

President-Elect Trump Selects Rudy Giuliani to Lead Cybersecurity Advisory Group

Prior to Thursday's transition daily briefing, President-elect Donald Trump announced former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani will lead a new cybersecurity advisory panel to provide private sector security concerns and solutions to the new administration.

Giuliani, the chairman of the global cybersecurity practice at Greenberg Traurig, was made available to the media at the daily briefing, but none of the reporters who called upon asked him any questions. Instead, he provided the following comments:

This is a great privilege to serve the president-elect. In my work in private security, I have seen both the problems and solutions of cyber defense that develop in the private sector. Our cyber defense is not where it should be.

It's time for the government and private sector to come together and work on solutions to issues we face together. With all of the many incredible advances we've made on the internet, we've let our defense fall behind—our offense far surpasses our defense—in some ways, it's like our military.

I will be bringing together the leaders of cybersecurity to give the president direct recommendations to improve our cyber defense. It's like cancer. It's been said that if you could put all of the people in the same room, you could probably cure it.

We may not be able to solve the cybersecurity problems we face, but we can do a heck of a lot better job than we have been doing. Ultimately, we're going to have a very vibrant,

robust cyber defense for both the government and the private sector.

The goal of the group Giuliani will lead will be to provide timely information from all sources and to gather senior corporate executives from companies which have faced or are facing challenges similar to those facing the government and public entities today—such as hacking, intrusions, disruptions, manipulations, theft of data and identities and securing information technology infrastructure—to meet with the president. The transition team offered the following explanation:

The president-elect's intent is to obtain experiential and anecdotal information from each executive on challenges faced by his/her company, how the company met the challenges, approaches which were productive or successful and those which were not. The attendees may or may not change from session to session, but the specific agenda subjects will likely change because of the rapidly evolving field of cybersecurity and frequent developments, both positive and negative.

No consensus advice or recommendations resulting from group deliberations or interaction is expected or will be solicited.

Cyber intrusion is the fastest-growing crime in the United States and much of the world. Its impact is felt from the individual citizen whose identity is stolen to the large private and government entities that have seen their confidential information seriously compromised. It is also a major threat to our national security.

As the use of modern communications and technology has moved forward at unparalleled speed, the necessary defenses have lagged behind. The president-elect recognizes that this needs immediate attention and input from private sector

leaders to help the government plan to make us more secure.

Mr. Giuliani was asked to initiate this process because of his long and very successful government career in law enforcement and his now 16 years of work providing security solutions in the private sector.

Rather than take the opportunity to ask Giuliani questions, however, the liberal mainstream media instead turned their attention elsewhere. They asked questions about the BuzzFeed dossier, the president-elect's plan to sever ties with the Trump Organization on Jan. 20 and concerns about the Senate's vote Wednesday night with regard to repeal of Obamacare and testimony from Secretary of State-designate Rex Tillerson and Secretary of Defense-designate Gen. James Mattis (ret.). {eoa}

Why the Unchurched Will Talk About Faith and Not Church Attendance

Americans who don't go to church are happy to talk about religion and often think about the meaning of life.

They're open to taking part in community service events hosted at a church or going to a church concert.

But only about a third say they'd go to a worship service if invited by a friend. Few think about what happens after they die.

Those are among the findings of a new online survey of 2,000 unchurched Americans from Nashville-based LifeWay Research. The survey, conducted in partnership with the Wheaton,

Illinois-based Billy Graham Center for Evangelism, found more than half of Americans who don't go to church identify as Christians.

But they are mostly indifferent to organized religion, says Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research.

"Unchurched Americans aren't hostile to faith," he says. "They just don't think church is for them."

Talking About Faith Isn't Taboo

For this survey, "unchurched" means those who have not attended a worship service in the last six months, outside of a holiday or special occasion like a wedding.

Among their characteristics:

- Two-thirds (67 percent) are white
- Just over half (53 percent) are male
- About half (47 percent) have a high school diploma or less
- Almost two-thirds (62 percent) went to church regularly as a child
- About a third (32 percent) consider themselves nonreligious
- One in five identifies as Protestant; one in four as Catholic

Few are turned off by conversations about faith, says McConnell.

Almost half (47 percent) say they discuss religion freely if the topic comes up. A third (31 percent) say they listen without responding, while 11 percent change the subject.

Only about a third (35 percent) say someone has ever explained the benefits of being a Christian to them.

McConnell says Christians may be reluctant to talk about their

faith out of fear of offending their friends. But the survey found that fear is unfounded.

“Unchurched folks are not being overwhelmed by Christians talking about their faith,” says McConnell. “If faith is important to you, then your friends will be interested in hearing about it.”

A Personal Touch Still Matters

Researchers looked at the kinds of activities unchurched Americans might be interested in as well as methods for inviting them to church.

