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THE

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REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

America's Spiritual Reawakening?





A Chinese ophthalmologist performs surgery for a cataract patient at the Regional Hospital Center of Fatick, Sengal (May 2, 2025).

SI YUAN/XINHUA VIA GETTY IMAGES

The Blind to See—Humanity’s Fight to Cure Blindness

Humanitarian organizations and charitable groups are working to eradicate eye disease. Their efforts point to an even greater purpose.

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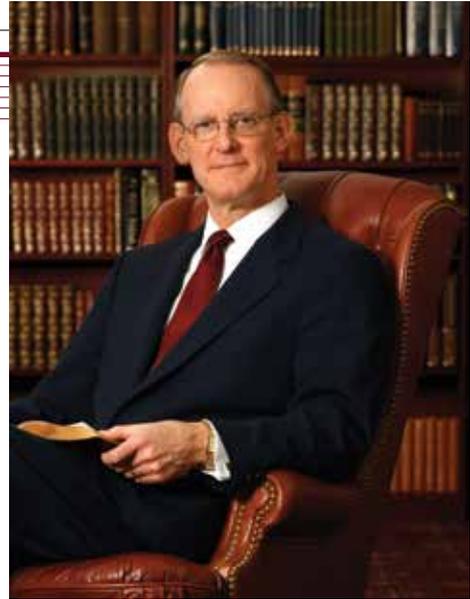
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PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



Rediscovering God's Day of Rest

THE ASSASSINATION of Charlie Kirk shocked the world. It graphically exposed the evil and division beneath society's surface, and in an instant became this generation's "JFK moment."

In the days that followed, Kirk's depth became increasingly apparent. He was a man who could converse on a wide range of topics, and would artfully bring facts and logic to every conversation. And while debate is not the forum for religious discussion (Rom. 1:28-29), this sometimes even included using the Bible to support a position.

Learning more about Kirk's work and views, something that surprised me came to light: He was a Sabbath keeper. In fact, he had finished a book on the subject prior to his death.

Through careful study he learned what God's Church has long understood—that the seventh-day Sabbath was never "done away with," as the vast majority of mainstream Christianity asserts. The accuracy of his research was confirmed by the benefits experienced by keeping the Sabbath, with his wife noting the rest had "transformed" him.

Lord of the Sabbath

The Restored Church of God traces its roots to the Church Christ built in AD 31. Many are shocked to learn the same Jesus Christ explained, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27-28).

The only Sabbath day in question was the seventh-day Sabbath kept by Christ and other Jews in His audience.

Contrary to what most believe, Christ did not do away with the Ten Commandments. Rather, He taught, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4).

In the next chapter, He said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (5:17-18). This is impossible to misunderstand!

In chapter 19, Jesus was asked a question that should be on the mind of every Christian: "What

good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?” (vs. 16). His answer was “if you will enter into life, keep the commandments” (vs. 17). To ensure there was no misunderstanding which commandments He was referring to, He went on to list several of the Ten Commandments found in Deuteronomy 5 and Exodus 20.

While Christ did not cite each of the 10, it would have obviously included the all-important Fourth Commandment: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Ex. 20:8).

Note how God began the command—REMEMBER! An all-wise Creator knew this command would be easy to forget. Unique to the other nine, humans cannot discern the need for a Sabbath, let alone which day it is. While routinely broken, the other commandments are generally accepted as “good ideas.” Killing, committing adultery, dishonoring parents and stealing are on their face wrong, but unless God *commanded* the seventh-day Sabbath, none could discern the need to keep it.

Verses 9 to 11 reveal *why* the commanded rest: “Six days shall you labor, and do all your work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God: in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your

stranger that is within your gates: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.”

Just as God rested from His work during the Creation week, He wants us to *remember* to rest on the seventh day, and focus on Him as our Creator.

From the Beginning

My book on the subject *Saturday or Sunday – Which Is the Sabbath?* thoroughly explains why Christians must observe the Sabbath and how to keep it holy.

It begins by revealing God instituted the seventh-day Sabbath at Creation:

“The subject of which day is the Christian Sabbath is one of the longest running debates about any Bible teaching. Theologians and ministers of every background and theology have offered their opinion about the ‘Saturday or Sunday’ question. Most begin with the assumption that traditional, orthodox Christianity is the place to start the discussion. While human opinion should not count, astonishingly, most are content to accept it. Few will look to the Bible as the authority. Not only is God’s Word the place to begin the study of this subject, as well as that of every other doctrine of God, but the ‘which

day is holy’ question already arises at the very beginning of the Bible.

“The book of Genesis—the name means ‘beginnings’—speaks almost immediately about the subject of the Sabbath—the seventh day of the week. It is as though God wanted this issue clearly established in the minds of the Bible’s readers from the outset of their study of Scripture.

“Near the book’s beginning, immediately after the ‘Creation chapter’ concludes, the Bible states this: ‘Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the *seventh day* God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the *seventh day* from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the *seventh day*, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made’ (2:1-3).”

Think. Why if God rested on the seventh day—Saturday—would Christ have changed the day of rest to *Sunday*?

In the book I dismantle all flimsy arguments like the false assertion that Christ was resurrected on Sunday, giving credence to a Sunday Sabbath. You will come to understand He was probably resurrected on a *Sabbath*! Every argument used to prove a Sunday Sabbath is exposed as human reasoning.

Those serious about Christianity should read it online or request a copy to understand what the Bible truly says on the matter.

But more than just pointing to the Creation week, the Sabbath also points *forward* to a time of “rest” for the people of God, and even all mankind! A Kingdom God’s Church now understands better than ever will soon transform life on Earth. All mankind will keep the Sabbath and experience its benefits.

But you now have advance knowledge. You can keep the Sabbath and enjoy God’s “rest” that must be experienced to understand *ahead of* this Kingdom!

If you are interested in keeping the Sabbath, contact us at rcg.org to find a congregation near you. □



A makeshift memorial at Timpanogos Regional Hospital in honor of political activist Charlie Kirk in Orem, Utah (Sept. 11, 2025).

GEORGE FREY/GETTY IMAGES



Just a Tradition?

From ornaments on trees to the belief that Jesus was born on December 25, there are countless popular customs and traditions associated with the Christmas holiday.

Where did it originate? From the Bible or paganism? Does it really matter? Where did Santa Claus come from? What about things like mistletoe, holly wreaths and the custom of exchanging gifts? Many are concerned about putting Christ back into Christmas. Was He ever there?

Order your free copy of *The True Origin of Christmas* at rcg.org/ttooc for the answers!

THE BLIND TO SEE— HUMANITY’S FIGHT TO *CURE* BLINDNESS

Humanitarian organizations and charitable groups are working to eradicate eye disease. Their efforts point to an even greater purpose.

BY EDWARD L. WINKFIELD

PEOPLE WHO can see clearly, even with the help of glasses or contacts, sometimes take it for granted. Yet a look at conditions in another part of the world provides a fresh perspective.

Cataracts are the chief cause of blindness on the planet. Groups such as the Cure Blindness Project—with its pioneering work in eliminating cataract disease in Nepal, Ethiopia, Myanmar and other developing nations—have opened the eyes of the masses, both literally and figuratively.

A former leper colony in Ethiopia was the site for one of the organization’s cataract surgery campaigns.

Dr. Matt Oliva, one of four surgeons on the team, described the situation to *Vice News*: “Blindness in Ethiopia is a death sentence, it’s a social problem, it’s a human suffering problem, and it’s an economic problem.” Another ophthalmologist on the team added, “In a society where you don’t have social security or things like that, these people are dependent on their family to whom they become a burden.”



A child with cataracts in both eyes awaits surgery in Basankusu, Democratic Republic of the Congo (April 9, 2019).

ANDRAS D. HAJDU/OWW AND FOUNDATION OF DOCTOR RICHARD FOR CONGOLESE PATIENTS

Those suffering from cataracts, which is a clouding of the eye lens, in developing nations discover that life as they knew it is essentially over. One woman, blind from the condition, said: “My little children look after me, I can’t even visit my friends. I just stay at home” (ibid.).

An elderly man with milky white eyes due to the disease painted a similarly grim picture: “I’m a farmer and I used to grow khat and sorghum. But now I can’t do it anymore. So, I have become a beggar and now I beg every day.”

The Cure Blindness Project’s mission is seeking to change it all by eradicating as much unnecessary blindness as possible. According to its

website, cureblindness.org, since 1995 it and partners have screened and treated over 19 million people, provided almost 2 million sight-restoring surgeries, and trained thousands of doctors to do the same.

Many in Ethiopia are blind due to untreated cataracts, which can be cured with a 10-minute surgery (the materials cost less than \$25). In November 2024, the Cure Blindness Project set a record of sight-restoring surgeries in Ethiopia. Over several trips during the 30-day period, over 12,000 people had their sight restored through cataract surgery.

Watching young and old in jubilation as their vision is restored changes you. One by one, as doctors remove

the surgical bandages a mere 24 hours following the procedure, patients scream, squeal and dance as their brains experience a sense that many patients had long given up on—sight.

The pure happiness on display, genuine embraces and overwhelming emotions are heartwarming. They demonstrate, in a most graphic way, the one-of-a-kind joy of being made whole.

One Man’s Vision

The Cure Blindness Project was co-founded by Dr. Sanduk Ruit, a 65-year-old ophthalmologist from Nepal. It was previously called the Himalayan Cataract Project.

Following his studies in India, the Netherlands and the United States, Dr. Ruit pioneered a simple, stitch-free surgical technique to cure cata-



A woman's eyes are checked before she can go for cataract surgery at a camp in Tapethok, Nepal (March 3, 2023).

MARYKE VERMAAK/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

racts. The procedure was so effective it began to be called a Ruitectomy.

Instead of relying heavily on machines, Dr. Ruit's manual surgical technique involves making a small incision on the surface of the eye just below the iris. Guided by a highly magnified image, the surgeon inserts a small tool resembling tweezers into the incision and pulls out the damaged lens. The doctor then replaces the old lens with an artificial one by pushing it into the same opening.

Though slicing into the surface of the eye and poking and prodding around may sound gory, it remarkably is not. The procedure requires no stitches and there is little to no blood involved.

The surgery is completed within 10 minutes, and the doctors apply thick eye patches with bandages in the hope that the patient's vision will be restored during a day of recovery.

Family and friends witnessing the removal of the bandages are usually just as excited in anticipation of the patient once again recognizing them, sometimes after years of being unable to. When the patches are removed, it takes a couple of seconds for the brain

of the former cataract sufferer to adjust to what is being seen. Moments later there is an unbelievable smile, demonstrating that the surgery was a success. Ninety percent of patients will see well enough to pass a U.S. driver's license test.

The ease and manual nature of the surgery, the assembly line approach, and Dr. Ruit's innovative \$3-per artificial lens is how \$25 of supplies and 10 minutes can help a person see again.

Greater Impact

Organizations besides the Cure Blindness Project are also taking on the task of doing all they can to cure blindness. The International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness lists other partners such as the World Council of Optometry, Sightsavers, and VisionSpring. The primary focus of all these groups is on the blind in the developing world.

