

The Answer to America's School Shooting Problem

The massacre at Santa Fe High School in Santa Fe, Texas, left 10 dead and shocked the nation once again. The response has been predictable by the media "experts" and political talking heads. They say the answer is more laws, more guards and better security. Sadly, few voices are addressing the root of the problem, which is spiritual and moral.

Rejecting Christian Morality Is Having Consequences

William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania, wisely stated, "Those who will not be governed by God must be ruled by tyrants." Fifty-five years ago, the nation's highest court decided that America's public schools would not be governed by God, and we are suffering the consequences with 22 school shootings so far this year, teachers having sex with students and students attacking teachers as well as one another.

In 1963, the Supreme Court banned prayer and Bible reading in public schools. Since that time, there has been an all-out attempt by clueless secularists to purge every vestige of Christian influence, not realizing that freedom and Christianity are indissolubly linked.

This anti-Christian crusade has led to the removal of crosses and Ten Commandment displays, coaches being told they can't bow in prayer with their players, school bands being barred from playing Christian songs and valedictorians being told they cannot talk about their faith at graduation.

Actions have consequences and this rejection of Christian morality has led to the breakdown of the traditional family and a culture with no moral compass, adrift on a sea of moral relativism.

The consequences of refusing to be governed by God are obvious. I attended high school in the 1960s in a rural area of northeast Texas. Every home had guns, and most of my friends owned hunting rifles. Even though there were few regulations, there were no school shootings, and the inappropriate use of firearms was rare.

We were governed from within by the moral constraints of a Christian culture. There were strong families, vibrant churches and schools where prayer was offered before every special event and teachers were free to talk about their faith. Even those who did not attend church had a respect for God. When someone would pray at the beginning of a sporting or social event, you would see hats being removed throughout the stadium, showing honor to God and that sacred moment.

The biggest problems in school at that time were chewing gum in glass, being out of your seat or talking without permission and being late with an assignment. My how things have changed since our brilliant jurists and politicians have decided we would not be governed by God.

As Penn pointed out, the only alternative to not being governed by God is tyranny. or taking away individual liberty by passing more and more stringent laws in hope of regulating the bad behavior of a society that is no longer governed by God.

Washington, Jefferson and Franklin Speak Out

America's Founding Fathers understood this and stated that they had formulated the U.S. Constitution for a Christian and moral people who would be self-governed from within. John Adams said, "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious [Christian] people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

In his farewell address after serving two terms as America's first president, George Washington declared, "Of all the

dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion [Christianity] and morality are indispensable supports." He goes on to say that the person who would "labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness" can never claim to be an American patriot.

Thomas Jefferson was in complete agreement, and he made Washington's Farewell Address required reading at the University of Virginia, which he founded. Notice that Washington did not call religion "optional." The word he used was "indispensable," and Jefferson obviously agreed. It should be remembered that when the Founding Fathers used the word "religion," they were referring to Christianity.

Jefferson may have had questions at times about certain aspects of Christian doctrine, but there is no question that he saw Christianity as providing the moral and intellectual system necessary for a stable society. Having read the Koran and the literature of ancient Greece, Rome and the Enlightenment, he stated, "Of all the systems of morality that have come under my observations, none appear to me so pure as that of Jesus."

Jefferson's commitment to Christian values is why he closed all presidential documents with the appellation, "In the year of our Lord Christ." It is also why he took money from the federal treasury to pay for missionaries to work among the Kaskasia Indian tribe and to build them a building in which to worship.

Benjamin Franklin also expressed questions at times about certain aspects of Christian doctrine, but through his Puritan roots and close friendship with George Whitefield, the most famous preacher of the Great Awakening, he became convinced that Christian values are necessary for a stable society. He once said, "The moral and religious system which Jesus Christ transmitted to us is the best the world has ever seen, or can see."

The Church Must Arise

If America will not be governed by God, its only alternative is to pass more and more stringent laws that take away individual liberty. If America will not be governed by God, then the country may find it necessary to get rid of the Second Amendment and live in an increasingly tyrannical state where individual freedom is a thing of the past.

The founders did not believe there could be liberty apart from virtue or freedom apart from morality. Only Christianity offered the moral and intellectual underpinnings that would preserve the nation they had brought into existence. William Novak is, therefore, correct in saying, "The founders did not believe the constitutional government they were erecting could survive without Hebrew-Christian faith."

