC's "hate group" designation to denigrate attorneys and public interest groups engaged in advocacy on issues with which the SPLC disagrees "overstepped the bounds of zealous advocacy and was unprofessional." According to the DOJ Disciplinary Counsel, employing the SPLC's "hate group" designation to denigrate conservative public interest groups and their attorneys is "uncivil" and "constitutes frivolous behavior and does not aid the administration of justice" Id. (emphasis added).

"Despite serious concerns about the false labeling by the SPLC, GuideStar has used this harmful rhetoric for the purpose of causing financial and reputational injury to Liberty Counsel and other nonprofit organizations," said Mat Staver, Founder and Chairman of Liberty Counsel. "GuideStar is playing with fire. There are unhinged people who have relied upon this reckless rhetoric to threaten and even cause physical harm and death because a person or organization was falsely labeled as a 'hater' or 'hate group.' This is not a game," said Staver. {eoa}

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**Daniel Murphy Experiences  
God's Grace Through Highs and**

# Lows of Baseball

Over their professional careers, many athletes experience the extreme highs and sometimes-crushing lows of sports.

That's certainly true for Washington Nationals second baseman Daniel Murphy, who recently told his faith story to *Fellowship of Christian Athletes* (FCA, ) *Magazine* and is featured on the cover of the July/August 2017 issue, released today on the FCA website.

With the Nats being one of the hottest teams in baseball this summer—and at the top of the National League East division—Murphy is at a high point, batting an impressive .340 with an on-base percentage of .392. This week, he leads All-Star voting—nearly 1.5 million votes ahead of the next second-baseman on the list—and will likely see his first All-Star start on July 11 in Miami. Voting ends today at midnight ET, and the 2017 All-Star team will be announced Sunday.

“The Fellowship of Christian Athletes is excited to share Daniel Murphy’s story in the newest edition of *FCA Magazine*,” said Clay Meyer, editor of *FCA Magazine*. “It’s awesome when we can talk about the faith journey of an athlete on one of the world’s biggest sports stages and show that they are just like everyone else when it comes to faith struggles, trusting God in all things and keeping the focus on Jesus. We hope that Daniel’s story will impact fans of all ages and demonstrate how the Lord uses everyone’s gifts for His plan.”

Two short seasons ago, when Murphy was with the New York Mets, he experienced the highest of highs and the lowest of lows—all in one playoff run. Murphy batted a ridiculous .556 in the NL Division Series and Championship Series, hitting home runs in six consecutive playoff games against the Los Angeles Dodgers and then the Chicago Cubs.

“The more notoriety I got, I tried to push in closer to

Jesus,” Murphy told FCA. “I didn’t want to take that glory for myself. It was a really, really sweet time in our lives.”

But what followed was the complete opposite. Once the Mets made it to the 2015 World Series, Murphy went hitless in three of the five games, batting 3 for 20 overall as the Mets fell to the Kansas City Royals. He drove in zero runs. He struck out seven times. And he made two costly errors in the field.

“Being on top of the mountain and then being at the bottom of the barrel ... just felt like a perfect picture of God’s grace and love in our lives,” Murphy said. “Jesus didn’t love me any less when I made those errors in the World Series than He did when I was hitting those home runs in the NLCS. If anything, He loved me more. He’s like, ‘I think you can handle this; and on My strength, we’re going to grow from this, we’re going to be stronger, and I’m going to refine your heart.’ I’ve been able to use that three-week period as a testimony.”

Murphy grew up in Jacksonville, Florida, with brother Jonathan and sister Tricia, and “would swing the bat all day long” if he could, his dad, Tom, said. Daniel and Jonathan have led an FCA hitting camp for the past few winters in the Jacksonville area, where Daniel shares his testimony with the young players. The brothers also use a host of FCA resources to hand out to the campers.

“We grew up going to church,” Daniel Murphy said. “At a very young age and even through middle school, high school and college, I knew the head answers of what Jesus had done for me personally. At the same time, I thought full surrender to Jesus meant giving up things in my life that I didn’t want to give up. I just didn’t want to give up control of my life.”

Murphy excelled on the Jacksonville University team, and the Mets took note and drafted him in the 13th round in 2006. He rose quickly through the Mets’ farm system and first reached the majors in 2008. He’s found a home there since 2009 and

experienced a few setbacks due to injury, missing out on the entire 2010 season.

He also went through a breakup with his girlfriend, Tori, which made him look at his own life from a deeper level.