Their work was initially shunned in ophthalmology circles. Many took issue with the unconventional research and work in environments considered squalid by Western standards. Yet groups stuck to the belief that excellent care could be delivered to the poor.

Not only do the majority of these programs waive surgery fees for those unable to pay, they also utilize mobile eye camps to take their services directly to people in hard-to-reach places. For instance, those doing work in and around the Himalayan region transport their equipment by vehicle as far as possible, then complete the journey by foot through mountainous terrain.

Once these mobile care teams get to a village, they immediately begin the work of transforming any available space into a sterile location for surgery. The location must be accessible and able to handle a large volume of patients who travel from miles around seeking to be cured. In a matter of hours, the team converts a dusty room into an operating area nearly equivalent to a clinic in the developed world.

While the work of all these organizations is admirable and they have made a positive impact, millions are still suffering from cataracts and awaiting care.

This reality drives efforts to pass along blindness prevention knowledge to other doctors. The Cure Blindness Project alone has helped train more than 20,100 eye-care personnel from 43 countries, of which over 640 are doctors. They have built hospitals in Ghana, Ethiopia, India and China. They have also worked in North Korea, Cambodia, Bangladesh and Vietnam.

These individuals are some of the many in the blindness prevention community hoping to bring the joy of sight to hundreds, thousands and eventually millions.

Miracle of Sight

Helping people see again is inspiring. In our world dominated by misery and despair, it is encouraging to witness uplifting accounts of people having their vision restored.

On the cureblindness.org website is an article titled "The Miracle of Cataract Surgery: Ten Minutes That Change Everything" that explains

some of the impact of their work. The work of the Cure Blindness Project *does* feel miraculous. Though cataract surgery may not fit the exact definition of a miracle, it is nevertheless hard to explain it any other way.

Miracles grab and hold our attention.

Jesus Christ knew this very fact. In the New Testament, He even explained it to a high-ranking official who, despite his status, was unable to find a cure to his son's terminal illness. He was left with no other option but to seek Christ and beg Him to heal his dying son (John 4:46-47). Christ's response alluded to His important purpose for healing people: "Except you see SIGNS and wonders, you will not believe" (vs. 48). He then healed the official's son. This irrefutable sign made the man and his entire household believers in Jesus and His ministry (vs. 53).

The Greek word translated "signs" means an indication, especially supernatural (*Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*). This term is many times translated "miracle." A true miracle is an event inexplicable by natural or scientific laws. It is solely of divine origin.

Jesus' first official miracle was changing water to wine at a wedding, which also helped people to believe in His divine authority (John 2:11). This act caught the attention of those of a certain status. However, Christ's most numerous and impactful miracles were those through which He brought or restored health to others, many of them poor. John 6:2 records, "A great multitude followed Him, because they saw His miracles which He did on them that were diseased." Christ's divine healing of the masses could not be explained away by nature or science.

Blindness was just one of the myriad diseases Jesus addressed: "And great multitudes came unto Him, having with them those that were lame, *blind*, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and He healed them: insomuch that the

multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, *and the blind to see*: and they glorified the God of Israel" (Matt. 15:30-31).

People brought their loved ones with the hopes of them being made whole. Many who had all but given up hope had their lives forever changed. When the healing came, it brought tremendous joy and exuberance (Luke 17:15-16).

Yet the question remains: What did the divine healings *signal* or indicate? Yes, people were made to feel better, but what did it all point to? What was the purpose of Christ's ministry?

Read His own words: "Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John [the Baptist] what things you have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor *the gospel is preached*" (Luke 7:22).

Christ wrapped His greater message—that of the gospel—in the healing of the sick. Helping people see, hear, walk and in some cases live again got their attention and the attention of witnesses.

Making people whole became the catalyst or means by which Christ spread the gospel. The word gospel appears in the Bible over 100 times. It is an Old English word meaning "god spell" or good news. The word kingdom is also an Old English term that means "government."

Therefore, it is proper to say that Jesus Christ came as a divine newscaster bringing the gospel or good news of the soon-coming Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14). Do not be fooled or misled by those who claim the gospel is about the person of Christ or various misnomers such as the gospel of salvation, gospel of grace, gospel of faith or a social gospel. These are UNBIBLICAL!

Jesus Christ, who plays a central role in Christianity and salvation, brought the only true gospel the Bible speaks of—the *good news of God's Kingdom coming to Earth*. He also

tied it to the joy and elation of being healed.

The government of God coming to Earth is God's overarching message to mankind. Under this divine rulership, all of mankind will have access to its Creator and will learn to live *His* way of life. One of the benefits of this way is good health. This is a major reason Christ focused on this during His 3.5-year ministry.

Healing the sick on the spot helped people recognize Jesus' credibility and believe His seemingly unbelievable statements. Making them whole also became the chief reason to believe He was the Son of God who brought a message to mankind (John 7:31).

The happiness that comes with being healed made Christ's words live, just as they do today.

Coming Good News

Good news *is* coming. God promised it would. He said plainly that we should repent (meaning *change*) and *believe the gospel* (Mark 1:15). The reader is therefore left with the same question presented to the throngs that followed the living Jesus Christ. Will you believe?

The Real Truth magazine and The Restored Church of God are committed to obeying Christ's command to "preach the gospel to the poor" (Luke 4:18).

The articles we present bring clear understanding to the problems of today's world. They reveal the coming solutions to the world's evils and ills.

In God's Kingdom, people will be healed and made whole. They will find permanent solutions to what ails them, physically, emotionally and spiritually. They will also experience the exuberance that comes along with it.

For more on what the gospel is and *is not*, according to the Bible, order our free booklet *Which Is the True Gospel?* at rcg.org/witrg. It will give you a much clearer understanding of the central message Jesus delivered, and a picture of the awesome environment in which ALL will soon be made whole. □



Gen Z Protesters Lead Global Wave of Generational Discontent



Leaders have been forced from office in Nepal and Madagascar by youth uprisings. What is behind this trend?

FROM THE Andes to the Himalayas, a new wave of protests is unfolding across the world, driven by generational discontent against governments and anger among young people.

In mid-October, Madagascar's President Andry Rajoelina was forced out of power and out of the country after a military mutiny, the culmination of weeks of demonstrations led by young protesters referring to themselves as "Gen Z Madagascar."

The rage against the political establishment in the Indian Ocean island country mirrors other recent protests across the world, in countries like Nepal, the Philippines, Indonesia, Kenya, Peru and Morocco. These protests have been sparked by specific grievances but are driven by long-simmering issues like widening inequality, economic uncertainty, corruption, and nepotism of leaders.

But they have one thing in common: Mostly leaderless, they are made up primarily of young people who brand

Top left, protesters climb a public monument as they celebrate the news of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's resignation, in Dhaka, Bangladesh (Aug. 5, 2024). Bottom left, a man injured in a September 8 anti-corruption protest gathers with others in Kathmandu, Nepal (Sept. 21, 2025). Bottom right, soldiers are greeted by people gathering for a ceremony in tribute to demonstrators killed during recent anti-government protests in Antananarivo, Madagascar (Oct. 12, 2025). Above, a protester wearing a flak jacket and carrying a shield snatched from a policeman shouts slogans at the Singha Durbar, the seat of Nepal's government's various ministries and offices, during a protest in Kathmandu (Sept. 9, 2025).

TOP LEFT, AP/RAJIB DHAR; BOTTOM LEFT, AP/NIRANJAN SHRESTHA; BOTTOM RIGHT, AP/MAMYRAEL; ABOVE, AP/NIRANJAN SHRESTHA

Please see **GEN Z**, page 26

Maintaining Your Health as You Grow Older

New research is giving older adults reason for hope, showing it is never too late to take charge of their health.

BY EDWARD L. WINKFIELD

IT IS never too late to improve your health.

You have lived a long life—enjoying many memories, starting a family and watching them grow. Perhaps your career is in its twilight or has already come to an end. It may feel like time is running out to be your best self physically, but this is not so if you know what to do.

New research offers hope for older adults. The Alzheimer's Association and

at 50

Prioritize heart and metabolic health. Monitor blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar, reduce sodium, limit alcohol and manage stress (Mayo Clinic).

the Wake Forest University School of Medicine recently led a two-year clinical trial that showed how simple, consistent habits—including daily walks, brain games and better meals—can improve heart health, mental clarity and overall vitality well into one's later years.

For Phyllis Jones, 66, of Aurora, Illinois, the trial gave her a sense of control. "It was the first time," she said, "I felt I was doing something proactive to protect my brain."



Science continues to confirm what the Bible taught long ago. God designed the human body to thrive when it follows His physical laws. “I wish above all things that you may prosper and be in health,” wrote the apostle John (III John 2). These words reflect God’s desire that we live active, balanced lives.

The connection between biblical wisdom and modern research is clear: Lasting health comes from steady, intentional choices that nourish the whole person—physically, mentally and spiritually.

Building Better Habits

One of the most encouraging lessons from the Wake Forest trial is that you do not need to make dramatic changes to improve your health. In fact, the best results came from small, steady habits done consistently.

Participants walked or stretched for 30 minutes a day, swapped butter for olive oil, added berries and leafy greens to their meals and spent time doing puzzles or memory games. These small, steady steps led to significant improvements in heart health, blood sugar levels, weight and cognitive function. In short—what strengthens the body also strengthens the mind.

This mirrors principles found in the Bible. God designed human beings to move and work, not live idle lives. Scripture encourages diligence, balance and moderation, all qualities that promote both spiritual and physical well-being.

The prophet Daniel set an example of this balance. When offered the rich foods of Babylon, he asked instead for a diet of “pulse”—vegetables and grains

(Dan. 1:12). His decision, made out of obedience to God, led to clearer thinking, better health and greater vitality than those around him (vs. 15).

You do not need to overhaul everything in your life at once. Replace processed foods with whole, natural ingredients. Take a morning walk. Do a word game instead of watching another TV episode.

The Bible encourages this same steady persistence: “Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season

we shall reap, if we faint not” (Gal. 6:9). Anyone willing to build good habits patiently and purposefully can reap lasting benefits.

Strengthening Mind and Spirit

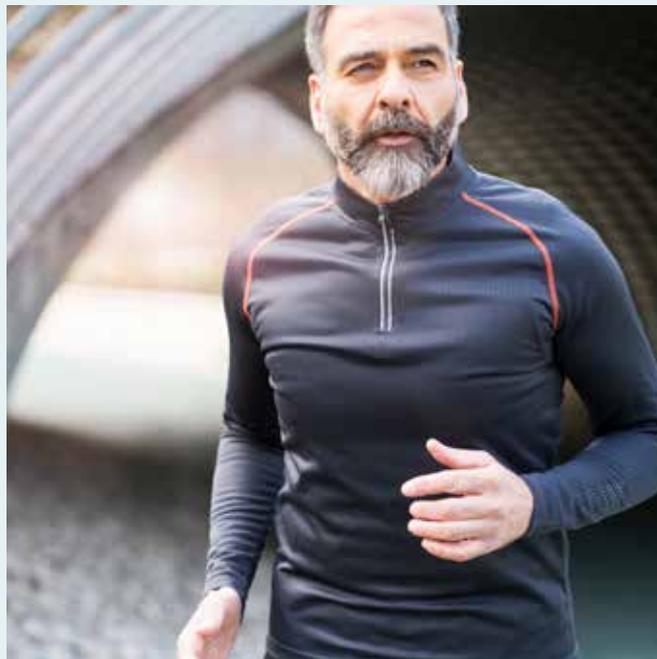
As we age, it is natural to think about more than physical health. Many wonder how to stay sharp, how to keep contributing or how to avoid becoming a burden to loved ones. These concerns are valid, yet the Wake Forest study offers a real reason for encouragement.