The church must stand up in boldness and reject the secularist lie that the First Amendment banned faith from the government and public square. Nothing could be further from the truth. Our schools and our nation need God, and it is time for the church to be salt and light in this nation. {eoa}

This article was derived from Eddie Hyatt's latest book, [5 Pillars of the American Republic](#), available from Amazon and his website at www.eddiehyatt.com.

The 7 Basics Bringing the Billion-Soul Harvest

Prophetic decorations are being heralded nationwide for the "billion-soul harvest." Supercharged conferences are permeated by enthusiastic Christians celebrating the anticipated end-

time in gathering of a billion new converts coming to Christ in our day.

Is this emotional hype or a genuine possibility? After all, Jesus did tell us that the “harvest is the end of the age” (Matt. 13:39, NIV).

This desired, massive turning of lost people to Jesus Christ won't happen by simply praying, praising and prophesying, no matter how intense or passionate the participants may be. And according to Scripture, it won't come about through angels preaching the gospel instead of us who are called to be His “ambassadors” of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-20).

There are seven basics that need to be understood and applied by leaders and those zealous to hasten the harvest and help bring back the King. Watch this inspiring and concluding video from the free YouTube series “Loving Lifestyle Evangelism” to be equipped and engaged for this exciting move of God in our day.

Leftist Leader Nicolas Maduro Beats Out Pentecostal Pastor for Venezuela Presidency

Venezuela's leftist leader Nicolas Maduro won a new six-year term on Sunday, but his main rivals disavowed the election alleging massive irregularities in a process critics decried as a farce propping up a dictatorship.

Victory for the 55-year-old former bus driver, who replaced Hugo Chavez after his death from cancer in 2013, may trigger a

new round of Western sanctions against the socialist government as it grapples with a ruinous economic crisis.

U.S. President Donald Trump's administration is threatening moves against Venezuela's already reeling oil sector.

Venezuela's election board, run by Maduro loyalists, said he took 5.8 million votes, versus 1.8 million for his closest challenger Henri Falcon, a former governor who broke with an opposition boycott to stand.

"They underestimated me," Maduro told cheering supporters on a stage outside Miraflores presidential palace in downtown Caracas as fireworks sounded and confetti fell on the crowd.

Turnout at the election was just 46.1 percent, the election board said, way down from the 80 percent registered at the last presidential vote in 2013. The opposition said that figure was inflated, putting participation at nearer 30 percent.

An electoral board source told Reuters 32.3 percent of eligible voters cast ballots by 6 p.m. (2200 GMT) as most polls shut.

"The process undoubtedly lacks legitimacy and as such we do not recognize it," said Falcon, a 56-year-old former state governor, looking downcast.

Maduro had welcomed Falcon's candidacy, which gave some legitimacy to a process critics at home and around the world had condemned in advance as the "coronation" of a dictator.

Falcon's quick rejection of Sunday's election, and call for a new vote, was therefore a blow to the government's strategy.

Falcon, a former member of the Socialist Party who went over to the opposition in 2010, said he was outraged at the government's placing of nearly 13,000 pro-government stands called "red spots" close to polling stations nationwide.

Mainly poor Venezuelans were asked to scan state-issued "fatherland cards" at red tents after voting in hope of receiving a "prize" promised by Maduro, which opponents said was akin to vote-buying.

The "fatherland cards" are required to receive benefits including food boxes and money transfers.

A third presidential candidate, evangelical pastor Javier Bertucci, followed Falcon in slamming irregularities during Sunday's vote and calling for a new election.

Despite his unpopularity over a national economic meltdown, Maduro benefited on Sunday not just from the opposition boycott but also from a ban on his two most popular rivals and the liberal use of state resources in his campaign.

His tally, however, fell short of the 10 million votes he had said throughout the campaign he wanted to win.

FIGHTING "IMPERIALISM"

Maduro, the self-described "son" of Chavez, says he is battling an "imperialist" plot to crush socialism and take over Venezuela's oil. Opponents say he has destroyed a once-wealthy economy and ruthlessly crushed dissent.