“Sometimes we have a tendency to forget His grace and His love and His mercy,” Murphy says. “I had not focused on that in a long time. I got on my knees and, by the grace of God, surrendered my life to Him. ‘I don’t know where You want to take me,’ I said, ‘but I know that Your ways for me have to be better than the choices I’ve made in my own life that have gotten me in this situation.’”

While Murphy went through spiritual growth, Tori was experiencing a spiritual breakthrough as well. The couple reunited, were engaged by January 2012 and married later that year. Today, they are the parents of son, Noah, daughter, Quinn, and have another baby on the way.

“If I were to write out the perfect plan, it never would have worked out like this—ever,” Daniel says. “God put things in my life with my family that just tried to strip away the massive idol that is baseball, as I mold, hopefully, into a gracious and serving husband and father.”

Back on the baseball diamond, some wrote off Murphy’s 2015 incredible postseason as a fluke. Perhaps the Mets were thinking the same thing, as they offered him a generous contract, but only for one year. Meanwhile, Dusty Baker—a former manager turned TV analyst turned back to manager—apparently believed Murphy’s newfound power could be sustained. Baker was hired to manage the Washington Nationals in November 2015, and a month later Murphy inked a three-year, \$37.5 million deal.

Baker’s confidence in Murphy was rewarded. Last season, Murphy shattered career highs with a .347 batting average, 47 doubles, 25 home runs and 104 RBIs, and finished second in

National League MVP voting. And he's on par for another stellar season. Within the Nats community, Daniel and Tori also help lead a Bible study for the team's couples, which is rooted in a profound lesson that Daniel learned from Mets chaplain Cali Magallenes.

"He told me, 'There will be two people waiting for you when you get done with the game of baseball,'" Murphy said. "'One of them I know will be there, and that'll be Jesus. And the other one will be your wife. The relationship you have with her will be a direct result of the investment you've made in her over the course of these years.'

"This is a season that Christ has us in, and I want to build relationships and hopefully show people that I'm far from perfect," Murphy added, "but I know where there's hope and where there's joy and where there's peace. Because I've tasted it, and I want to point them in that direction." {eoa}

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## **Miley Cyrus: 'I Want Gender-Neutral to Be the New Normal'**

Miley Cyrus has claimed she is "genderless" and said she hopes it will become "the new normal".

The controversial pop star said: "I feel like everything and nothing and all at once ... I feel very genderless, I feel ageless".

"So I feel very much like there's no us and them, there's no me and you, I feel like I'm kind of just, I want to be everything and I want to be also kind of nothing ... hopefully that stops being weird", she added.

## **'Very Neutral'**

Cyrus, who has previously described herself as "pansexual", made the comments on ITV's *Lorraine* program.

The remarks were not the first time the 24-year-old has claimed to be gender-neutral.

Last October, she told *Variety* magazine: "I don't ever think about someone being a boy or someone being a girl."

## **Wrong Message**

"I feel very neutral", she added.

Cyrus has previously been criticized for sending children the wrong message through her revealing outfits and sexually explicit performances.

But in 2013, she told BBC Radio 1's "Newsbeat": "I feel like I'm one of the biggest feminists in the world because I tell women to not be scared of anything. I'm for anybody and anything, I don't care what you want to do, what you want to look like."

## **'6-Year-Old Girl'**

Cyrus is not the first person to make claims about their chosen gender and age.

In 2015, a Canadian man who was married with seven children shared how he left his family and now "lives as if he is a 6-year-old girl."

Paul, who is in his 50s and calls himself Stefonknee Wolscht, lives in Toronto with friends whom he refers to as his "adoptive mommy and daddy," dresses in children's clothing and plays with their grandchildren.

## **Escape**

Wolscht was 46 when he left his wife and family. He was homeless for a spell and attempted suicide on two occasions.

In an interview with a homosexual news website, he explained that he is living as a child in order to escape his past.

He told *Daily Xtra*: “In my mind I was never allowed to be a little girl so I’m filling that tank of little-girl experiences.”

“By not acting my age, I don’t have to deal with the reality that was my past, because it hurt,” he added.

### **‘Gender-Fluid Identity’**

Earlier this year, the Family Policy Institute of Washington released a video showing students at the University of Washington responding to scenarios of “gender-fluid identity.”  
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## **ISIS Caliphate Defeated, Iraqi PM Says**

After eight months of grinding urban warfare, Iraqi government troops on Thursday captured the ruined mosque at the heart of Islamic State’s de facto capital Mosul, and the prime minister declared the group’s self-styled caliphate at an end.

Iraqi authorities expect the long battle for Mosul to end in coming days as remaining Islamic State fighters are bottled up in just a handful of neighborhoods of the Old City.