About two-thirds (62 percent) would attend a church meeting about neighborhood safety. Half would take part in a community service event (51 percent), concert (45 percent), sports or exercise program (46 percent) or neighborhood get-together (45 percent) at a church.

“Concerns for neighborhood safety and desire to express compassion to the under-resourced seem to be the biggest potential draws for the unchurched to get connected to a church,” noted Rick Richardson, professor of evangelism and leadership at Wheaton College and research fellow for the Billy Graham Center for Evangelism. “Invite unchurched people to those kinds of events, and many say they will attend.”

Fewer are interested in attending a worship service (35 percent), recovery group (25 percent) or seminar on a spiritual topic (24 percent) if invited.

When it comes to church invitations, a personal touch works better than a sales pitch.

Half (51 percent) of unchurched Americans say a personal invitation from a friend or family member would be effective in getting them to visit a church. Other methods, such as a church member knocking on the door (21 percent), a TV

commercial (23 percent), postcard (23 percent) or Facebook ad (18 percent), are less effective.

Little Interest in Life After Death

Researchers also asked unchurched Americans about the big questions of life.

About seven in 10 agree there's an ultimate plan and purpose for every person. One in five (19 percent) disagrees. One in nine (11 percent) isn't sure.

Almost six in 10 (57 percent) say it's important for them to find their deeper purpose in life. A third disagree (31 percent), while one in nine (12 percent) isn't sure.

Few wonder, at least on a regular basis, if they'll go to heaven when they die. Just under half (43 percent) say they never ponder that question. One in five (20 percent) isn't sure the last time that question came to mind. Three in 10 (29 percent) say they ask that question on at least a monthly basis.

This lack of interest in the afterlife can pose a problem for Christians who want to share their faith, says McConnell. Many have been trained to ask questions like, "If you died tonight, would you go to heaven?"

That tactic might not be as effective today, says McConnell.

"If the only benefit of being a Christian is that you get to go to heaven, most unchurched people don't care," McConnell says. "It can't be the only way of talking about faith."

Instead, McConnell suggests those who want to share their faith talk about how their relationship with Jesus affects them in day-to-day life and discuss the benefits of being part of a church.

And be proactive, he says.

“Don’t wait for unchurched people to bring up the topic of faith,” he said. “It’s probably not going to happen.” {eo}

Bob Smietana is senior writer for Facts & Trends magazine.

For the original article, visit .

Despite Death Threats, This Pastor Refuses to Compromise

Despite constant threats on his life, Pastor Amin won’t back down. As a result, his church is growing.

Though his heart was beating wildly, he stood toe-to-toe with his accuser, refusing to show even the slightest bit of fear.

In a threatening tone that was almost a growl, the Islamic extremist hissed, “I am a faithful Muslim ... so I have to participate in jihad.” To Pastor Amin, the implication was clear: These could be his last moments on Earth.

If they were, so be it.

“Kill me if you must. Here I am!” the Central Asian pastor said defiantly. His two would-be assailants were dumbfounded. Never had they seen such courage and calmness in the face of almost certain death. It was almost as if God had put a shield around the pastor they knew they couldn’t penetrate.

What they didn’t know is that Pastor Amin will never run and hide, no matter what threats are made against him.

“My place is here, preaching the gospel to Muslims,” he says without hesitation. “If you love Christ, you follow Him and do

His will. If you love and follow Christ, you will not be afraid.”

Word of Pastor Amin’s boldness has spread throughout the region. He has organized youth evangelistic trips, where they preached the gospel to Muslims and distributed Bibles and other Christian literature. As a result, he now has a huge church that consists mostly of former Muslims. He founded a rehab center for drug addicts and alcoholics. And he has operated missionary schools and summer camps for Muslim children.

Yet he still receives death threats regularly, a fact that makes him sad but has not changed his determination to see Muslims come to Christ.

“I will never hide!” he says boldly. And after what he’s been through, most people who know him believe he won’t back down—ever. Not as long as there are Muslims in his country who need to hear the truth about Christ and His love for them.

One of the reasons Pastor Amin has been so successful in growing his church is that through your gifts, [Open Doors has] provided him with Bibles, Christian literature, encouragement and when necessary, a safe place for his family.

Today, he asks not to be removed from danger, but to be strengthened so he can continue to spread the gospel among those who don’t know the truth. {eoa}

Why Are Wal-Mart and Boeing

Laying Off Workers if the US Economy Is in Good Shape?

The stock market has been on quite a roll in recent weeks, but signs of trouble continue to plague the real economy.

Earlier this week, I talked about the “retail apocalypse” now sweeping America. Major retail chains such as Sears and Macy’s are closing stores and laying off workers, but I didn’t think Wal-Mart would be feeling the pain as well. Unfortunately, that’s precisely what is happening. *USA Today* is reporting that approximately 1,000 jobs will be cut at Wal-Mart’s corporate headquarters in Bentonville, Arkansas by the end of this month:

Wal-Mart’s plan to lay off of hundreds of employees is the latest ripple in a wave of job cuts and store closures that are roiling the retail industry.