Attendance appeared thin in many polling stations visited by Reuters reporters, from wealthy east Caracas to the Andean mountains near Colombia. There were lines, however, at poorer government strongholds, where the majority of voters interviewed said they were backing Maduro.

"I'm hungry and don't have a job, but I'm sticking to Maduro," said Carlos Rincones, 49, in the once-thriving industrial city of Valencia, accusing right-wing business owners of purposefully hiding food and hiking prices.

Many Venezuelans are disillusioned and angry over the election: they criticize Maduro for economic hardships and the

opposition for its dysfunctional splits.

Reeling from a fifth year of recession, falling oil production and U.S. sanctions, Venezuela is seeing growing levels of malnutrition and hyperinflation, and mass emigration.

Venezuelan migrants staged small anti-Maduro protests in cities from Madrid to Miami. In the highland city of San Cristobal near Colombia, three cloth dolls representing widely loathed officials – Electoral Council head Tibisay Lucena, Socialist Party No. 2 Diosdado Cabello and Vice President Tareck El Aissami – were hung from a footbridge.

But streets were calm, with children playing soccer on one road in San Cristobal blocked off at past elections to accommodate long voter lines. For many Venezuelans, Sunday was a day to look for scant food or stock up on water, which is increasingly running short because of years of underinvestment.

“I’m not voting – what’s the point if we already know the result? I prefer to come here to get water rather than waste my time,” said Raul Sanchez, filling a jug from a tap by a busy road in the arid northwestern city of Punto Fijo because his community has not had running water for 26 days.

With the election behind him, Maduro may choose to deepen a purge of critics within the ruling “Chavismo” movement.

He faces a Herculean task to turn around the moribund economy, with the bolivar currency down 99 percent in the past year and inflation at an annual 14,000 percent, according to the National Assembly. {eoa}

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WATCH: Most Rev. Michael Curry Boldly Proclaims the Gospel During the Royal Wedding

The Most Rev. Michael Curry boldly proclaimed the gospel during his homily at the wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex.

The presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church preached on love, quoting the Song of Solomon and Martin Luther King.

“But it is not just about and for a young couple who we rejoice with,” Curry said. It’s more than that.

He transitioned into the teachings of Jesus, much to the shock of some in attendance.

Meghan Markle and her new husband, Prince Harry, beamed at the reverend while he spoke.

“When love is the way, there is plenty good room for all of God’s children,” Curry proclaimed. “When love is the way, we treat each other like we are actually family.”

Watch the video to see his full sermon.

Irish Voters Could Repeal

Pro-Life Amendment

Irish voters will decide this week whether to repeal the Eighth amendment to their constitution, which protects the right to life of both a mother and her unborn child. If it falls, as polling suggests it might, some fear it could open the way to abortion on demand.

Ireland added a pro-life amendment to its constitution in 1983, because it did not want the right to life in its constitution to be overturned by a court, like what happened in the United States' with the Roe vs Wade Supreme Court decision.

Ireland's Steady Spread of Social Change

But Ireland has been undergoing sweeping social change. In 2015, Ireland became the first country to legalize gay marriage by popular vote. Its Taoiseach or prime minister is openly gay. And Leo Varadkar backs repeal of the Eighth along with much of the Irish establishment and media.

Around the time that polling showed the race was tightening, Facebook and Google effectively sealed off the nation to any foreign advertising about the referendum on social media, in what looked to pro-lifers as a way to make sure the repeal or yes camp wins.

"Save the 8th" spokeswoman Naih m ui Bhriain told reporters, "It's very significant that 'Yes' campaigners rushed out today to welcome this censorship of the 'No' message because the 'Yes' side in this referendum doesn't need Google to campaign. Was it because the polls are tightening? Was it because it looks like this referendum, which is absolutely supported by the media establishment and the political establishment, is going to be rejected?"

Uphill Battle to Keep Ireland Pro-Life

Ui Bhriain described to CBN News an uphill battle against most of the nation's press and politicians.

"The bias is off the charts," she said. "They're saying to Irish women, 'You're not safe without abortion, your health is not safe, your lives might be in danger. Women need abortion in order to have full and safe lives, in order to be equal in society.' And when you look at the facts this is entirely untrue."