The trial found that even modest improvements to diet and activity can lead to clearer memory, better mental focus and an overall stronger sense of well-being.

The Bible reveals a connection between mental and spiritual health. The apostle Paul wrote that “God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (II Tim. 1:7). A sound mind, according to Scripture, helps us think clearly, act wisely and stay grounded even amid the challenges of life.

Good habits—whether physical, mental or spiritual—work together. Exercise improves mood and reduces anxiety. Healthy eating supports focus and energy. Spiritual practices such as prayer, meditation on Scripture and serving others bring balance and peace. Together, these reinforce the mind God intends us to have.

Our booklet *God’s Principles of Healthful Living* explains that caring for your body is not vanity—it is part of honoring your Creator. Staying active and alert physically supports your spiritual life and helps you remain positive and engaged in your community,



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Stay active and engaged. Aim for 150 minutes of exercise weekly, eat nutrient-rich foods, keep learning and maintain social connections (Cleveland Clinic).



rather than drifting into passivity or discouragement.

Staying the Course

The greatest benefits from the Wake Forest University study came to those who kept going—who made small changes and stuck with them.

Ms. Jones joined the trial after years of off-and-on efforts to improve her health. What finally moved her was her adult child's concern about having to care for her at a relatively early age. "For me, that was the wake-up call," Ms. Jones told CNN. "That's when I found the [Wake Forest] study and my life changed. What I accomplished during the study was phenomenal—I'm a new person."

Her story illustrates a timeless truth that is covered in the *Healthful Living* booklet: "Good health is a precious attribute. You must maintain it. Otherwise, it deteriorates. Traditional living habits and environments are hostile to good health. Unless *you* make an effort to protect and maintain it, good health could easily disappear—even at an early age."

The apostle Paul drew a similar comparison between physical and spiritual endurance: "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection" (1 Cor. 9:27). Like physical fitness, spiritual strength requires discipline over time. Neither happens by accident—and both are worth the work.

The study revealed something deeply encouraging—those who stuck with simple lifestyle changes experienced greater benefits. And this is

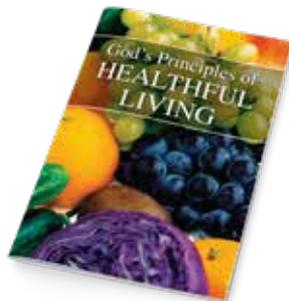
key: Success will not come from doing everything perfectly, but from staying consistent over time.

Ms. Jones was initially advised to do 30 minutes of aerobic exercise each day to raise her heart rate, along with strength training and stretching sessions several times a week. She found it difficult at first. "After that first 10 minutes, I was sweating and exhausted," she said. "But we went

slow, adding 10 minutes at a time, and we kept each other honest. Now I just love to work out."

That mindset—steadily moving forward—is what brings lasting results. As our biblical resource on health puts it: "Given the correct habits and environment, the body was designed to be self-healing and naturally healthy."

You do not need to be perfect. You just need to keep going.



“Good health is a precious attribute. You must maintain it.”

—*God's Principles of Healthful Living*

at 70+

Prioritize fall prevention and mobility. Do balance and strength exercises, keep your home safe and stay active to maintain independence (CDC).

Health for the Whole Person

The Bible shows that you are more than just a body or a brain. True health means tending to all parts of your life: physical, mental and spiritual.

As you grow older, your goal is not just to avoid illness but to stay vibrant, clear-minded and ready to encourage and serve others. With every walk, every healthy meal and every intentional small choice, you are preserving the tools God gave you to fulfill your purpose.

God's Principles of Healthful Living offers a deeper look at what

Scripture teaches about health. It explains how to apply God's timeless instruction in a modern world, helping you take meaningful steps toward better living—without extremes or gimmicks. Read or order your free copy today at rcg.org/glohl.

The Bible is clear: Your later years can still be rich with mental clarity, physical strength and peace of mind. With the right habits—and God's help—you can prove that His way to health truly works. □





Why the *Mayflower*

Matters Over 400 Years Later

BY JUSTIN M. FRAZIER

The voyage of the Mayflower began a nation that would change the course of world history. The story is told every year, but the real purpose of the journey has remained hidden to most.



EVERY NOVEMBER in the United States, schoolchildren make pilgrim hats out of black construction paper and draw hand turkeys as part of a lesson about Thanksgiving.

They are taught that the pilgrims who sailed to America on the Mayflower fled religious persecution and that the first winter was hard. The local native population helped them survive, and they held a banquet to celebrate the end of a bountiful harvest with their native friends.

Americans have continued this traditional celebration to this day—every year families come together to carve turkey and share a sumptuous meal.

Turkey, ‘taters and tales of survival. This is all most have ever known of the meaning behind the autumn holiday. But the *real* story of those men and women who traversed the Atlantic has much more significance on modern society than the tradition reveals.

Genealogists estimate that one out of every 10 people in the U.S. today is a descendant of those who crossed the Atlantic on the Mayflower, survived their first winter in America, and then went on to have children. That means 35 million Americans today came from 102 colonists who landed in Cape Cod in November 1620.

But the full story of that tiny group carries an even greater significance to all Americans and the nation as a whole. The nation’s identity—and future—is revealed by the tale of this small group of people.

Fleeing Persecution

The persecution facing the Pilgrims began with England’s religious break-away from the Catholic Church. The Protestantization of England was completed with the Act of Uniformity 1558, which put fines on those who did not attend required services at the Church of England every week.

This was not enough for some who felt Church of England was *not Protestant enough*. These dissenters sought to “purify” the new English church of all Roman Catholic traditions they considered unbiblical—such

as making the sign of the cross at baptism or bowing on hearing the name of Jesus.

Members of these so-called Puritan groups were arrested and imprisoned. Others’ homes were under constant watch from the community. Many saw the only option to escape intense scrutiny was to set sail for Holland.

Yet the trouble continued even after the move to continental Europe. In 1619, Holland forbade any organization from collecting money to support ministers, orphans or the elderly except the Dutch Reformed Church. Again, the Puritans faced the decision of assimilation or departure.

Seeing nowhere fruitful to go in Europe, they began to look west toward the New World.

At the time, a move to North America was especially risky. The Puritans would have heard of the colony in Jamestown, where in the winter of 1607, 440 of the 500 new settlers died of starvation. Also, the threat of attacks from indigenous peoples was constant.

But a sense of divine purpose—a kind of 17th century Manifest

Destiny—overpowered these potential threats. “We verily believe and trust the Lord is with us,” they wrote, “and that He will graciously prosper our endeavors according to the simplicity of our hearts therein” (*Mayflower: A Story of Courage, Community, and War*).

The Pilgrims in Holland bought a 43-year-old boat named the Speedwell to take them back to Southampton, England, and rendezvous with the Mayflower. Future governor of Plymouth Colony, William Bradford, described their emotional departure on July 22, 1620: “So they left that goodly and pleasant city [Leiden] which had been their resting place near twelve years; but they knew they were pilgrims, and looked not much on those things, but lift up their eyes to the heavens, their dearest country, and quieted their spirits” (ibid).

Their voyage brings to mind the words in Hebrews 11. They were “strangers and pilgrims” (vs. 13) who would “declare plainly that they seek a country...But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly” (vs. 14, 16).



The signing of the Mayflower Compact.
PAINTING BY JEAN LEON GEROME FERRIS

THE JOURNEY

To pay for the journey to America, the Pilgrims took a loan from a group of London businessmen called the Merchant Adventurers. They purchased shares in a joint-stock company that paid for the *Mayflower*, its crew and a year's worth of supplies. The contract was for the Pilgrims to work for seven years but they struggled to repay the loan. They finally did so in 1648, mostly through beaver pelts.

NEW WORLD

ATLANTIC OCEAN

EUROPE

5. 4

1. JULY 22, 1620: Speedwell departed Delfshaven, Netherlands, to Southampton, England. Leaks in the Speedwell are patched up.

2. AUGUST 15: Speedwell and *Mayflower* left Southampton. The ships were forced back twice because of leaks in the Speedwell.

3. SEPTEMBER 16: The *Mayflower* left Plymouth carrying 102 passengers from both ships.

4. NOVEMBER 11: The *Mayflower* compact was signed aboard the ship after it anchored off the coast.

5. NOVEMBER 21: The *Mayflower* anchored at Provincetown, Massachusetts. By the end of the journey, one passenger died and a boy was born.

SOURCE: MAYFLOWERHISTORY.COM; HISTORY.COM
ILLUSTRATION: THE REAL TRUTH

Twice on their journey to Southampton, the *Speedwell* sprung a leak, forcing it to dock. This delayed the trip enough that some of the passengers became disillusioned and returned to Holland.

Those who made it to the *Mayflower* were already running low on provisions. They had been on board for six weeks, nearly the length of time they had planned to be at sea.

Robert Cushman, aboard the *Speedwell*, worried whether there would be enough to survive: "Our victuals will be half eaten up, I think, before we go from the coast of England; and, if our voyage last long, we shall not have a month's victuals when we come in the country" (*MayflowerHistory.com*).

Finally, favorable winds on September 16 allowed the crossing of the Atlantic with 102 passengers on board.

Perilous Journey

The first month at sea was calm, but conditions were at best uncomfortable for passengers. Since the *Mayflower* was a cargo ship, it was not designed to carry as many people as it had. Most passen-

gers had to stay in an area where the ceiling was five feet high.

The second month brought the dreaded north Atlantic storms, "with which the ship was thoroughly shaken, and her upper works made very leaky," Bradford recorded (*eyewitness to history.com*). Waves would sweep the top deck as the raging seas buffeted the ship's hull.

The storms broke one of the main beams in the middle of the ship. The leaders of the passengers met with the captain and his officers to discuss returning to England. But the ship's officers decided that the boat was strong enough below the waterline to keep going and that the buckled beam could be raised with an iron screw.

Though weakened, it was assured that the boat would make it.

Finally, after 66 days at sea, land was sighted on November 9 at Cape Cod. One of the passengers, William Brewster, led the Pilgrims to read Psalm 100 to give thanks for the successful crossing.

But the story of survival was far from over.

The First Winter

Weeks of waves brought the ship several hundred miles off course, and the worsening winter weather made following the coastline to the mouth of the Hudson River impossible.