The world’s largest retailer is cutting roughly 1,000 jobs at its corporate headquarters in Bentonville, Arkansas, later this month, according to a person familiar with the matter who was not authorized to speak about it.

The company is saying these cuts are necessary because Wal-Mart is always “looking for ways to operate more efficiently and effectively.” But something doesn’t smell right here. You don’t get rid of 1,000 employees at your corporate headquarters if everything is just fine.

I have driven past Wal-Mart’s headquarters in Bentonville a number of times, and it is in a beautiful part of the country. Bentonville and the surrounding areas had been booming, but it looks like times may be changing.

Meanwhile, there are signs of trouble out on the west coast as

well. The *Los Angeles Times* is reporting that there is going to be a new round of engineering job cuts at Boeing.

Boeing Co. has internally announced a new round of employee buyouts for engineers company-wide, including in Southern California, and warned that layoff notices will follow later this month to engineers in Washington state, where the company has a large presence.

Management did not cite a target for the number of projected job cuts.

The news comes after company Vice Chairman Ray Conner and the new chief executive of Boeing Commercial Airplanes, or BCA, Kevin McAllister, warned in December of the need to aim for further cuts in 2017.

And according to Boeing spokesperson Doug Alder, similar job cut announcements are coming for other classes of workers as well.

So why is Boeing getting rid of so many employees?

Well, the truth is that Boeing's business is way down. The following comes from Wolf Richter:

Business has been tough. In 2016, deliveries fell by 14 jets from a year ago, to 748. Net orders dropped 13 percent from an already-rotten level in 2015, to just 668, down 53 percent from 2014. And the lowest level since 2010!

When the economy is doing well, air traffic tends to rise, and when the economy is doing poorly, it tends to go down.

Needless to say, the fact that Boeing is doing so poorly does not bode well for the future.

In addition to Wal-Mart, another major retailer that is letting people go is Petco.

Petco is cutting 180 positions with about 50 at its San Diego headquarters, the pet supply retailer confirmed Wednesday.

The company made the cuts across its workforce and include both existing and open positions.

Petco has about 650 workers at its headquarters in Rancho Bernardo. It employs 27,000 in the U.S.

My wife and I have three cats, and even though Petco tends to be a bit overpriced, we have always appreciated the work they do.

Unfortunately, when the economy gets tough, spending on pets tends to be one of the first things to get cut back, and this current trouble at Petco could be a sign that rough sledding is ahead for the entire economy.

Of course, your personal perspective on these things is likely to be very heavily influenced by your immediate surroundings. Those who live in wealthy enclaves of major cities such as San Francisco, New York City or Washington, D.C. may be wondering how anyone could possibly be talking about economic trouble right now.

But if you live in economically depressed areas of Appalachia or the upper Midwest, it may seem as though the last economic recession never even ended.

There have been pockets of economic prosperity in recent years, and this has resulted in some people becoming exceedingly wealthy. Meanwhile, things have just continued to become even tougher for millions of other families as the cost of living always seems to grow faster than their paychecks do.

If you are in the top one percent of all income earners, maybe to you it seems as though things have never been better. But most of the country is living paycheck to paycheck and is just struggling to survive from month to month. The following comes

from CNN:

The rich are money-making machines. Today, the top mega-wealthy—the top 1%—earn an average of \$1.3 million a year. It's more than three times as much as the 1980s, when the rich “only” made \$428,000, on average, according to economists Thomas Piketty, Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman.

Meanwhile, the bottom 50% of the American population earned an average of \$16,000 in pre-tax income in 1980. That hasn't changed in over three decades.

The workers being laid off at the companies discussed above are real people with real hopes and real dreams. Perhaps many of them will be able to land other employment fairly soon, but the truth is that the job market is really tough in many areas of the country right now.

Finding a good job that will allow you to pay the bills and support your family is not easy. You may find that out the hard way if you end up losing your current job during the economic troubles that will come in 2017.

Earlier today, I came across an excellent article by Gail Tverberg that detailed a bunch of reasons a significant economic downturn appears to be imminent in 2017. If you would like to read it, you can find it [here](#). She points to many of the same things to which I have been pointing for a very long time.

Even though economic conditions were fairly stable throughout 2016, our long-term problems continued to get even worse. So the truth is that we are more primed for a major crisis today than we have been at any point since the last recession.

My hope is that things will not be nearly as bad in 2017 as Gail Tverberg and others are projecting that they could be, but the warning signs are definitely there, and it isn't going

to take much to push the U.S. economy off the rails. {eoa}

Ted Cruz's Defense of Jeff Sessions Is a Beautiful Thing to Watch

Attorney General-designate Jeff Sessions took a beating from Democrat senators during the two days of his confirmation hearings, but his friend and colleague, U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) offered a bright ray of sunshine when it was his turn to question the senator from Alabama.