"Abortion is not predominantly a medical issue," says, pro-life Irish doctor, John Kehoe. While some doctors have announced publicly that they support repeal of the Eight Amendment for the health and safety of women, Kehoe says women don't need a change in the law to be safer.

"This is not a medical debate in my opinion. This is a social debate," Kehoe says. "This is a debate about choice and this is a debate in my opinion about human rights, the right to life."

Is Abortion Ever Necessary?

The repeal or pro-choice side says it's absolutely about the health and safety of women, but whether an abortion is ever necessary to save a woman's life is in dispute, because if there is a serious complication, a doctor can attempt to deliver the baby early, alive.

Another issue is the Irish women who are already traveling to Britain for the procedure or who are taking the abortion pill illegally.

Leo Varadkar, Ireland's prime minister, says, "I think the laws that we have in Ireland are far too restrictive. Nine, ten women every day travel to the United Kingdom to end their pregnancies, and increasingly women are buying pills over the internet and taking them at home, so that is actually quite a dangerous situation and we believe that we should face up to

the reality of abortion and provide for it in our own country but with the necessary restrictions.”

‘Women Are Safe in Ireland’

Pro-life spokeswoman Ui Bhriain says, ” The facts show us this: woman are safe in Ireland. They’re much safer here than in the United States where abortion is widely available. Any care they need during pregnancy, any intervention they need during pregnancy are given to them under Irish law.”

The other issue is whether abortion should be allowed for fetal abnormalities. The “Yes” camp says women suffer psychologically when they are forced to carrying a child with a fetal abnormality to term. {eoa}

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20 Evangelical Pastors Among the 110 Killed in Cuba Plane Crash

Ten evangelical pastoral couples were killed when a plane crash shortly after takeoff in Cuba Friday.

According to the [Nazarene](#) website, these couples were at a three-day [National Conference in Havana](#), returning home to the Province of Holguín.

The deceased are:

1. Mirza Rodríguez Rondón and Juan Luis Vega Velázquez

2. Luis Manuel Rojas Pérez and Maricela Peña
3. Norma Suárez Niles and Jesús Manuel García Oberto
4. María Virgen Filandez Rojas and Rafael Vega Velázquez
5. Ronni Alain Pupo Pupo and Yurisel Milagros Miranda Mulet (NMI president)
6. Eloy Ortiz Abad and Elva María Mosqueda Legrá
7. Juan Carlos Noguerras Leyva and Noelbis Hernández Guerrero
8. Gelover Martín Pérez Avalo and Yoneisi Cordovez Rodríguez (pastor and district treasurer)
9. Manuel David Aguilar Saavedra and María Salomé Sánchez Arévalo (district secretary)
10. Grisell Filandes Clark and Lorenzo Boch Bring

“They were men and women faithful to God, to their families, to their neighbors and to the people,” Rev. Leonel Lopez, the head of Cuba’s Nazarene church, tells [*The New York Times*](#).

“In this moment of anguish and pain, we ask for your prayers and help to be able to get through this situation together,” Lopez says.

The plane crash was the deadliest air disaster in 30 years, Reuters reports, with 110 of the 113 on board dying.

According to Reuters, President Miguel Diaz-Canel visited the morgue over the weekend, which is the first big test of his presidency after taking the reins from Raul Castro last month.

Some locals who saw the crash say one of the engines appeared to have caught fire before the plane hit the ground.

“The plane was on fire, it flipped and then nosedived,” said farmer Marino Perez Alvaredo.

Is Biblical Truth No Different Than the Yanny vs. Laurel Debate?

The Yanny vs. Laurel debate has taken the internet by storm. What did you hear when you heard the [robot audio clip](#)?

As I listened, there was no doubt that the word was “Laurel,” no matter how many times I listened. It was “Laurel,” clear as a bell.

For others, the word was definitely “Yanny.” How, they wondered, could anyone hear anything else?

The offshoot of all this is simple (and scary): Two sincere people can hear (or see) two different things at one and the same time, even though they’re hearing (or seeing) the very same thing.

But does that mean all truth is up for grabs? Perish the thought. The Yanny vs. Laurel debate actually underscores this.

“How so?” you might ask?

Well, we’re having a conversation about this issue, and everyone understands what we’re talking about. In other words, if you followed the Yanny vs. Laurel controversy the last few days, you know what’s dividing us.