So they had no choice but to find a site and winter in. As the men sought suitable land to begin construction, most of the passengers and crew stayed on board the *Mayflower* for another four months.

The tight quarters and cold weather helped spread disease, and 45 passengers died by winter's end. Another six died over the summer.

Only 51 of the 102 passengers survived to take part in that famous first Thanksgiving.

The Pilgrims chose an abandoned settlement that was easy to defend, and since the land was already cleared it would be suitable for spring planting. They named their colony Plymouth after the port in England from which they had departed.

Please see **MAYFLOWER**, page 27

America's Spiritual Reawakening?

The Bible reveals why religious revivals always seem to fade—and the only path to true, lasting change.

BY SAMUEL C. BAXTER

IS THE tide turning? After decades of decline in religious affiliation, 31 percent of U.S. adults in February 2025 said religion is gaining influence in American life—up from just 18 percent a year earlier.

The numbers from the Pew Research Center also indicated “an overall shift toward more positive views about religion’s role in American life over the past five years or so.”

As 2025 began, other reports demonstrated a quiet surge in spiritual curiosity. Bible publishers noted double-digit growth after years of decline—what *The Wall Street Journal* called “a golden age of Bible publishing.”

Faith-based media has boomed across the board: One market estimate values the U.S. Christian streaming sector at \$2 billion in 2025, partly driven by growing demand for Christian-themed entertainment (*Data Insights Market*).

Polls, publishing trends and viewing habits all told the same story: Americans are paying attention to God again.

Then a single event supercharged it all. On September 10, political activ-

ist Charlie Kirk was assassinated while addressing students at a Utah university.

In a podcast interview released just a few months earlier, he was asked how he hoped to be remembered after he died. His answer was simple: “For courage for my faith.” That faith, he added, was “the most important thing” in his life.

The reactions to his death were immediate and emotional. Candlelight vigils, prayer marches and overflowing church services swept the country. One post on X (formerly Twitter) captured a widespread feeling that Kirk’s death had “started a mass awakening... This is what Charlie would’ve wanted most, a massive revival.”

Statistics reflected the mood: “Bible sales have surged by more than a third following the assassination of Charlie Kirk,” *The Telegraph* reported, estimating 2.4 million copies sold in September alone—a 36 percent jump from the previous year.

From politicians to podcasters to teens on social media, America is once again talking about God. Beneath the emotion lies something deeper—a

hunger for meaning that culture and politics have failed to satisfy. Millions are reaching for something lasting, something real.

The question is whether this moment can become more than talk. Can it bring the lasting change so many desire?

‘A Spiritual Reawakening’

Eleven days after Kirk’s death, mourners filled State Farm Stadium in Glendale, Arizona—not for a funeral but for what many likened to a revival service. Speakers all talked about God, the Bible and faith.

Vice President JD Vance told the crowd: “The evil murderer who took Charlie from us expected us to have a funeral today. Instead, my friends, we have had a revival...”

Later in the event, President Donald Trump said that Kirk had believed America needed “a spiritual reawakening,” adding, “We have to bring back religion to America, because without borders, law and order, and religion you don’t really have a country anymore.”



The sense of renewal was not limited to politicians.

Benny Johnson, a conservative commentator who was close friends with Kirk, compiled many online posts in a video that mentioned packed churches, first-time visitors and mass baptisms in the days after the assassination.

One said, “The church was full today...people were parking in the grass.” Another said, “Hundreds came to Christ through baptism after the service. The Charlie effect.”

Other posts described deeply personal shifts: “On our way to Church for the first time in at least 15 years.” “Who bought a Bible for the first time after [Kirk’s death]?” One country singer urged his 5 million followers, “Follow Jesus Christ...If you haven’t gotten your heart right with Him...today is the day.”

In an interview with *National Catholic Register*, *New York Times* writer Ross Douthat discussed what could be driving the increased curiosity about God and the Bible. He noted a “general recovery of interest in the idea that religion is good for society.” The age of atheism, he added, has passed, with many realizing that “getting rid of organized religion did not in fact make the world a happier, less polarized, more enlightened and rational place.”

For many, one Bible promise has become the verse of the moment: “If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (II Chron. 7:14).

Before the 2024 presidential election, one Christian outlet called for a “National 2 Chronicles Day” on Election Day that urged believers to show up at polling places and in Washington to pray.

Why Revivals Rise and Fall

This is not the first time America has longed for renewal. Throughout its history, waves of religious fervor have swept the nation.



Attendees of the memorial service of Charlie Kirk raise their hands at State Farm Stadium in Glendale, Arizona (Sept. 21, 2025).

JON PUTMAN/ANADOLU VIA GETTY IMAGES

The First Great Awakening of the 1730s filled meetinghouses with fiery preaching and public displays of repentance—but within a generation, zeal cooled and daily life returned to routine. The Second Awakening of the early 1800s promised moral reform—yet schisms among denominations blunted any lasting impact. The Prayer Revival of 1857 began with lunchtime prayer meetings for businessmen—yet despite initial passion, attendance rapidly dwindled.

In the next century, the Jesus Movement of the 1970s brought youthful energy—yet within a decade, it was mostly absorbed into more established denominations. And the Promise Keepers rallies of the 1990s filled stadiums with men pledging faith and

integrity—only to dissolve when the emotion of the moment ebbed.

Each of these movements began with sincerity and a rejection of national drift toward secularism. Yet each ended the same way: A spark that burned high, bright—and then out.

This pattern is not uniquely American. The Bible records it too. Ancient Israel repeatedly cried out to God in crisis, only to backslide soon after.

The book of Judges summarizes their cycle: “When the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge...And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers” (2:18-19).

Through the prophet Hosea, God lamented the phony righteousness of Israel's leading tribes: "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto you? O Judah, what shall I do unto you? For your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goes away" (6:4).

Israel's goodness evaporated like dew under the morning sun—momentary conviction without lasting commitment.

And in that example lies a warning for the U.S.: Spiritual awakenings may seem to start well, but without real change, they will not endure.

What God Really Wants

The Bible explains why revivals through history have faded. God requires something far deeper than emotion—He wants TRANSFORMATION.

Through the prophet Isaiah, He rebuked His own people for showing outward devotion while ignoring His commands: "Forasmuch as this people draw near Me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor Me, but have removed their heart far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the precept of men" (29:13).

Centuries later, Jesus Christ cited that very verse during His earthly ministry to describe the religious leaders of that time—people who looked devout but trusted their own traditions and teachings more than God's Word. They appeared zealous, yet resisted making deeper changes in their lives.

Read II Chronicles 7:14 one more time, this time paying close attention to what God desires when people turn to Him: "If My people, which are called by My name, shall *humble themselves*, and *pray*, and *seek My face*, and *turn from their wicked ways*; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

God desires humility—for people to realize they do not have all the answers. He then wants them to turn from their own ways and seek Him.

The Hebrew word translated "turn" means to reverse direction—to change course, not merely express regret.

Other passages echo this: "Rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn

unto the LORD your God" (Joel 2:13). "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD" (Lam. 3:40).

True change is not measured by how loudly a nation invokes God's name, but by how willingly its people live by His Word.

The Hope of Lasting Awakening

Every revival begins with hope—that *this time*, change will last.

Across the U.S., many are reading their Bibles again, praying more and returning to church for the first time in years. Yet what will be the result of this new movement? Will an entire nation truly turn to God?

History and prophecy both say no.

God is not working with whole nations right now. He is patient, carrying out His purpose in ways the world does not yet understand. But the Bible shows He will soon intervene in world affairs decisively, once and for all, to establish His Kingdom.

God's Plan is to give every human being, past, present and future, the chance to truly know Him.

The apostle Peter wrote, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise... but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that ALL should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9). To repent simply means to change, sincerely and from the heart.

Isaiah described what life will be like: "It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains...and *all nations* shall flow unto it" (2:2). When that day arrives, "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. 2:14).

Clearly, none of these things are occurring today. The natural question: What is God doing now, before He sets up His Kingdom on Earth?

He is working with individuals. Jesus said, "No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me *draw him*" (John 6:44). This could include *you*.

God calls people to Him. When doing so, He opens their minds to spir-

itual truth. He invites them to repentance and lasting conversion: "Repent you therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out..." (Acts 3:19).

That process of repentance—leading to true conversion—is not a fleeting emotional high. It is the beginning of a lifelong relationship with your Creator. It is a process of building His character and becoming more like Him over time.

When God starts to open your eyes to His truth, you will begin to see the world differently. Old assumptions will no longer satisfy you. In addition, the Bible will suddenly feel alive, clear and understandable.

These are all telltale signs God is working with you. What will you do next?

The Bible gives the answer: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (I Thes. 5:21). God does not want you to just believe what others say about Him. He wants you to PROVE it for yourself.

You should *prove* that God exists, that the Bible is His inspired Word, and exactly where He is working today.

To help you along that journey, The Restored Church of God, publisher of this magazine, offers free resources:

- *Does God Exist?*
- *Bible Authority...Can It Be Proven?*
- *Where Is God's Church?*

Read them carefully. Compare every statement with the Bible. Let God's Word—not human tradition, emotion or opinion—show you what is true.

If you sense that God is calling you to something deeper, do not ignore it. Talk to Him. Ask Him to guide you. Open your Bible, seek Him earnestly—then ACT on what you learn.

In this current age, national spiritual movements will rise and fade—but when God begins working inside an individual, the results can last forever. The spiritual awakening that will one day fill the Earth can begin right now inside anyone willing to respond to His call. □



Thai officials show samples of illegally imported electronic waste from the United States, which they said they seized at Bangkok Port, in Thailand (May 14, 2025).

AP/SAKCHAI LALIT

The dumping of electronic waste releases toxic chemicals into the environment. Here is why this problem is so difficult to solve.

MILLIONS OF tons of discarded electronics from the United States are being shipped overseas, much of it to developing countries in Southeast Asia unprepared to safely handle hazardous waste, according to a recent report by an environmental watchdog.

The Seattle-based Basel Action Network, or BAN, said a two-year investigation found at least 10 U.S. companies exporting used electronics to Asia and the Middle East, in what it says is a hidden tsunami of electronic waste.

“This new, almost invisible tsunami of e-waste, is taking place... padding already lucrative profit margins of the electronics recycling sector while allowing a major portion of the American public’s and corporate IT equipment to be surreptitiously exported to and processed under harmful conditions in Southeast Asia,” the report said.

Growing E-waste

Electronic waste, or e-waste, includes discarded devices like phones and computers containing both valuable materials and toxic metals like lead, cadmium and mercury. As gadgets are replaced faster, global e-waste is growing five times quicker than it is formally recycled.

The world produced a record 62 million metric tons in 2022. That is expected to climb to 82 million by 2030, according to the United Nations’

American E-waste Is Causing a Hidden Tsunami in Southeast Asia, Report Says

International Telecommunication Union and its research arm, UNITAR.