It was something beautiful to behold. He said:

Senator Sessions, congratulations on your nomination. You are a friend. You are a man of integrity. You and I have worked closely together on this committee, on the Armed Services Committee. And I have every confidence you are going to make a superb attorney general.

This has been an interesting day at this hearing, listening to Democratic senator after Democratic senator give speeches and praise the rule of law. And I am heartened by that. I am encouraged by that because for eight years it's been absent.

For eight years, we have seen a Department of Justice consistently disregarding the rule of law. When Eric Holder's Department of Justice allowed illegal gun transactions, illegally sold guns to Mexican gun traffickers as part of Fast and Furious, guns that were later used to murder border patrol agent Brian Terry, the Democratic members of this committee were silent.

When Eric Holder was found in contempt of Congress for refusing to cooperate with Congress' investigation into Fast and Furious, once again, the Democratic members of this committee were silent. When the IRS illegally targeted United States citizens for exercising their First Amendment views, for exercising their roles in the political process, Democratic members of this committee were silent.

When the Department of Justice refused to fairly investigate the IRS targeting citizens and indeed assigned the investigation to a liberal partisan Democrat who had given over \$6,000 to President Obama and Democrats, Democrats on this committee were silent.

When numerous members of this committee called on the attorney general to appoint a special prosecutor to ensure that justice was done in the IRS case, Democrats on this committee were silent. When the Department of Justice used Operation Choke Point to target legal businesses because they disagreed politically with those businesses, the Democrats on this committee were silent.

When the Obama Justice Department sent millions of dollars of taxpayer money to sanctuary cities that were defying federal immigration law, the Democrats on this committee were silent. When the Obama administration refused to enforce federal immigration laws and unilaterally rewrote those laws, the Democrats on this committee were silent.

When the Obama administration released tens of thousands of criminal illegal aliens, including rapists and murderers into the general population, Democrats on this committee were silent. When the Department of Justice signed off on the Obama administration paying a nearly \$2 billion ransom to Iran contrary to federal law, the Democrats on this committee were silent.

When the Obama administration ignored and rewrote provision

after provision of Obamacare, contrary to the text of the law, the Democrats on this committee were silent. When the Obama administration signed off on illegal recess appointments that the Supreme Court had to strike down unanimously, the Democrats on this committee were silent.

And when the Obama administration released five Guantanamo terrorists without the prior notification of Congress, the Democrats on this committee were silent.

That pattern has been dismaying for eight years. But I take today as a moment of celebration. If once again this committee has a bipartisan commitment to rule of law, to following the law, that is a wonderful thing, and it is consistent with the tradition of this committee going back centuries.

The question-and-answer part of Cruz' portion of the hearing was equally delightful. See the video above. {eo}

This Is Where Your Real Strength Comes From

Remember when Popeye the Sailor Man would pop open a can of spinach, guzzle down the green goop and bam!, his biceps would bulge? Then, he wielded extra power, speed, wit and energy to foil Bluto's chaotic plans to steal the spindly love interest Olive Oyl.

Ever feel like you could use a super-sized helping of strength? Not strength from curling barbells, but real strength: strength of character, perseverance and wisdom;

strength that comes from confidence, peace and faith.

Spinach worked great for Popeye, but in real life, real strength comes from joy.

“... the joy of the Lord is your strength”(Neh. 8:10d).

Notice it doesn't say “happiness.” Being happy is a feeling, an expression that requires joy. Joy comes from an inner sense of well-being. Maybe instead of writing “Happy,” Pharrell Williams should have come up with a song about joy.

So where's your source of real strength? How do you develop joy?

The key is to take your eyes off yourself, your circumstances, your ups and downs. Regardless of the situation, turn your eyes to Jesus and thank Him. Worship Him. Acknowledge God for who He is—the creator of everything, author of life, savior of our soul, Lord of life. He is worthy to be praised.

I know this next part may be hard for many men, but open your mouth and sing.

“Sing aloud unto God our strength”(Ps. 81:1a).

God returns adoration by filling you with joy. And joy gives you strength. At a glance, it doesn't seem to add up, but the biblical math for real strength looks like this:

Rejoice in the Lord + Sing = Joy = Strength

It may be paradigm-shifting, but to be able to rejoice in the Lord, you can't be self-absorbed. Being self-absorbed is a form of worship and prohibits you from serving and loving others. Even in sadness, facing dire straits, the Bible says to:

“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” (Phil. 4:4).

Joy also comes from healthy relationships. That's why God's motto is to love God and love people. If you invest in God, you get joy back. Love what God loves; you will know joy.

Just like Bluto trying to ruin Popeye's day, our archenemy is trying to rob us of our joy. He knows if you are unhappy, your real strength diminishes. Are you robbed of strength? That means your joy has been stolen.