We listened to the same clip, and some of us heard one thing and others heard another thing. The reason we know this is because when we choose to communicate clearly, we can.

That’s how we know there’s a national controversy. We’ve been communicating about it with each other. And our communication has been simple and clear.

That's why no one reading this column thinks I'm talking about the NBA playoffs or the Middle East conflict or alpine skiing or favorite pets. When we want to communicate clearly, we can.

That's why we have traffic lights and traffic signs. (Does anyone think that STOP means "Accelerate now"?)

That's why we have tests with questions and answers.

That's why we have menus with descriptions.

An optical (or auditory) illusion is one thing. Intentional, clear, black and white communication is another thing.

Unfortunately, I can already see what's coming down the pike based on the Yanny vs. Laurel debate. It's going to sound something like this: "You have your truth and I have mine. Remember Yanny and Laurel! Your reality may be real for you, but it's not real for me."

How much more will we hear this argument when it comes to biblical truth: "Remember Yanny and Laurel!"

Now, as a lifelong student of the Scriptures (from the age of 16 until today), I'd be the first to admit that there are verses in the Bible that are hard to understand. Some are even downright difficult just to translate. And some are subjects of debate to this moment.

At the same time, I'd be the first to affirm that some things are as clear as day, and it is only if we choose not to see what is written that we will remain blind.

That's why so many people hate God's Word: The message is all too clear! As the old Mark Twain [saying](#) goes, "It ain't those parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand."

Let's take John 14:6 and Acts 4:12 as examples. In John, Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to

the Father except through Me.” In Acts, speaking of this same Jesus, Peter said, “There is no salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Does this sound like, “All paths lead to God”? Do these verses say, “Even if you reject Jesus, God will receive you”?

Certainly not. This is not one of those Yanny vs. Laurel examples.

And on and on it goes, in verse after verse through the Scriptures. There is a clear message about the one true God. A clear message about the sinfulness of our race. A clear message about the holy standards of the Lord. A clear message about our need to be forgiven and redeemed. A clear message about a Savior and Redeemer. A clear message about the consequences of rejecting that Savior and Redeemer.

The words are not ambiguous and the message is not unclear. Rather, the truth is staring us right in the face, if we only humble ourselves and believe.

Again, this doesn't mean that every verse in the Bible is easy to understand. And it doesn't mean that serious students of the Word won't have some differences. And, obviously, it doesn't mean that everyone recognizes the Bible as God's Word, even though it is His Word.

But it does mean that the objection we're sure to hear in the days ahead is no objection at all. There's a massive difference between an auditory illusion and eternal, unambiguous, clearly-communicated truth.

Men Around the World Are Giving Up Porn, and It's Because of This...

With 68% of Christian men viewing pornography on a regular basis, the church is in desperate need for something to help men understand what they are up against. Already, 500,000 men have found a solution that is kick-starting their journey toward sexual integrity. The Conquer Series is a twelve-disc cinematic series for men, which uses war analogies to help men understand the battle they're facing. Dr. Ted Roberts, host of the [Conquer Series](#), has helped thousands of men find freedom. Take your first step towards freedom and order the [Conquer Series](#) today!

[Discover more at conquerseries.com.](http://conquerseries.com)

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'We're in Final Jeopardy!': Prophetic Dream Reveals Church's Supernatural Opportunity

Most people in America would be familiar with the long running television game show *Jeopardy* with host Alex Trebek. The show's concept is that an answer is stated and the contestants then respond with the question. For instance, the "answer"

might be: "This man was the first president of the United States." The correct response would be, "Who is George Washington?" Each correct response allows the contestants to increase in money and earnings. Each incorrect response causes players to lose the money. The person with the most money wins the game. The game is broken up into three rounds, Jeopardy, Double Jeopardy and Final Jeopardy. Each round increases in money value so that as the game progresses hopefully more and more money is accumulated. The Final Jeopardy round is where the players can risk up to all of their money to try and win the game.

A Prophetic Dream—It's Time to Stretch and Risk!

In a very prophetic dream I had, I was watching as three players were in Final Jeopardy. I watched as each player made their wager and gave their answers. Each player got the answer correct. The last player who gave their response, however, risked the most money and therefore won the game.