The seizure of the nearly 850-year-old Grand al-Nuri Mosque—from where Islamic State proclaimed the caliphate

nearly three years ago to the day—is a huge symbolic victory.

“The return of al-Nuri Mosque and al-Hadba minaret to the fold of the nation marks the end of the Daesh state of falsehood,” Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said in a statement, referring to the hardline Sunni Muslim group by an Arabic acronym.

The fall of Mosul would in effect mark the end of the Iraqi half of the IS caliphate, although the group still controls territory west and south of the city, ruling over hundreds of thousands of people.

Its stronghold in Syria, Raqqa, is also close to falling.

A Kurdish-led coalition besieging Raqqa on Thursday fully encircled it after closing the militants’ last way out from the south, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group said.

These setbacks have reduced Islamic State’s territory by 60 percent from its peak two years ago and its revenue by 80 percent, to just \$16 million a month, said IHS Markit.

“Their fictitious state has fallen,” an Iraqi military spokesman, Brigadier General Yahya Rasool, told state TV.

However, it still occupies an area as big as Belgium, across Iraq and Syria, according to IHS Markit, an analytics firm.

Islamic State fighters blew up the medieval mosque and its famed leaning minaret a week ago as Iraqi forces started a push in its direction. Their black flag had been flying from al-Hadba (The Hunchback) minaret since June 2014.

Much of the mosque and brickwork minaret was reduced to rubble, said a Reuters TV reporter who went to the site with the elite units that captured it.

Only the stump of the Hunchback remained, and a green dome of the mosque supported by a few pillars which resisted the

blast, he said.

The mosque grounds were off limits as the insurgents are suspected to have planted booby traps.

Abadi "issued instructions to bring the battle to its conclusion," by capturing the remaining parts of the Old City, his office said.

The cost of the fighting has been enormous. In addition to military casualties, thousands of civilians are estimated to have been killed.

About 900,000 people, nearly half the pre-war population of the northern city, have fled, mostly taking refuge in camps or with relatives and friends, according to aid groups.

Those trapped in the city suffered hunger, deprivation and IS oppression as well as death or injury, and many buildings have been ruined.

### **Arduous Task**

Counter Terrorism Service (CTS) troops captured the al-Nuri Mosque's ground in a "lightning operation" on Thursday, a commander of the elite units told state TV.

CTS units are now in control of the mosque area and the al-Hadba and Sirjkhana neighborhoods and they are still advancing, a military statement said.

Other government units, from the army and police, were closing in from other directions.

An elite Interior Ministry unit said it freed about 20 children believed to belong to Yazidi and other minorities persecuted by the jihadists in a quarter north of the Old City which houses Mosul's main hospitals.

A international coalition is providing air and ground support

to the Iraqi forces fighting through the Old City's maze of narrow alleyways.

But the advance remains arduous as IS fighters are dug in the middle of civilians, using mortar fire, snipers, booby traps and suicide bombers to defend their last redoubt.

The military estimated up to 350 militants were still in the Old City last week but many have been killed since.

They are besieged in one sq. km (0.4 square mile) making up less than 40 percent of the Old City and less than one percent of the total area of Mosul, the largest urban center over which they held sway in both Iraq and Syria.

Those residents who have escaped the Old City say many of the civilians trapped behind IS lines – put last week at 50,000 by the Iraqi military – are in a desperate situation with little food, water or medicines.

“Boys and girls who have managed to escape show signs of moderate malnutrition and carry psychosocial scars,” the United Nations Children's Fund UNICEF said in a statement.

Thousands of children remain at risk in Mosul, it said.

IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi proclaimed himself ruler of all Muslims from the Grand al-Nuri Mosque's pulpit on July 4, 2014, after the insurgents overran swathes of Iraq and Syria.

His speech from the mosque was the first time he revealed himself to the world and the footage broadcast then is to this day the only video recording of him as “caliph.”

He has left the fighting in Mosul to local commanders and is believed to be hiding in the border area between Iraq and Syria, according to U.S. and Iraqi military sources.

The mosque was named after Nuruddin al-Zanki, a noble who fought the early Crusaders from a fiefdom that covered

territory in modern-day Turkey, Syria and Iraq. It was built in 1172-73, shortly before his death, and housed an Islamic school.

The Old City's stone buildings date mostly from the medieval period. They include market stalls, a few mosques and churches, and small houses built and rebuilt on top of each other over the ages. {eoa}

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## **Here's What to Expect When Moon Jae-in Comes to Visit Friday**

This week's Korea summit will be scrutinized for signals of the strength of the relationship and divergence in approaches to North Korea.

