

10 Positive Trends Christians Should Thank God For

2014 was a year of some pretty bad news. Between Ebola, ISIS, race relations, cyber-attacks, airline crashes, Obama's executive orders "gone wild" and the attacks on marriage, it's easy to become discouraged. Further, our own society is in moral free-fall and the country we know and love is in dire economic, spiritual, political and social straits. If you're like me, you hear so much bad news that it's easy to become negative and jaded, overlooking the positive and powerful things happening in the midst of all the depravity. So to help you restore hope in the New Year, and give a more realistic perspective, here are ten really great (even amazing) things happening in our world right now.

- 1. We are steadily winning the pro-life battle on many fronts.** In 2010, I wrote an article entitled "The Beginning of the End of Abortion in America." I made the case for why we are winning the hearts and souls of Americans on this issue in so many ways. Even though we are not able to legally ban all abortions because of *Roe v Wade*, we are still able to wage a cultural battle of ideas and we are making great strides. The ultimate proof is that there has been a steady decline in the number of abortion clinics and the number of abortions performed in America. In 2014 alone, 73 abortion clinics have been closed! Between 2008 and 2011, there has been a 4 percent decline in abortions nationwide. Since 2009, Americans have shifted their view of abortion and the number of people identifying as "pro-life" now exceeds those who are "pro-choice." Among the reasons we are winning this battle are crisis pregnancy centers, technology and ultrasound, pro-life movies, side walk counselors, pro-life legislation and many more Black and

Hispanic pro-life leaders. Given the number of young people who are pro-life, we may reach a cultural consensus on this issue in the next generation. We will not rest until every baby is protected and cherished, but it should encourage us that on the single most important moral issue of our day, we are winning.

2. Among church-going couples, the divorce rate is *much* lower than the rest of the country. It is commonly repeated by Christian leaders and even some gay-rights activists that “One out of two marriages end in divorce, and the divorce rate is just as high among Christians as it is in society at large.” Yet, *this is simply not true*. Harvard-trained researcher Shaunti Feldhahn spent the better part of eight years studying this question and found the overall divorce rate to be significantly below 50 percent, and even much lower for those who go to church. Feldhahn estimates the actual divorce rate across America is around 31 percent. The studies of people who regularly attend church show even a much lower divorce rate of “15 percent, maybe 20 percent for all marriages, [including] first marriages, second marriages, third marriages.” She cites one study where a pastor tracked 143 couples who he personally married. “It was 25, 27 years later. Less than 10 percent had been divorced.” There is no question the marriage rate is rapidly declining, but it is great news that for those who do marry, the context of a local church clearly strengthens the longevity and success rate of marriages. This is good news!

3. More movies promote Christian messages and values than ever before. *Bella, Amazing Grace, Facing the Giants, Fireproof, the Narnia series, Grace Unplugged, Courageous, Grace Card, Alone Yet Not Alone, God’s Not Dead, October Baby, Heaven Is for Real, Letters to God, The Passion of the Christ, Son of God, Unconditional,*

The Nativity Story, *End of the Spear*, *Persecuted*, and *The Secrets of Jonathan Sperry* are only a small sampling of the movies with unapologetic Christian values and messages that played in theaters in the last 10 years alone. This does not even consider the hundreds of Christian documentaries, educational presentations and entertainment videos for children. Even secular movie producers are trying to cash in on the demand for Christian programming at the box office as evidenced by the recent *Noah* and *Exodus* films. There is a strong connection between entertainment, culture, ideas, worldview and the gospel, so this is a very exciting development.

4. **Christianity is exploding in atheist China with a historic revival.** Even though it is officially an atheist country, Christianity is exploding in China. Some sociologists believe that in less than a generation China will become the largest Christian nation in the world. In spite of persecution by the Chinese government, by 2025 China is expected to have over 160 million Christians, putting it ahead of the United States. The irony of all this is that Chairman Mao set out to end religion in China and he thought he accomplished it. The reality is that exactly the opposite has occurred. There are so many Christians in China that the hostile government has to respect them more than in the past just because of their vast numbers. Some leaders believe that China could eventually experience a historical and peaceful revolution, similar to what Poland experienced with the Catholic Church. This is one really, really, bright light in a world of darkness.
5. **Trail Life USA, the new Christian scouting movement in America continues to grow.** After the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) changed their membership policy to allow