Toxic Chemicals

That American e-waste adds to the burden for Asia, which already produces nearly half the world's total. Much of it is dumped in landfills, leaching toxic chemicals into the environment. Some ends up in informal scrapyards, where workers burn or dismantle devices by hand, often without protection, releasing toxic fumes and scrap.

About 2,000 containers—roughly 33,000 metric tons (36,376 U.S. tons)—of used electronics leave U.S. ports every month, according to the report. It said the companies behind the shipments, described as “e-waste brokers,” typically do not recycle the waste themselves but send it to companies in developing countries.

Response to the Report

The companies identified in the report include Attan Recycling, Corporate eWaste Solutions or CEWS, Creative Metals Group, EDM, First America Metal Corp., GEM Iron and Metal Inc., Greenland Resource, IQA Metals, PPM Recycling and Semsotai.

Six of the companies did not immediately respond to emailed requests for comment.

Semsotai told *The Associated Press* that it does not export scrap, only working components for reuse. It accused BAN of bias.

PPM Recycling told *The Associated Press* it complies with all regulations and accurately handles shipments through certified partners. Greenland Resource told *The Associated Press* it took the allegations seriously and was reviewing the matter internally. Both said they could not comment further without seeing the report.

CEWS said it follows strict environmental standards, but some aspects of where and how recycled materials are handled are industrial secrets.

Value of More Than \$1 Billion

The report estimated that between January 2023 and February 2025, the

10 companies exported more than 10,000 containers of potential e-waste valued at over \$1 billion, the report said. Industrywide, such trade could top \$200 million a month.

Eight of the 10 identified companies hold R2V3 certifications—an industry standard meant to ensure electronics are recycled safely and responsibly, raising questions about the value of such a certification, the report said.

Several companies operate out of California, despite the state's strict e-waste laws requiring full reporting and proper downstream handling of electronic and universal waste.

International Treaty

Many e-waste containers go to countries that have banned such imports under the Basel Convention, which is an international treaty that bars hazardous waste trade from non-signatories like the U.S., the only industrialized nation yet to ratify it.

The nonprofit said its review of government and private trade records from ships and customs officials showed shipments were often declared under trade codes that did not match those for electronic waste, such as “commodity materials” like raw metals or other recyclable goods to evade detection. Such classifications were “highly unlikely” given how the companies publicly describe their operations, the report said.

Landfills and Pollution

Tony R. Walker, who studies global waste trade at the Dalhousie University's School for Resource and Environmental Studies in Halifax in Canada, said he was not surprised that e-waste continues to evade regulation. While some devices can be legally traded if functional, most such exports to developing nations are broken or obsolete and mislabeled, bound for landfills that pollute the environment and have little market value, he said.

He pointed to Malaysia—a Basel Convention signatory identified in

the report as the primary destination for U.S. e-waste—saying the country would be overwhelmed by that volume, in addition to waste from other wealthy nations.

“It simply means the country is being overwhelmed with what is essentially pollution transfer from other nations,” he said.

‘Mecca of Junk’

The report estimates that U.S. e-waste shipments may have made up about 6 percent of all U.S. exports to the country from 2023 to 2025. After China banned imports of foreign waste in 2017, many Chinese businesses shifted their operations to Southeast Asia, using family and business ties to secure permits.

“Malaysia suddenly became this mecca of junk,” said Jim Puckett of the Basel Action Network.

Containers were also sent to Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and the UAE, despite bans under the Basel Convention and national laws, the report added.

In countries receiving this U.S. e-waste, “undocumented workers desperate for jobs” toil in makeshift facilities, inhaling toxic fumes as they strip wires, melt plastics and dismantle devices without protection, the report said.

Efforts to Control Illegal Imports

Authorities in Thailand and Malaysia have stepped up efforts to curb illegal imports of U.S. e-waste.

In May, Thai authorities seized 238 tons of U.S. e-waste at Bangkok's port while Malaysian authorities confiscated e-waste worth \$118 million in nationwide raids in June.

Most of the facilities in Malaysia were illegal and lacked environmental safeguards, said SiPeng Wong, of Malaysia's Center to Combat Corruption & Cronyism.

Exporting e-waste from rich nations to developing nations strains local facilities, overwhelms efforts to manage domestic waste and is a form of “waste colonialism,” she said. □

DEEPFAKES:

Is Seeing Still Believing?

The viral spread of manipulated videos, often involving AI, is forcing people to distrust what they see and hear.



THE PHONE rings. It is the U.S. Secretary of State calling. Or is it?

For Washington insiders, seeing and hearing is no longer believing, thanks to a spate of recent incidents involving deepfakes impersonating top officials in President Donald Trump's administration.

Digital fakes are becoming more widespread for corporate America, too, as criminal gangs and hackers associated with adversaries including North Korea use synthetic video and audio to impersonate CEOs and low-level job candidates to gain access to critical systems or business secrets.

Thanks to advances in artificial intelligence, creating realistic deepfakes is easier than ever, causing security problems for governments, businesses and private individuals and making trust the most valuable currency of the digital age.

Responding to the challenge may require laws, better digital literacy and technical solutions that fight AI with more AI.

"As humans, we are remarkably susceptible to deception," said Vijay Balasubramaniyan, CEO and founder of the tech firm Pindrop Security. But he believes solutions to the challenge of deepfakes may be within reach: "We are going to fight back."

This summer, someone used AI to create a deepfake of Secretary of State Marco Rubio in an attempt to reach out to foreign ministers, a U.S. senator and a governor over text, voice mail and the Signal messaging app. In May, someone impersonated Mr. Trump's chief of staff, Susie Wiles.

Another phony version of Mr. Rubio had popped up in a deepfake earlier this year, saying he wanted to cut off Ukraine's access to Elon Musk's Starlink

internet service. Ukraine's government later rebutted the false claim.

The national security implications are huge: People who think they are chatting with Mr. Rubio or Ms. Wiles, for instance, might discuss sensitive information about diplomatic negotiations or military strategy.

"You're either trying to extract sensitive secrets or competitive information or you're going after access, to an email server or other sensitive network," Kinny Chan, CEO of the cybersecurity firm QiD, said of the possible motivations.

Synthetic media can also aim to alter behavior. Last year, Democratic voters in New Hampshire received a robocall urging them not to vote in the state's upcoming primary. The voice on the call sounded suspiciously like then-President Joe Biden but was actually created using AI.

Their ability to deceive makes AI deepfakes a potent weapon for foreign actors. Both Russia and China have used disinformation and propaganda directed at Americans as a way of undermining trust in democratic alliances and institutions.

Steven Kramer, the political consultant who admitted sending the fake Biden robocalls, said he wanted to send a message of the dangers deepfakes pose to the American political system. Mr. Kramer was acquitted in June of charges of voter suppression and impersonating a candidate.

“I did what I did for \$500,” Mr. Kramer said. “Can you imagine what would happen if the Chinese government decided to do this?”

Scammers Target the Financial Industry

The greater availability and sophistication of the programs mean deepfakes are increasingly used for corporate espionage and garden variety fraud.

“The financial industry is right in the crosshairs,” said Jennifer Ewbank, a former deputy director of the CIA who worked on cybersecurity and digital threats. “Even individuals who know each other have been convinced to transfer vast sums of money.”

In the context of corporate espionage, they can be used to impersonate CEOs asking employees to hand over passwords or routing numbers.

Deepfakes can also allow scammers to apply for jobs—and even perform them—under an assumed or fake identity. For some, this is a way to access sensitive networks, to steal secrets or to install ransomware. Others just want the work and may be working a few similar jobs at different companies at the same time.

Authorities in the U.S. have said that thousands of North Koreans with information technology skills have been dispatched to live abroad using stolen identities to obtain jobs at tech firms in the U.S. and elsewhere. The workers get access to company networks as well as a paycheck. In some cases, the workers install ransomware that can be later used to extort even more money.

The schemes have generated billions of dollars for the North Korean government.

Within three years, as many as one in four job applications is expected to be fake, according to research from Adaptive Security, a cybersecurity company.

“We’ve entered an era where anyone with a laptop and access to an open-source model can convincingly impersonate a real person,” said Brian Long, Adaptive’s CEO. “It’s no longer about hacking systems—it’s about hacking trust.”

Experts Deploy AI to Fight AI

Researchers, public policy experts and technology companies are now investigating the best ways to address the economic, political and social challenges posed by deepfakes.

New regulations could require tech companies to do more to identify, label and potentially remove deepfakes on their platforms. Lawmakers could also impose greater penalties on those who use digital technology to deceive others—if they can be caught.

Greater investments in digital literacy could also boost people’s immunity to online deception by teaching them ways to spot fake media and avoid falling prey to scammers.

The best tool for catching AI may be another AI program, one trained to sniff out the tiny flaws in deepfakes that would go unnoticed by a person.

Systems like Pindrop’s analyze millions of datapoints in any person’s speech to quickly identify irregularities. The system can be used during job interviews or other video conferences to detect if the person is using voice cloning software, for instance.

Similar programs may one day be commonplace, running in the background as people chat with colleagues and loved ones online. Someday, deepfakes may go the way of email spam, a technological challenge that once threatened to upend the usefulness of email, said Mr. Balasubramaniyan, Pindrop’s CEO.

“You can take the defeatist view and say we’re going to be subservient to disinformation,” he said. “But that’s not going to happen.”

Yet these efforts would only address the *effects* of deepfakes. Addressing the underlying *cause* is much more difficult.

Nothing New

In the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes, King Solomon stated: “The thing that has been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun” (1:9).

Though Solomon never saw a video, let alone one created with Sora, Adobe Firefly or other AI tools, during his time ruling ancient Israel, deepfakes are just the latest iteration of a long history of people deceiving others.

The world’s first photograph was taken in 1826. Only 20 years later, a person in a photo negative was painted over and subsequently blocked from the printed image. Throughout the rest of the 19th century, wealthy clients and magazine editors retouched images with increasing sophistication.

Image editing started out with good intentions. “Most of the earliest manipulated photographs were attempts to compensate for the new medium’s technical limitations—specifically, its inability to depict the world as it appears to the naked eye,” Mia Fineman, an assistant curator of photography at the Met, said in an interview with *PBS*.

In most cases, manipulation was used to make the image “look the way it felt” rather than to deceive. Yet over time, these techniques began to be used to tell a different story than what really happened.

A famous example is a cut-out of Abraham Lincoln’s face from an 1860 photograph of him pasted onto the body of Vice President John Calhoun in an 1852 engraving. The composite image, which portrayed the 16th president wearing a robe in a near-Napoleonic pose, circulated during a wave of heroic-style pictures of the president after he was assassinated. For a century, no one noticed the image was fake.

Photoshop computer software debuted in 1987 and ushered in a new era of deceptive image manipulation. With a computer and the right software, anyone could change images. Advertisers, publishers and propaganda machines churned out so many digitally altered images that the term “photoshop” came to refer to any photo manipulation.