As I awoke, I was aware that the Lord was speaking. He said to me, "In the church and the world we have entered a season of Final Jeopardy. (I am not speaking of some 'end-time' theology but rather a season and period in the spirit where clear decisions must be made.) In Final Jeopardy it is the stage of the game where not only is it important to get the right answer, but the risk taken must be sufficient to win. Whoever takes the biggest risk wins. The Lord is challenging us and stretching us to move in faith in these seasons. Even in the face of danger, we are willing to believe Him and His word.

Crisis or Opportunity?

I was aware that the word crisis from the Latin can mean dangerous opportunity. In these times of dangerous opportunities, we must not shrink back. Hebrews 10:37-38 tells us that God has no pleasure in those who draw back.

"For, 'In yet a little while, He who is to come will come, and

will not wait. Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him.”

We cannot allow the danger of the moment to cause us to miss the opportunity before us. The Lord is presenting opportunities to many. However, there is a risk attached to these opportunities. It could even be said to be dangerous. If we allow the danger to override the opportunity before us, we can miss the very purpose for which we were created. This is what happened to the children of Israel as they came to the border of Canaan to cross over. (Num. 14:26-33) After the spies returned because of the walled cities, iron chariots and giants the people refused to go in and possess the land. Even though it was a land “flowing with milk and honey” they allowed the danger to cause them to miss the opportunity. The result was a wandering in the wilderness for another generation.

‘The Decisions Made in This Time Will Determine the Future for a Long Time’

I believe we are in a similar time. We are being presented opportunities of a lifetime that will have generational impact. Should we allow the danger to persuade us that the risk is too big, God may have to wait for another generation to arise and step up to the assignment. We are in Final Jeopardy. I was aware in the dream that the decisions made in this time will determine the future for a long time. The decision of the 10 spies and their influence upon the nation caused a nation to wander for 40 years. We are in a dangerous moment of opportunity. We must make decisions born out of faith and not doubt. We must have “another spirit” like Caleb and Joshua had in this moment. (Num. 14:24) Otherwise, we can miss this time.

In my dream, everyone had the right answers. I believe as a church, we have the right answers. I believe the issue is one of faith that will allow us to believe God and take the

necessary risks. The issue was would there be a big enough risk taken to win.

Three strategies to “play to win” in this Final Jeopardy we are in.

1. Realize the season we are in: I was aware in this dream that perhaps we had been faced with similar decisions in times past. However, because it is Final Jeopardy this time, the outcome will be different.

It is very similar to Peter fishing all night and catching nothing. (Luke 5: 4-11) When Jesus however tells him to launch out into the deep and let down his net a great catch was secured. The difference was the season of the spirit he was in. The word of the Lord changed the season. This is what Song of Solomon 2:10-13 declares: “My beloved speaks and says to me: ‘Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For now the winter has past; the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth its green figs, and the vines their blossoms; and they give forth fragrance. Rise up, my love, my beautiful one, and come away.’”

The voice of the bridegroom changed the season. Winter was past and the rain was gone. Once the bridegroom spoke, everything shifted. When Jesus spoke the previous season of the night before—the time of barrenness and unfruitfulness—ended. The new season of extravagant fruit through this new catch began. We are in Final Jeopardy. What didn’t work before will work now. This only occurs if we can see past the danger and see into the moment God is granting us.

2. Ask the right kingdom questions: In the game of *Jeopardy* the correct answers must be phrased in a question. I believe one of the keys to winning in this time is to ask the right

questions. So often we are asking the wrong things. Pastors ask how they can see their church grow. The right question is “How can we expand the kingdom influence into our culture?” Business people ask, “How can we make money?” The right question is “How can we serve our community and meet a necessary need?” We must ask the right questions as they related to the purposes of God. Our questions reveal the motive of our hearts, which is very important to the Lord.

3. Exercise Faith, Take Risks, Believe God: Finally, we must be willing to exercise a realm of faith to take a risk and believe God. Real faith always causes us to lay our lives down and trust the Lord. Real faith is willing to declare that even if it doesn't work, it's a joy to believe and place my entire hope in Him. This is not to say we do unwise or silly things. We however are willing to believe the word of God and know He cannot fail. We are willing to step out onto the water, because we have heard Him say, “Come” (Matt.14:28-29).