The message of the world is drive, determination, desire—that's strength. The cultural math to get joy looks like:

Work + diligence = joy

Most guys are grinding away, thinking they are reaching true joy. But it's a manipulation. A trick. A ploy. The enemy is after your joy. He goes for your joy so you feel bad, which makes you want to look for anything to appease your pain. Remember the enemy's No. 1 mission is to steal, kill and destroy you.

"The thief does not come, except to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

Jesus came so you could live and love abundantly. He loves you. You were created so he could love you. If you let the paint dry on that thought alone, you will experience joy.

Maybe Popeye should have tattooed "joy" on his bicep. Because with joy, you can do anything.

"I can do all things because of Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13). {eoa}

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For the original article, visit [.](#)

Why Has the White House Suddenly Released a Strategy For Dealing With The Threat of a Catastrophic Meteor Impact?

Does the White House know something the rest of us do not? As the Obama administration draws to a close, the White House has suddenly released a major document that details a multi-pronged strategy for dealing with the threat of a catastrophic meteor impact. Most of us remember movies such as *Deep Impact* and *Armageddon* that attempted to depict what such a crisis would look like, but up until fairly recently the U.S. government has never seemed to take this kind of threat very seriously.

So what has changed?

Of all the things the White House could be focusing on, why this?

And this new report is just the latest in a series of measures the government has taken over the past couple of years to help prepare us for incoming meteors and asteroids. The following is an excerpt from a recent Gizmodo article:

Concern over an apocalyptic asteroid strike has risen all the way to the top: The White House released a document this week detailing a strategy for National Near Earth Object (NEO) preparedness. Morgan Freeman would no doubt be proud, although honestly, the nation might have more pressing apocalypse concerns closer to home.

Last year brought renewed interest in handling humanity-ending impact events. After a 2014 audit showed that NASA had a cruddy NEO preparedness system, the agency founded a new Planetary Defense Coordination Office (PDCO) last year to detect all of our potentially nasty NEO neighbors. The office quickly escalated talk to action, running preparedness drills with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), launching spacecraft to gather asteroid information and even drawing up plans to nuke the bad boys out of the sky if things get dicey.

NASA continues to assure us that no threat is imminent, so why spend so much time, energy and resources on a non-existent crisis?

If you want to read the 25-page document the White House just released, it is entitled “National Near-Earth Object Preparedness Strategy,” and you can read it for yourself [here](#).

The document was put together by the Interagency Working Group for Detecting and Mitigating the Impact of Earth-bound Near-Earth Objects, and it outlined seven key objectives the authors believe are important.

1. Enhance NEO detection, tracking and characterization capabilities.

2. Develop methods for NEO deflection and disruption.
3. Improve modeling, predictions and information integration.
4. Develop emergency procedures for NEO impact scenarios.
5. Establish NEO impact response and recovery procedures.
6. Leverage and support international cooperation.
7. Establish coordination and communications protocols and thresholds for taking action.

And without a doubt, we definitely do need to enhance our detection abilities. Just the other day, a very large asteroid barely missed us, and we had only discovered it two days earlier:

Early Monday morning, while the U.S. East Coast was pouring coffee, dropping kids off at school and cursing in traffic, a space rock as big as a 10-story building slipped past Earth.

The asteroid, dubbed 2017 AG13, was discovered only Saturday by the University of Arizona's Catalina Sky Survey, according to an email from Slooh, a company that broadcasts live views of space.

We were very fortunate this time, but the truth is that our planet crosses paths with other giant space rocks on a very regular basis.

In fact, a near-Earth object that is being called "a cross between an asteroid and a comet" will come fairly close to our planet in February:

The latter "object", dubbed the 2016 WF9, was detected by NASA in late November and has left scientists scratching their heads.

They have described the celestial rock as a cross between an asteroid and a comet.

It's in the middle of its .9-year orbit between Jupiter and Earth and will approach us on February 25, flying by at a

distance of 32 million miles from the planet.

Currently, approximately 10,000 major near-Earth objects have been identified by scientists, and about 10 percent of them are one kilometer or larger in size.

If one of those monsters directly hit our planet, we truly would be facing an extinction-level event.

For example, just imagine the kind of devastation that would happen if a large asteroid or meteor hit the Atlantic Ocean. Tsunami waves hundreds of feet tall would be sent racing toward the coasts of North America, South America, Africa and western Europe, and millions upon millions of people would die.

This is something scientists have actually studied. According to a study conducted at the University of California at Santa Cruz, if a giant meteor did strike the Atlantic Ocean, we could potentially see tsunami waves as high as 400 feet slam into the east coast of the United States.

If an asteroid crashes into the Earth, it is likely to splash down somewhere in the oceans that cover 70 percent of the planet's surface. Huge tsunami waves, spreading out from the impact site like the ripples from a rock tossed into a pond, would inundate heavily populated coastal areas. A computer simulation of an asteroid impact tsunami developed by scientists at the University of California, Santa Cruz, shows waves as high as 400 feet sweeping onto the Atlantic Coast of the United States.