Enter deepfakes, which have become more difficult to decipher over a handful of years. “Presently, there are slight visual aspects that are off if you look closer, anything from the ears or eyes not matching to fuzzy borders of the face or too smooth skin to lighting and shadows,” Peter Singer, cybersecurity and defense strategist at the New America think tank, stated to *CNBC*.

But the “tells” are becoming harder to find as the technology advances, Mr. Singer said.

Think of generative AI photos and videos. What started out as primitive media that most people could immediately tell was not real has now advanced to a much more lifelike state. AI videos regularly go viral, with those sharing them on platforms like Facebook, TikTok and X not realizing they were fake.

One example is the “AI homeless man prank.” According to *The Hill*, “An AI-driven TikTok trend is resulting in 911 calls by panicked people who think a man has broken into their homes. The prank uses artificial intelligence to create a picture or video of a ‘homeless man’ entering a person’s home, going through their fridge, or lying in their bed. The prankster sends the fake video to a loved one, who thinks the convincing images are real. Police departments in at least four states have received calls for reported home intrusions only to find out the ‘intruder’ was an AI-generated person...”

While many may think they would not be fooled by a fake video or phone call, as technology advances, it will become harder to avoid deception.

Understanding the Danger

Every tool that mankind has developed can be used for good or evil.

DEEPAKE MEDIA SCAMS



Scams targeting Americans are surging.



Since 2020, the FBI has received **4.2 million+ reports of fraud.**
That's **\$50.5 billion in losses.**

Imposter scams in particular are on the rise in the age of artificial intelligence (AI). Criminals are using deepfakes, or media that is generated or manipulated by AI, to gain your trust and scam you out of your hard-earned money.

Deepfakes can be altered images, videos or audio. They may depict people you know — including friends and family — or public figures including celebrities, government officials and law enforcement.

HOW TO DETECT A DEEPAKE



LOOK FOR INCONSISTENCIES:

- Are any of the facial features blurry or distorted?
- Does the person blink too much or too little?
- Do the hair and teeth look real?
- Are the audio and video out of sync?
- Is the voice tone flat or unnatural?
- Does the visual show odd or unnatural shadows or lighting?

The internet has allowed for instant communication, online schooling and access to a plethora of do-it-yourself videos. Yet it also allows for the intentional spread of misinformation, the hacking and stealing of personal information, and for pushing extremist ideals abroad.

Similarly, some deepfake videos are harmless. They can be used for creativity, humor and satire, and if they are clearly labeled as AI up front, do not mislead people. But more often than not, they are used as “a perfect weapon for purveyors of fake news

who want to influence everything from stock prices to elections,” an MIT technology report stated.

This is contributing to a larger trend of distrust among Americans toward what they see and hear. According to *Gallup*, “Americans’ confidence in the mass media has edged down to a new low, with just 28% expressing a ‘great deal’ or ‘fair amount’ of trust in newspapers, television and radio to report the news fully, accurately and fairly. This is down from 31% last year and 40% five years ago.” Deepfakes only fuel this perception.

TIPS TO STAY SAFE



STOP AND THINK. Is someone trying to scare you or pressure you into sending money or sharing personal information?



VERIFY the legitimacy of people and requests by using trusted numbers, official websites and online reverse image/video search tools.



CREATE CODEWORDS or phrases with loved ones to confirm identities.



LIMIT YOUR DIGITAL FOOTPRINT. Photos, voice clips and videos can be used to train deepfake models.



NEVER REPOST videos or images without verifying the source.

RED FLAGS OF A DEEPAKE SCAM



Unexpected requests for money, passwords, personal information or secrecy.



Emotional manipulation involving fear or urgency.



Uncharacteristic communication from someone you know, especially over text, phone or video.

REPORT SCAMS



To your local police



To the FBI at IC3.Gov



To your bank if you sent money



While some amount of skepticism can be healthy, the problem is that many lack the mistrust needed to see through deception. Even when viewers know that videos are altered, the deception often still works. People are inclined to believe what they *want* to believe.

The research organization RAND Corporation reported: “Deepfakes play to our weaknesses,” explains Jennifer Kavanagh, a political scientist at the RAND Corporation and coauthor of ‘Truth Decay,’ a 2018 RAND report about the diminishing role of facts and data in public discourse. When we see

a doctored video that looks utterly real, she says, ‘it’s really hard for our brains to disentangle whether that’s true or false.’ And the internet being what it is, there are any number of online scammers, partisan zealots, state-sponsored hackers and other bad actors eager to take advantage of that fact.”

People who cannot trust what they see are faced with three options: Accept the deception, try to ignore it, or spend time analyzing news from multiple sources to discern the truth. Daunted by the effort required to find truth, many unwittingly give in to deception.

Thousands of years before the discovery from these polls, a seldom-quoted verse in the Bible sums up this human tendency: “The heart is *deceitful above all things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9).

Lies and deception have been a way of life for mankind for millennia, individually and on a national, corporate and political scale. This verse also shows that deceit is deeply rooted within a person’s heart. It is not simply an external problem—it lies at the core of human nature. People are naturally susceptible to deceit. Each individual must fight this tendency in order to find the truth.

With the advance of deepfake technology in a world where deceit is already so rampant, a time has come where facts can be completely distorted and “truth is fallen in the street, and equity [meaning straightforwardness, integrity, truth, or right] cannot enter. Yes, truth fails” (Isa. 59:14-15).

How many times have you found yourself at a loss to locate *any* source of truth? Looking at the media landscape, it becomes easy to say: “Truth fails.”

But there is a place you can turn to find truth. God’s Word—the Bible—states that it is truth (John 17:17 and II Tim. 2:15). God says that He cannot lie (Titus 1:2) and that His words will not pass away (Matt. 24:35). In a turbulent time when you are not sure who to believe, God’s Word provides comfort and stability on which you can rely.

You do not have to remain unsure whether to take Scripture at face value—you can actually **PROVE** it. Our booklet *Bible Authority...Can It Be Proven?*, available free at rcg.org/bacibp, shows that you can determine, beyond all doubt, that the Bible is truth.

We at *The Real Truth* are here to help. This magazine uses God’s Word as the bedrock foundation from which to view and understand world events, bringing you the truth hidden beneath the deception that is so common today.

For more, read our articles “Weathering the Misinformation Age” and “Should I Be Worried About AI?” on our website, rcg.org/realtruth. □

GEN Z

Continued from page 9

themselves as “Gen Z,” defined as those born roughly between 1996 and 2010—the first generation to grow up entirely in the internet age.

“What connects these youth-led protests is a shared sense that traditional political systems aren’t responsive to their generation’s concerns, whether that’s corruption, climate change, or economic inequality. Protest then becomes the logical outlet when institutional channels feel blocked,” said Sam Nadel, director of Social Change Lab, a UK-based nonprofit that researches protests and social movements.

Protesters Take Cues From Each Other
Though their specific demands differ, most of these protests have been sparked by government overreach or neglect. Some have also confronted harsh treatment by security forces and brutal repression.

In Morocco, a leaderless collective called Gen Z 212—named after Morocco’s dialing code—has taken to the streets to demand better public services and increased spending on health and education. In Peru, protests over a pension law exploded into broader demands, including action to tackle rising insecurity and widespread corruption in the government. In Indonesia, deadly protests have erupted over lawmakers’ perks and the cost of living, forcing the president to replace key economic and security ministers.

The most widely recognized movement to be dubbed as a “Gen Z” protest was a deadly uprising in Nepal that culminated with the resignation of the prime minister in September. Protesters drew inspiration from successful anti-government movements elsewhere in South Asia—Sri Lanka in 2022 and Bangladesh in 2024—which led to the ouster of incumbent regimes.

In Madagascar in turn, protesters say they were particularly inspired

by the movements in Nepal and Sri Lanka.

The protests began against regular water and electricity cuts but quickly morphed into wider discontent, as demonstrators called for the president and other ministers to step down. On October 15, Madagascar’s military coup leader said he is “taking the position of president.”

Uniting Behind a Manga Pirate Flag

Across multiple countries, a singular pop culture symbol has emerged: A black flag showing a grinning skull and crossbones wearing a straw hat. The flag comes from a cult Japanese manga and anime series called “One Piece,” which follows a crew of pirates as they take on corrupt governments.

In Nepal, protesters hung the same flag on the gates of the Singha Durbar, the seat of the Nepalese government, and on ministries, many of which were torched in protests. It was also hoisted by crowds in Indonesia, the Philippines, Morocco and Madagascar.

In early October in the Peruvian capital, Lima, 27-year-old electrician David Tafur stood with the same flag in San Martin Square, now the stage for weekly protests.

“We’re fighting the same battle—against corrupt officials who, in our case, are also killers,” he said, recalling that President Dina Boluarte’s government held on to power since December 2022 despite more than 500 protests and the deaths of 50 civilians.

“In my case, it’s outrage over abuse of power, corruption, the deaths,” Mr. Tafur said, referring to the sharp rise in murders and extortion plaguing the South American country since 2017, amid new laws that have weakened efforts to fight crime.

Ms. Boluarte had been under investigation for months over various allegations including bribery and involvement in a deadly crackdown on protesters in 2022. She was replaced in early October by interim President Jose Jeri.

Mr. Tafur said that was not enough.

“The president is an ally of Congress and has to go,” he said.

Harnessing Social Media for Mobilization and Awareness

Many significant protests in the past, like Occupy Wall Street in 2011, the Arab Spring between 2010 and 2012, and the 2014 Umbrella Revolution in Hong Kong, have been led by younger people. While they also used the internet and social media for mass mobilization, the “Gen Z” protesters are taking it to another level.

“Digital platforms are powerful tools for information sharing and building connections, but the most effective movements often combine digital mobilization with traditional in-person organizing, as we’ve seen in these recent protests,” said Mr. Nadel from Social Change Lab.

Days before the deadly protests began in Nepal, the government announced a ban on most social media platforms for not complying with a registration deadline. Many young Nepalese viewed it as an attempt to silence them and began accessing social media sites through virtual private networks to evade detection.

Over the next few days, they used TikTok, Instagram and X to spotlight the lavish lifestyles of politicians’ children, highlighting disparities between Nepal’s rich and poor, and announce planned rallies and venues. Later, some of them also used the gaming chat platform Discord to suggest who to nominate as an interim leader for the country.

“Whatever movement happens, whether against corruption or injustice, it spreads through digital media. The same happened in Nepal. The changes that took place after the Gen Z protests in Nepal spread globally through digital platforms, influencing other countries as well,” said protester Yujan Rajbhandari.

He said the protests in Nepal awakened not only the youth but also other generations.

“We realized that we are global citizens and the digital space connects us all and plays a powerful role across the world,” Mr. Rajbhandari said. □

MAYFLOWER

Continued from page 15

New Israel

Beating overwhelming odds while crossing the Atlantic and surviving in the harsh new world, the Pilgrims clung to the belief that they were a kind of Old Testament Israel being guided out of Egypt into the Promised Land.