The elections of U.S. President Donald Trump and South Korean President Moon Jae-in upended their countries' policies toward the bilateral alliance and North Korea, producing uncertainty and concerns in both capitals.

Both presidents have subsequently sought to allay those concerns by sending messages of reassurance and commonality of objectives.

But significant policy differences remain in their two approaches toward Pyongyang, which will become evident over time. For the summit, both sides will emphasize building trust and a personal rapport rather than producing an in-depth policy framework. As such, there will be fewer public

disagreements and policy fireworks than originally expected.

Trump has yet to fill critical vacancies for policymakers covering Asia at a time when numerous threats and potential crises are growing.

Trump has touted his dealmaking acumen as well as his unpredictability. He postulates that these traits increase his negotiating leverage, but they have unnerved U.S. allies.

The Trump administration's Asia policy has been troubled by conflicting signals, including how willing Trump is to use military force to prevent Pyongyang from developing an intercontinental ballistic missile that could threaten the U.S. homeland.

Although Trump has criticized President Barack Obama's "strategic patience" policy as weak and ineffectual, he has yet to distinguish his North Korea policy from his predecessor's.

Trump's policy of "maximum pressure" is anything but and, like Obama, he continues to pull U.S. punches by only incrementally sanctioning North Korea and refraining from imposing secondary sanctions on Chinese violators of U.S. law.

Moon has yet to define his approaches toward Washington and Pyongyang. He has described himself as "America's friend" and the U.S. alliance as the "most important foundation for our diplomacy and national security."

Yet Moon also advocates being able to "say no to the Americans," strengthening his country's independent defense capabilities, and regaining wartime operational control of South Korean military forces from the United States. Currently, control of the South Korean military will be turned over to the U.N. commander (always a U.S. general) when the two presidents decide a state of war exists.

Moon has repeatedly criticized Seoul and Washington for an overreliance on sanctions and pressure tactics and vowed for Seoul to take the lead on North Korean matters rather than taking a back seat to the U.S. and China. He advocates a return to the "sunshine" engagement policies of previous liberal presidents, which offered economic largesse with few conditions.

For example, Moon proposes reopening the Kaesong and Kumgangsan joint economic ventures with North Korea. Doing so, however, would be a violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions.

U.N. Resolution 2094 (paragraphs 11-15) requires U.N. member states to prevent financial services that could contribute to North Korea's nuclear and missile programs. U.N. Resolution 2321 (paragraph 32) prohibits any financial support to Pyongyang unless it is specifically approved in advance by the U.N. 1718 Committee.

During a recent trip to Washington, presidential adviser Moon Chung-in and two National Assembly members exacerbated U.S. concerns over Moon Jae-in's policies on North Korea, the alliance, and deployment of the THAAD missile defense system to South Korea.

The administration distanced itself from adviser Moon's remarks, but it remains unclear whether his faux pas was simply being too forthcoming about Seoul's intentions.

Moon Jae-in originally opposed the THAAD deployment but he tacked to the center during the campaign to gain conservative voters.

After his inauguration, Moon claimed he wouldn't overturn the alliance deployment decision but froze ongoing deployment to allow for an environmental impact assessment, which could take 1-2 years.

Doing so increases the risks from North Korean nuclear, chemical, and biological attack to South Korean citizens as well as the 28,500 American sons and daughters put in harm's way to defend South Korea.

Moon sees economic engagement with North Korea as a means of bringing the North back to the negotiating table. But there is little utility to such negotiations as long as Pyongyang rejects their core premise—which is an abandonment of its nuclear weapons and programs.

During my meetings with North Korean officials in Sweden earlier this month, they made unambiguously clear that denuclearization was totally off the table and there was nothing either Washington or Seoul could offer that would induce Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear arsenal.

North Korea conducted several missile tests since Moon's inauguration in violation of U.N. resolutions and rejected his offers of dialogue, humanitarian assistance, and exchanges of nongovernment visits.

The regime's actions show that it will not act any more benevolently to Moon than to his conservative predecessors.

In 2009, Pyongyang similarly disabused Obama of his view that the regime would behave differently than it had under President George W. Bush.

Trump and Moon will be on their best behavior during the summit to prevent appearances of strains in the alliance.

Both sides should make clear their unwavering support of the alliance and maintaining the international consensus on the need to punish Pyongyang for its repeated violations.

However, if Moon signals that he will return to the failed engagement policies of the past or hinder the THAAD deployment, it could cause significant strains in the

bilateral relationship with Washington. {eoa}

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