open and avowed homosexuality to be expressed among its youth members in 2013, thousands of BSA members could no longer trust the program to be faithful to its own oath to be “morally straight.” Those men and their sons, along with thousands of others, have charted a new course with a Christ-centered scouting movement called Trail Life USA (TLUSA). After its first full year of operation, TLUSA has 524 troops in 48 states and just under 20,000 members. Another 300 troops are in the process of becoming officially chartered. The Florida Family Policy Council was a major force in providing financial support and leadership for launching this new program, and they spent an entire year focused on the project. TLUSA has also closely partnered with the American Heritage Girls (AHG) who formerly associated with the BSA, and together these programs can provide a Christian outdoor adventure program that focuses on character and leadership for the whole family. Hundreds of churches across America have abandoned their affiliation with the BSA and are now chartering TLUSA troops. The future is very bright for the young men of Trail Life USA.

6. **The homeschool and school choice movements continue to grow.** As more parents become dissatisfied and alarmed by the blatant immorality, disrespect for parental rights, shootings, secularism and lack of educational quality in government-run schools, home education and other alternatives continue to grow steadily. In fact, homeschooling is growing at an estimated rate of 7-15 percent annually. Approximately two million children are homeschooled today in America—far more than those in private schools. Home education is also on the rise internationally in Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Mexico, South Africa, the United Kingdom and Japan. Homeschoolers continue to score above the national average on SATs and ACTs, and leading colleges actively

recruit home-educated students. Other alternatives to traditional public schools in America are also on the rise, including charter schools, magnet schools, private schools, and online academies. Educational choice breaks the monopoly grip of government-run schools which have become the “brain factories” for the left and secularists. School choice options have undermined this institution’s ability to influence America’s children. There is good reason to believe the trend toward alternative schooling will continue increasing in the future. This development is restoring hope, especially for Black and Hispanic families or those living in dangerous or underperforming school zones.

7. **Mainstream American voters are catching on to the extreme agenda of liberals.** President Obama is without question is the most philosophically and morally radical president in our nation’s history. This is not hyperbole and can be easily documented. Obamacare, the rapid pushing of gay rights, the immigration crisis, out-of-control judges and a host of other abuses of power by the President’s administration is causing mainstream America to wake up and pay attention. The 2014 landslide midterm election is certainly evidence of this and (other than Sen. Bill Nelson in Florida) there are currently no Democratic U.S. Senators or Governors in any southern state. This says a lot about the future of the liberal political party in America and about the American people.
8. **Internet, social media and cable TV allow conservative and Christian views to be presented and spread.** Technology has presented a number of never-before-faced challenges. The immediate access to Internet, smartphones, social media and cable television are probably the most significant changes in the way human beings live in the history of the world. The

effect of this is a mixed bag. However, one great benefit from the advancement is the free flow of Christian programming and conservative political viewpoints. Just a generation ago, there were mainly three major networks doing nightly news and a handful of radio news outlets. There are now hundreds, if not thousands, of news and information sources making it much easier for conservative views to flourish. For example, conservative talk radio has no rival on the left and in a free market of ideas, truth has a way of winning the day. Like with public schools, the free market of media breaks up the news monopoly and allows other viewpoints to compete and flourish.

9. **Fathers are spending more time with their children than ever before.** While fatherlessness continues to be epidemic in America, for those children who do have fathers, the dads are spending more time with their children and families. In a 2012 Pew Research Center survey, 46 percent of fathers said they personally spend more time with their children than their own parents spent with them. Very few said they spend less time with their children than their parents did. The data is crystal clear on the fact that children do better in every category of human flourishing when they are able to have both a natural father and mother in their lives. All of this contributes to healthier and more well-adjusted children.
10. **The God of the universe is still sovereign and that is no small thing to help cure anxiety and maintain a positive outlook on the future.** God is sovereign. While we often hear these words in the Christian world, we must never allow them to become commonplace in our hearts. As theologian Dr. R.C. Sproul says, "There are no maverick molecules in the universe." Even the concept of prophecy assumes God's providential hand is guiding

the history of the world. Somehow in the mystery of His purposes, He is guiding all things, even evil, and causing it to be used for His greater purposes. This can be hard to understand and even harder to accept. But let's not forget that in God's economy, even the worst day on the face of the earth became the best day. We call it "Good Friday." All of us need to do our part to be responsible citizens in this extraordinary form of government that requires us to participate in order for it to work properly. But in the end, God calls us merely to be faithful. The final results are in His hands. And this is *the best* news for an anxious believer in 2015.