In his journal *The History of Plymouth Settlement*, William Bradford made the comparison clear: “Our fathers were Englishmen who came over the great ocean, and were ready to perish in the wilderness; but they cried unto the Lord, and He heard their voice, and looked on their adversity...When they wandered forth into the desert-wilderness, out of the way, and found no city to dwell in, both hungry and thirsty, their soul was overwhelmed in them.”

Yet this is not the last time ancient Israel would be tied to the budding nation.

Over 100 years later, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams proposed a seal for the new nation of the United States. It was to be an image of the ancient Israelites crossing the Red Sea with pharaoh chasing them and Moses standing on the other side. It would have included the motto, “Rebellion to Tyrants is Obedience to God.”

The Liberty Bell also bears an inscription from Moses’ book of Leviticus: “Proclaim LIBERTY throughout all the Land unto all the Inhabitants thereof” (25:10).

Moses, the human leader of the Israelites as they exited Egypt, is depicted several times in the U.S. Supreme Court, including on the eastern pediment of the building, holding two tablets. He also appears inside the courtroom, holding the Ten Commandments.

Connections to Old Testament Israel are laced throughout America’s political system, partially in a nod to its ancestors’ tendency to identify with it. But this fascination with an event nearly 3,500 years ago says a lot about America’s true identity—and its future.

Ancient History

To understand, we must realize that the Bible is more than a book of antiquity. It contains *two kinds* of history.

One is details of past events such as the Exodus story in which the Pilgrims found so much meaning. But another kind of history—that is, history written in advance—comprises one-third of the book.

Much of this *future history*, aka prophecy, is recorded of ancient Israel and has a lot to do with the nation that came from the Pilgrims.

Chapter 49 of the first book of the Bible, Genesis, reveals what would become of Israel’s 12 tribes in the “last days” or the far future (vs. 1). Each of them were to eventually grow into separate nations or set of nations.

The most extensive description belongs to the tribes of Joseph. The Bible states that his descendants would grow and spread beyond the territory allotted to them. “Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall” (49:22).

In addition, Joseph would become powerful and unstoppable in war: “The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him, but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob” (vs. 23-24).

It would also become the wealthiest nations the world had ever seen, given “blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb. The blessings of your father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph...” (vs. 25-26).

These blessings that were pronounced on Joseph were then passed on to his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. Each was given a unique promise that would make them distinct on the world scene millennia later.

Fulfilling a Promise

Nations are families grown large. Many modern nations can trace their lineage

back to one of the 12 tribes of Israel, each tribe coming from one of the sons of the patriarch Jacob (also named Israel).

The Bible provides clues as to where these nations exist today.

David C. Pack, editor-in-chief of *The Real Truth* magazine, explained which countries these tribes of Israel eventually became in his book *America and Britain in Prophecy*.

Mr. Pack explained the identity of Joseph’s sons: “the great, wealthy, dominant *single* ‘nation,’ of Genesis 35:11, would descend and grow from Manasseh. The even greater, wealthier, more dominant ‘company of nations,’ here called a ‘multitude of nations,’ would spring from Ephraim.”

The greatest nation and company of nations or empire—what do these sound like? History reveals there is only one answer!

The British Empire is the greatest empire the world has ever seen. Britain explored, conquered, and colonized every continent, including Antarctica. The British Empire, at its peak in 1920, covered over a quarter of the entire planet. For a time, the sun did not set on the globe-spanning empire.

The United States is undoubtedly the most powerful single nation in history. It rose as a new country in 1776 to become so powerful that it unilaterally brought the “Pax Americana” to the world after 1945. The U.S. was instrumental in turning the tide of war in both world wars.

The success of the U.S. and Britain clearly show that God finally gave the promised blessings of Abraham to his descendants.

The Pilgrims believed they were establishing a New Israel. What they did not realize is they had established a colony of the tribe of Manasseh—foretold to explode in riches, power and fame!

America and Britain are just two of the tribes of Israel. Read *America and Britain in Prophecy* at rcg.org/aabibp to learn the identity of the others and what God has planned for them. □

How Will the Next UN Chief Be Chosen and Who Wants the Job?

A new United Nations Secretary-General will be elected next year for a five-year term starting on January 1, 2027.

Here is how the successor to current UN chief Antonio Guterres will be chosen.

When Does the Process Start?

The race will formally start when the 15-member Security Council and the president of the 193-member General Assembly send a joint letter soliciting nominations.

That letter is due to be sent by the end of the year. A candidate has to be nominated by a UN member state.

The job traditionally rotates among regions, but when Mr. Guterres—who is from Portugal—was elected in 2016, it was supposed to be Eastern Europe's turn. Next on the list is Latin America; however, some diplomats expect candidates from other regions.

What Is the Process?

The 15-member Security Council will formally recommend a candidate to the 193-member General Assembly for election as the 10th UN secretary-general later next year.

The Security Council will hold secret ballots—referred to as a straw poll—until a consensus is reached on a candidate. The choices council members are given for each candidate in the straw poll are: encourage, discourage or no opinion.

Ultimately, the five permanent veto-wielding council members—the United States, Russia, Britain, China and France—must agree on a candidate.

The ballots for the veto powers in the straw poll are traditionally a different color to those of the 10 elected

members. When Mr. Guterres was chosen in 2016 to be recommended to the General Assembly, it took six straw polls for the Security Council to reach agreement.

The Security Council then adopts a resolution, traditionally behind closed doors, recommending an appointment to the General Assembly. The resolution needs nine votes in favor and no vetoes to pass.

The General Assembly's approval of the appointment of a secretary-general has long been seen as a rubber stamp.

How Transparent Is the Process?

The General Assembly, in a resolution adopted in September 2025, said each candidate should provide a vision statement when they are formally nominated and be given the opportunity to present it. It said the vision statement should also be publicized on a dedicated United Nations web page.

The Assembly said each candidate should disclose their sources of funding and that any candidates who already hold a UN position “should consider suspending their work in the United Nations system during the campaign, with a view to avoiding any conflict of interest that may arise from their functions and adjacent advantages.”

What Does the Secretary-General do?

The UN Charter calls the secretary-general the “chief administrative officer” of the world body. The UN website describes the role as “equal parts diplomat and advocate, civil servant and chief executive officer.”

Mr. Guterres currently oversees more than 30,000 civilian staff and 11 peacekeeping operations with around 60,000 troops and police. The core annual United Nations budget is \$3.7 billion, while the peacekeeping budget is \$5.6 billion.

Since the power to authorize military force or sanctions rests with the Security Council, the UN chief has little more than a bully pulpit. Many diplomats say the five council veto powers prefer a “secretary” rather than a “general.” □



The United Nations logo adorns a window at UN headquarters in New York City (Sept. 18, 2025).

REUTERS/JEENAH MOON

‘Nightmare Bacteria’ Cases Are Increasing in the U.S.



This 2019 illustration provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention depicts carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae (CRE) bacteria.

STEPHANIE ROSSOW/CDC VIA AP

Infection rates from drug-resistant “nightmare bacteria” rose almost 70 percent between 2019 and 2023, according to a report from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention scientists.

Bacteria that are difficult to treat due to the so-called NDM gene primarily drove the increase, CDC researchers wrote in an article published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*. Only two antibiotics work against those infections, and the drugs are expensive and must be administered through an IV, researchers said.

Bacteria with the gene were once considered exotic, linked to a small number of patients who received medical care overseas. Though the numbers are still small, the rate of U.S. cases jumped more than fivefold in recent years, the researchers reported.

“The rise of NDMs in the U.S. is a grave danger and very worrisome,”

said David Weiss, an Emory University infectious diseases researcher, in an email.

It is likely many people are unrecognized carriers of the drug-resistant bacteria, which could lead to community spread, the CDC scientists said.

That may play out in doctors’ offices across the country, as infections long considered routine—like urinary tract infections—could become harder to treat, said Dr. Maroya Walters, one of the report’s authors.

Antimicrobial resistance occurs when germs such as bacteria and fungi gain the power to fight off the drugs designed to kill them. The misuse of antibiotics was a big reason for the rise—unfinished or unnecessary prescriptions that did not kill the germs made them stronger.

In recent years, the CDC has drawn attention to “nightmare bacteria” resistant to a wide range of antibiotics.

That includes carbapenems, a class of antibiotics considered a last resort for treatment of serious infections.

Researchers drew data from 29 states that do the necessary testing and reporting of carbapenem-resistant bacteria.

They counted 4,341 cases of carbapenem-resistant bacterial infections from those states in 2023, with 1,831 of them the NDM variety. The researchers did not say how many of the infected people died.

The rate of carbapenem-resistant infections rose from just under 2 per 100,000 people in 2019 to more than 3 per 100,000 in 2023—an increase of 69 percent. But the rate of NDM cases rose from around 0.25 to about 1.35—an increase of 460 percent, the authors said.

A researcher not involved in the study said the increase is probably related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

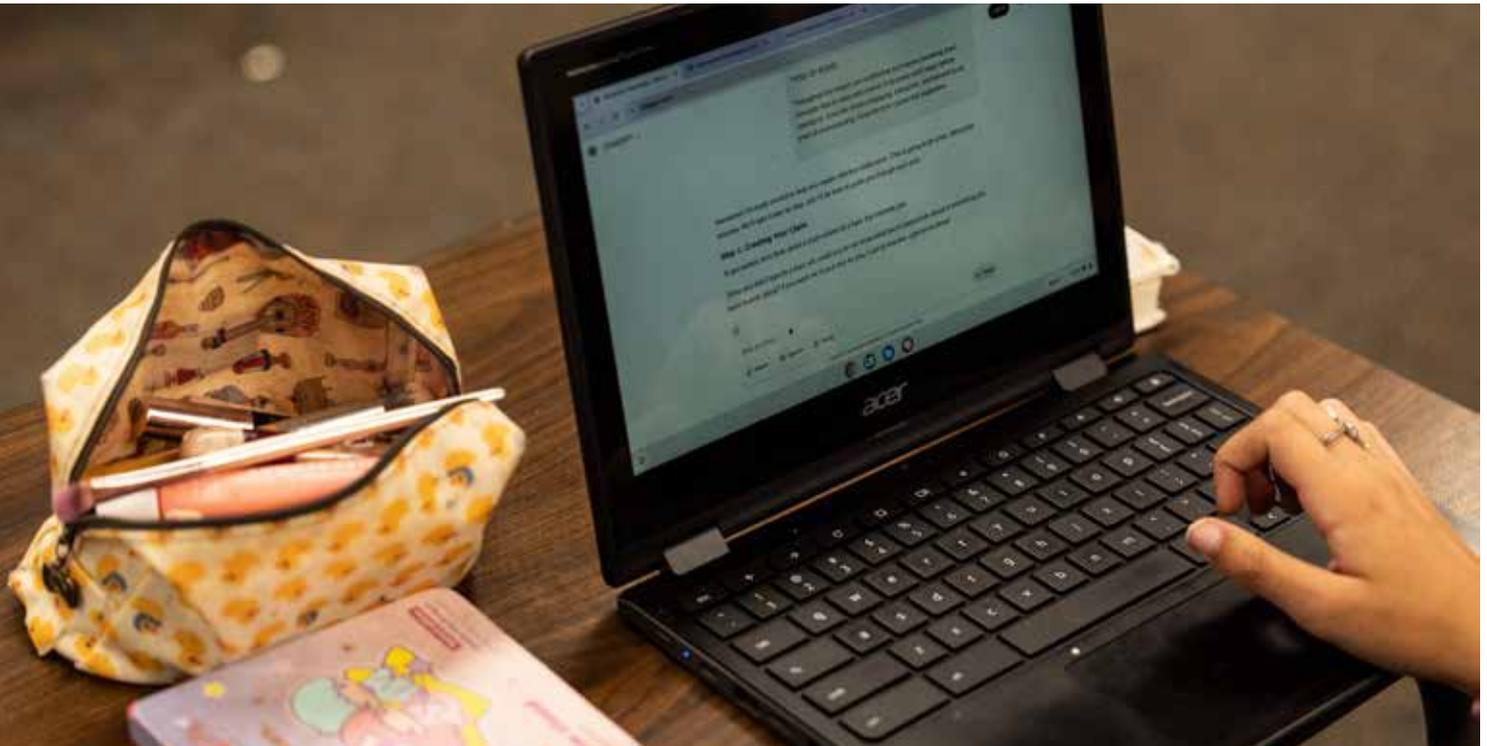
“We know that there was a huge surge in antibiotic use during the pandemic, so this likely is reflected in increasing drug resistance,” said Dr. Jason Burnham, a Washington University researcher, in an email.