Depending on where the meteor strikes, we could potentially see New York City; Boston; Philadelphia; Baltimore; Washington, D.C.; Charleston; Miami and countless other major coastal cities all wiped out on a single day.

Right now, 39 percent of all Americans live in a county that

directly borders a shoreline.

To say that we are vulnerable to a massive tsunami caused by a meteor impact would be a massive understatement.

And scientists assure us that it will happen someday. In fact, I don't know if you have noticed, but our area of space seems to have a lot more "traffic" in it these days. NASA tells us that there is nothing to be worried about, but others are concerned that something may be coming toward us or that we are moving toward something.

Ultimately, we need to remember that we are essentially a speck of dust hurtling through a massive galaxy at incredibly high speeds, and our galaxy is only an extremely small part of an absolutely enormous and ever-changing universe.

But instead of turning to the author and creator of this incredible universe for blessing and protection, we continue to defy Him and His ways. In the end, that will turn out to be a tragic mistake. {eoa}

Homophobia Causes STDs and Fat-Shaming Causes Obesity (and Other Urban Myths)

I was recently sent an article, asking for my comments. It was written in 2013 and alleged that in the states where same-sex "marriage" had been opposed in America, there was an increase in STDs among gays, demonstrating that it was homophobia more than homosexual acts that caused STDs. In sum, the author claimed, "bigotry makes us sick" but "full acceptance ...

improves our health.” More recently, I was sent an article that claimed that it was fat-shaming that largely contributed to obesity.

Can we utter a collective sigh?

Regarding the first claim, the reality is that the reported increase in STDs was miniscule (especially when compared to the extraordinarily high rates of STDs among gay men), and the data was quite limited. But even if it were true that where gay “marriage” is discouraged, there is slightly more gay promiscuity, which in turn results in slightly higher rates of STDs, this would not for a moment negate three important realities.

First, it is sexual promiscuity that causes STDs, not homophobia.

Second, there is more promiscuity among gays than straights.

Third, men who have sex with men (MSM) have the highest rate of STDs, to the point that the CDC reported in 2010 (and beyond) that, “Gay Men’s HIV Rate 44 Times that of Other Men; Syphilis Rate 46 Times Higher.”

Tragically, these numbers remain extremely high, and even a 2015 CDC report that is quite sympathetic to the gay community states that “Gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (collectively referred to as MSM) are at increased risk for STDs, including antimicrobial resistant gonorrhea, when compared to women and exclusively heterosexual men.”

The bottom line, then, is simple: Regardless of the presence or absence of alleged homophobia, STDs are transmitted sexually (hence their name), and they remain disproportionately high in the gay community, especially among men.

Could it be that God did not design our bodies for promiscuity

or certain homosexual acts? If we want to reduce STD's—among heterosexuals as well as homosexuals—that's the place where we need to focus.

Regarding causes of obesity, a January 5, 2017 article claims that, "Fat shaming—not lack of willpower—is why so many Americans struggle with their weight."

In short, "Fat-shaming—the process of insulting, bullying or stigmatizing a person for their weight—is an American pastime," and this in turn creates greater anxiety and stress, which in turn leads to more weight gain.

To be sure, there is a lot of pressure on Americans today to have the perfect body, and without a doubt, many of us treat thin people more nicely than fat people (or, at the least, view thin people differently than fat people). And there's no question that millions of Americans hate being fat and keep trying to lose weight, ending in failure and frustration.

As someone who was overweight (or even obese) much of my life, I have tremendous sympathy for those who struggle, and I abhor the idea of making overweight people, who already feel bad about their condition, feel even worse.

But it is deeply misguided to blame societal fat-shaming for people's obesity, since the only reason I will be fat, barring a specific medical condition, is if I eat too much food, especially unhealthy food.

The article I cited here claims that there is scientific support for the thesis that, "Fat-shaming can spike stress hormones that can increase weight gain," and while there may be some truth to this, for every ounce gained because of a spike in stress hormones due to "fat-shaming," there is surely a pound (or many pounds) gained because of lack of self-control and/or poor eating habits.

What these two articles have in common is a refusal to take

full responsibility for our struggles, pointing a finger instead at others—the homophobes and the fat-shamers—rather than saying, “What can I do to correct a serious, health-threatening problem in my life?”

Funnily enough (welcome to my world!), a gay website recently attacked an article of mine titled, “Is It a Sin for a Christian to Be Obese?,” responding with this headline: “Anti-LGBT Radio Host Fat Shames for the Lord to Sell His Diet Book.”

Apparently, I’m not only a homophobe, I’m also a fat-shamer, and even though my article starts off with all kinds of caveats as to why people may be obese, even though I urge us to judge ourselves for being overweight, not judge others, and even though I wrote the article to lift people up, not beat them up, I’m still a fat-shamer.