We are in Final Jeopardy. May the Lord help us in our weakness to hear Him clearly and move in faith to take the necessary risks. Our future, the church's future and the future of nations can hang in the balance. Is there a people who will believe God and see past the danger to the potential of this time? Lord help me, I want to be one! {eoa}

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Practical Keys to Keep Your Heart Soft Toward God in Hard Seasons

Have you ever gone through a hard time that lasted more than just a day or a week? Maybe you've been in the middle of a battle for a whole season, or perhaps even years. I know that these times can suck the life out of you, and leave you feeling dry, discouraged and alone. It can even feel like there's no way out. When **tough times** turn to a tough life, it can be easy to become disillusioned and even cynical toward your life, toward the church or toward God's goodness. It's important to realize that this doesn't have to be your story!

Tough Times Build Character

Let me tell you about a personal story of a hard time that turned into a hard season for my family. In the early 1980s, Kathy and I owned one auto parts store and we (mostly I) decided to expand our business into two other cities. My decision turned out to have a treacherous effect on our cash flow to the point that we barely had money to feed our family. Our three children were little and we had strong convictions that they needed a full-time mom at home. This made it impossible for Kathy to work outside of the house to help pay our bills.

So, she set up her desk in our home and did all of our accounting and oversaw our finances while she simultaneously took care of our small children. This was no easy task, but we worked hard and kept growing. Over time, Kathy developed into a great CFO of our four businesses in three locations with 40 employees. Yet the faster we grew, the tighter things became financially, especially at home. Personally, I felt like I was carrying the weight of the world on my shoulders. Growing a

business from scratch can be agonizing, but growing three businesses all at the same time is like a mother having triplets—you will have stretch marks for life. The truth we found from this season, which I know now is universal, is that you might forget the pain you were in, but you never forget the intensity of the labor it took to give birth to your dreams. At the end of the day, tough times build character.

When It Just Won't Let Up

Even if you have the strength to endure challenges, sometimes you go through seasons when the mere frequency of things going wrong can be discouraging and overwhelming. One of the worst things that can happen in these seasons is that you begin to expect things to go wrong. Expectation is the fruit of faith. In other words, you believe and therefore empower destructive outcomes; simply put, by faith, your life is horrible.

You must avoid the temptation to “go with the flow” and “faith” your way into a miserable life. For example, have you ever bent over to pick up a box thinking it was going to be really heavy, and instead it was incredibly light? Or, on the other hand, have you ever picked up something you thought would be extra light and found it to be extremely heavy? Our expectations of life's circumstances determine whether or not we're prepared for them. But some people always prepare for the worst so that they won't be disappointed. They reason that if something then goes better than expected, they will be encouraged.

The challenge is that expectation is actually the manifestation of faith, and you tend to receive what you believe. Therefore, life gets harder when you think it will, and easier when you expect it to be. Of course, all of us have been surprised when something unexpected goes wrong. However, it's important that you don't turn bad circumstances into a lifetime of cynicism and thus invite trouble into your life.

8 Practical Keys to Avoid Getting Cynical

Cynicism can creep in if we don't manage our hearts well. So, here are eight practical keys to avoid cynicism that I encourage you to practice frequently when in a tiring season:

1. Look for Jesus in the midst of your troubles. He tends to hang out **in hard places**.
2. **Remember God's past miracles** and works in your life.
3. **Cultivate thankfulness** in your heart no matter how you "feel."
4. Avoid the "misery loves company" syndrome by **disciplining yourself to hang around happy people** when you don't feel like it.
5. Pray in the Spirit, because the Bible says you "edify yourself" when you do.
6. **Take a mental vacation**. Give yourself permission to take a break each day from thinking about your problems. Cultivate some happy thoughts.
7. Remember the Bible says, "It came to pass!" In other words, it came so it could pass—this season will end.
8. Remind yourself that everything works out for good in the end. **So if it isn't good, it isn't the end.**

As you read this list, I bless your spirit to receive the truth that God wants to reveal to you today. I pray that no matter what you're facing, you would be encouraged and have the courage to face each day with hope and the knowledge that God is with you.

Have you ever found yourself becoming cynical? What have you done to overcome it? Let me know in the comments below. {eoa}

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