As the gay website states, “Brown does tell readers that God is not condemning them, but goes on to say: ‘I encourage you to confess your bad eating habits as sin, asking the Father for mercy and forgiveness, believing that Jesus paid for this sin as well and trusting God for grace to overcome. With His help and with a good plan, you can do it!’”

This is fat-shaming?

What makes this all the more ironic is that, for years, critics have said to me, “You Christians are such hypocrites. You preach against homosexuality but you don’t preach against gluttony. And many of you are so fat!”

Of course, from a biblical standpoint, committing a homosexual act is far more serious than having a big bowl of ice cream, but now that my wife and I have written a book encouraging others to healthier living, rather than commending me, these same critics condemn me. Is anyone surprised?

The take-away in all this is simple: Although there are many

societal factors that contribute to the choices we make, we are ultimately responsible for those choices, and if we don't like sleeping in the bed we made, we have no business blaming others for it.

Positive change comes when we take full responsibility for our actions, and with God's help, radical, lasting change is possible for all. {eoa}

Director of National Intelligence Declares 'Profound Dismay' Over Leak of the 'BuzzFeed Dossier'

We now know the lengths those who opposed President-elect Donald Trump were willing to go to stop him from winning on Nov. 8, and how far they're willing to go to undermine and delegitimize his presidency.

Following BuzzFeed's publication of a review of the now-debunked 35-page "dossier" that alleges a number of vile and ugly acts on the part of the president-elect, and the subsequent blasting the online alternative news source took as a result, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper reached out to Trump. He then released a statement about the phone call in which he disavowed any involvement by the U.S. intelligence community (IC).

The statement reads:

This evening, I had the opportunity to speak with President-

elect Donald Trump to discuss recent media reports about our briefing last Friday. I expressed my profound dismay at the leaks that have been appearing in the press, and we both agreed that they are extremely corrosive and damaging to our national security.

We also discussed the private security company document, which was widely circulated in recent months among the media, members of Congress and Congressional staff even before the IC became aware of it. I emphasized that this document is not a U.S. intelligence community product and that I do not believe the leaks came from within the IC. The IC has not made any judgment that the information in this document is reliable, and we did not rely upon it in any way for our conclusions. However, part of our obligation is to ensure that policymakers are provided with the fullest possible picture of any matters that might affect national security.

President-elect Trump again affirmed his appreciation for all the men and women serving in the intelligence community, and I assured him that the IC stands ready to serve his administration and the American people.

But if the dossier wasn't produced by the intelligence community, and it wasn't leaked by the intelligence community, there are only two options for who could have gotten those documents in the hands of the media: Republican opponents or Democratic opponents. According to CNN's reporting on the documents, it "originated as opposition research, first commissioned by anti-Trump Republicans and later by Democrats."

To translate, "anti-Trump Republicans" means the likes of former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney and U.S. Sens. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) and John McCain (R-Ariz.). "Democrats" means the Hillary Clinton campaign.

The CNN report continues:

Some of the memos were circulating as far back as last summer. What has changed since then is that U.S. intelligence agencies have now checked out the former British intelligence operative and his vast network throughout Europe and find him and his sources to be credible enough to include some of the information in the presentations to the president and president-elect a few days ago.

On the same day that the president-elect was briefed by the intelligence community, the top four Congressional leaders, and chairmen and ranking members of the House and Senate intelligence committees—the so-called “Gang of Eight”—were also provided a summary of the memos regarding Mr. Trump, according to law enforcement, intelligence and administration sources.

The two-page summary was written without the detailed specifics and information about sources and methods included in the memos by the former British intelligence official. That said, the synopsis was considered so sensitive it was not included in the classified report about Russian hacking that was more widely distributed, but rather in an annex only shared at the most senior levels of the government: President Obama, the President-elect and the eight Congressional leaders.

McCain has since attempted to paint his involvement as civil responsibility, saying he couldn't verify the information he had obtained in December was accurate, so he sent it to the FBI. The FBI was already in possession of the documents in August, according to media reports.

But what is also missing from CNN's reporting is that much of what was contained in the dossier had been shared with the mainstream media as early as the fall of 2015, making the

timing of its release certainly suspect. Both CNN and BuzzFeed continue to claim their reporting was based on sound journalistic principles. {eoa}

How You Can Jump-Start Your Weight Loss and Kick-Start Your Health

You have an assignment to fulfill. Many prophets are saying this is the year of fulfillment of dreams and goals for our lives. It's time to take action and become lean, healthy and energized so you can fulfill the plans God has for you. "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).

Do you know what His plans are for your life for this year? If not, press in until you hear them. Then take an assessment. What kind of health, energy and body do you need to make those plans a reality? We do know God wants you to live an abundant, joy-filled life; therefore, He doesn't want you to struggle with sickness, fatigue or excess weight.

One study showed that people gain weight between October and December and specifically one to three pounds between Christmas and New Year's. About half the weight was lost quickly, but the other half hung around for a while. Another study showed that though the weight gain was smaller for those in that study, people never lost the holiday weight they gained. You need a plan so that doesn't happen to you.

But weight gain is not the only concern. Sugar, fat and

alcohol damage the body in more ways than one. Studies show that alcohol and sugar contribute to fatty liver disease. Other studies show that sugar is as addictive as cocaine. No wonder we find it hard to stop eating sweets once we start. And according to a study published in *The Journal of Clinical Investigation*, eating too much animal fat may damage your hypothalamus, the area of your brain that regulates energy balance.

If you had too many holiday treats, fatty foods and cheese balls, fear not. It's a new year. You can hit the reset button.

Are you ready for a new beginning? One way to jump-start your weight loss and your health is to try a short juice fast. Fresh juice is particularly helpful because it's broken down like a predigested food. It's rewarding because it provides an abundance of nutrients that bind up toxins, while also supporting the digestive system, providing it an opportunity to heal.

Juice nutrients cleanse your pathways of elimination and feed your cells an abundance of nutrients, including vitamins, minerals, enzymes, phytonutrients and biophotons.

Juice is the cavalry. The antioxidants march into your body like good soldiers to clean up sludge and knockout the bad guys like free radicals, which damage your cells. Then you can really sail through the winter cold and flu season without a bout of anything because you've supported your first defense line—your immune system.

The juice fast is a fantastic post-holiday weight loss choice. With this fast, you give up solid foods and enjoy delicious, nutrient-rich elixirs. They'll help you flush your system and rejuvenate your body. On a juice fast, cravings will diminish. You may find some aches and pains going away too. You can even get rid of acid reflux. And you can get your energy back

because you'll be absorbing nutrients more efficiently.

Many people gain belly fat during the holiday season. But some of that may not actually be fat, but rather bloating and some toxic sludge in the colon. You can cleanse your colon of the bloating and waste or plaque that causes it to protrude with a cleansing fast.

You can start your jump-start program with a one- to three-day juice fast. On your solid food days, avoid sugar, refined carbs, sodas, junk food, fast food, and snack foods.

Drink one or two glasses of juice those days. If you want to lose more weight, continue a one- to two-day juice fast each week until you reach your weight goal. Then you can juice-fast a few meals a week as a maintenance plan. If you have diabetes or hypoglycemia, be aware of consuming fruits. Although you can add a small amount of low-sugar fruit like green apple or berries for flavor, you should stay away from most fruit when you juice and stick to vegetables.

Juice It Up!

Here are three great recipes designed to taste great while cleansing your body and helping you burn fat.

Weight Loss Buddy Cocktail

Serves 1

Jerusalem artichoke juice combined with carrot and beet is a traditional remedy for satisfying cravings for sweets and junk food. The key is to sip it slowly when you get a craving for high-fat or high-carb foods.

1 Jerusalem artichoke, scrubbed well

3-4 carrots, scrubbed well, tops removed, ends trimmed

1 green apple (lower in sugar than red or yellow)

½ cucumber

1-inch chunk ginger root

Cut produce to fit your juicer's feed tube. Juice ingredients and stir. Pour into a glass and drink as soon as possible.

Fat Flush Ambrosia

Serves 1

According to research, grapefruit contains fat-burning phytochemical that works to balance insulin levels. That means you'll burn more fat rather than store it. Grapefruit has also been shown to lower the bad cholesterol (LDL).

1 grapefruit, peeled*

1 small handful mint

6 leaves Romaine lettuce

Juice all ingredients and give it a stir!

*Note, always peel grapefruit (and oranges) as it contains volatile oils that can upset your stomach.

Metabolism Booster Juice

Serves 1

Celery and hot peppers are considered thermogenic foods, which means they boost your metabolism.

4 ribs celery, with leaves too

1 green apple

1 cucumber

Dash of cayenne pepper or dash of hot sauce.

Juice all ingredients, and give it a stir!

Ready, Set, Go!

Get a juicer that's easy to use or find a good juice bar. You can use a blender if you don't have a juicer. You may also use freeze-dried juice powder or low sodium V-8 in a pinch.

- Drink 3-6 glasses of juice a day on juice fast days.
- Drink 8 glasses of water to flush your system.
- Check out the Dirty Dozen at [http://www.ewg.org/dirtydozen/](#). You'll want to avoid the most heavily pesticide sprayed produce and get organic when it comes to these twelve.

Pick the best day to start and get all your produce assembled in advance unless you're going to your local juice bar.

Many people find it easiest to start on a weekend day.

Get some good recipes; don't wing it. If you don't like the taste of what you create, you may ditch the whole thing. {eo}

Note: The recipes and portions of this article are excerpts from my new book, The Juice Lady's Guide to Fasting. (Siloam)

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