The CDC’s count is only a partial picture.

Many states are not fully testing and reporting cases. Even in states that do, cases tend to be among hospital patients sick enough to warrant special testing. Many hospitals also are not able to do the testing needed to detect certain forms of genetic resistance.

The CDC researchers did not have data from some of the most populous states, including California, Florida, New York and Texas, which means the absolute number of U.S. infections “is definitely underestimated,” Dr. Burnham said.

This is not the first study to report a rise. A CDC report published in June noted an increase in NDM cases in New York City between 2019 and 2024. □



A student types a prompt into ChatGPT on a Chromebook during an English class at Valencia High School in Santa Clarita, California (Aug. 27, 2025).

AP/JAE C. HONG

The Rise of AI Tools Forces Schools to Reconsider What Counts as Cheating

The book report is now a thing of the past. Take-home tests and essays are becoming obsolete.

Student use of artificial intelligence has become so prevalent, high school and college educators say, that to assign writing outside of the classroom is like asking students to cheat.

“The cheating is off the charts. It’s the worst I’ve seen in my entire career,” says Casey Cuny, who has taught English for 23 years. Educators are no longer wondering if students will outsource schoolwork to AI chatbots. “Anything you send home, you have to assume is being AId.”

The question now is how schools can adapt, because many of the teaching and assessment tools that have been used

for generations are no longer effective. As AI technology rapidly improves and becomes more entwined with daily life, it is transforming how students learn and study and how teachers teach, and it is creating new confusion over what constitutes academic dishonesty.

“We have to ask ourselves, what is cheating?” says Mr. Cuny, a 2024 recipient of California’s Teacher of the Year award. “Because I think the lines are getting blurred.”

Mr. Cuny’s students at Valencia High School in southern California now do most writing in class. He monitors student laptop screens from his desktop, using software that lets him “lock down” their screens or block access to certain sites. He is also inte-

grating AI into his lessons and teaching students how to use AI as a study aid “to get kids learning with AI instead of cheating with AI.”

In rural Oregon, high school teacher Kelly Gibson has made a similar shift to in-class writing. She is also incorporating more verbal assessments to have students talk through their understanding of assigned reading.

“I used to give a writing prompt and say, ‘In two weeks, I want a five-paragraph essay,’” says Ms. Gibson. “These days, I can’t do that. That’s almost begging teenagers to cheat.”

Take, for example, a once typical high school English assignment: Write an essay that explains the relevance of social class in “The Great

Gatsby.” Many students say their first instinct is now to ask ChatGPT for help “brainstorming.” Within seconds, ChatGPT yields a list of essay ideas, plus examples and quotes to back them up. The chatbot ends by asking if it can do more: “Would you like help writing any part of the essay? I can help you draft an introduction or outline a paragraph!”

Students Are Uncertain When AI Usage Is Out of Bounds

Students say they often turn to AI with good intentions for things like research, editing or help reading difficult texts. But AI offers unprecedented temptation, and it is sometimes hard to know where to draw the line.

College sophomore Lily Brown, a psychology major at an East Coast liberal arts school, relies on ChatGPT to help outline essays because she struggles putting the pieces together herself. ChatGPT also helped her through a freshman philosophy class, where assigned reading “felt like a different language” until she read AI summaries of the texts.

“Sometimes I feel bad using ChatGPT to summarize reading, because I wonder, is this cheating? Is helping me form outlines cheating? If I write an essay in my own words and ask how to improve it, or when it starts to edit my essay, is that cheating?”

Her class syllabi say things like: “Don’t use AI to write essays and to form thoughts,” she says, but that leaves a lot of grey area. Students say they often shy away from asking teachers for clarity because admitting to any AI use could flag them as a cheater.

Schools tend to leave AI policies to teachers, which often means that rules vary widely within the same school. Some educators, for example, welcome the use of Grammarly.com, an AI-powered writing assistant, to check grammar. Others forbid it, noting the tool also offers to rewrite sentences.

“Whether you can use AI or not depends on each classroom. That can get confusing,” says Valencia 11th grader Jolie Lahey. She credits Mr. Cuny with teaching her sophomore English class a variety of AI skills like how to upload study guides to ChatGPT and have the chatbot quiz them, and then explain problems they got wrong.

But this year, her teachers have strict “No AI” policies. “It’s such a helpful tool. And if we’re not allowed to use it that just doesn’t make sense,” Ms. Lahey says. “It feels outdated.”

Schools Are Introducing Guidelines, Gradually

Many schools initially banned use of AI after ChatGPT launched in late 2022. But views on the role of artificial intelligence in education have shifted dramatically. The term “AI literacy” has become a buzzword of the back-to-school season, with a focus on how to balance the strengths of AI with its risks and challenges.

Over the summer, several colleges and universities convened their AI task forces to draft more detailed guidelines or provide faculty with new instructions.

The University of California, Berkeley emailed all faculty new AI guidance that instructs them to “include a clear statement on their syllabus about course expectations” around AI use. The guidance offered language for three sample syllabus statements—for courses that require AI, ban AI in and out of class, or allow some AI use.

“In the absence of such a statement, students may be more likely to use these technologies inappropriately,” the email said, stressing that AI is “creating new confusion about what might constitute legitimate methods for completing student work.”

Carnegie Mellon University has seen a huge uptick in academic responsibility violations due to AI, but often

students are not aware they have done anything wrong, says Rebekah Fitzsimmons, chair of the AI faculty advising committee at the university’s Heinz College of Information Systems and Public Policy.

For example, one student who is learning English wrote an assignment in his native language and used DeepL, an AI-powered translation tool, to translate his work to English. But he did not realize the platform also altered his language, which was flagged by an AI detector.

Enforcing academic integrity policies has become more complicated, since use of AI is hard to spot and even harder to prove, Ms. Fitzsimmons said. Faculty are allowed flexibility when they believe a student has unintentionally crossed a line, but are now more hesitant to point out violations because they do not want to accuse students unfairly. Students worry that if they are falsely accused, there is no way to prove their innocence.

Over the summer, Ms. Fitzsimmons helped draft detailed new guidelines for students and faculty that strive to create more clarity. Faculty have been told a blanket ban on AI “is not a viable policy” unless instructors make changes to the way they teach and assess students. A lot of faculty are doing away with take-home exams. Some have returned to pen and paper tests in class, she said, and others have moved to “flipped classrooms,” where homework is done in class.

Emily DeJeu, who teaches communication courses at Carnegie Mellon’s business school, has eliminated writing assignments as homework and replaced them with in-class quizzes done on laptops in “a lockdown browser” that blocks students from leaving the quiz screen.

“To expect an 18-year-old to exercise great discipline is unreasonable,” Ms. DeJeu said. “That’s why it’s up to instructors to put up guardrails.” □

‘Children Are Bound to Die’: Corruption, Aid Cuts and Violence Fuel a Hunger Crisis in South Sudan

JUBA, South Sudan (AP) – At 14 months, Adut Duor should be walking. Instead, his spine juts through his skin and his legs dangle like sticks from his mother’s lap in a South Sudan hospital. At half the size of a healthy baby his age, he is unable to walk.

Adut’s mother, Ayan, could not breastfeed her fifth child, a struggle shared by the 1.1 million pregnant and lactating women who are malnourished in the east African country.

“If I had a blessed life and money to feed him, he would get better,” Ayan said at a state hospital in Bor, 124 miles from the capital, Juba.

A recent UN-backed report projects that about 2.3 million children under 5 in South Sudan now require treatment for acute malnutrition, with over 700,000 of those in severe condition. The report attributes the rising numbers to renewed conflict in the northern counties and reduced humanitarian assistance.

Independent since 2011, South Sudan has been crippled by violence and poor governance. United Nations investigators recently accused authorities of looting billions of dollars in public funds, as 9 million of South Sudan’s almost 12 million people rely on humanitarian assistance. Now, funding cuts, renewed violence, entrenched corruption and other issues are converging to deepen the unfolding hunger crisis.

Funding Cuts

In the basic ward at the hospital in Bor, dozens of mothers cradle frail children. Malnutrition cases have more than doubled this year, a crisis worsened by recent staff cuts. Funding cuts this spring forced Save the Children to

lay off 180 aid staff, including 15 nutrition workers who were withdrawn from Bor in May.

Funding cuts have also hit supplies of ready-to-use therapeutic food, RUTF, the peanut paste that has been a lifeline for millions of children around the world. USAID once covered half global production, but Action Against Hunger’s Country Director Clement Papy Nkubizi warns stocks are now running dangerously low.

“Twenty-two percent of children admitted for malnutrition at Juba’s largest children’s hospital have died of hunger,” Mr. Nkubizi said. “Triangulating this to the field...there are many children who are bound to die.”

He explained that families now walk for hours to reach support after the organization closed 28 malnutrition centers. UNICEF says more than 800 (66 percent) of malnutrition sites nationwide report reduced staffing.

Violence Hampering Aid Delivery

Violence in South Sudan’s northern states has compounded the crisis, blocking humanitarian access and driving hundreds of thousands from their farmland.

Although a 2018 peace deal ended the country’s five-year civil war, renewed clashes between the national army and militia groups raise fears of a return to large-scale conflict. In Upper Nile State, where the violence has resurged, malnutrition levels are the highest.

The UN said intensified fighting along the White Nile River meant no supplies reached the area for over a month in May, plunging more than 60,000 already malnourished children into deeper hunger.

In June, the South Sudanese government told *The Associated Press* it turned to U.S. company Fogbow for airdrops to respond to needs in areas hit by violence. Although the company claims to be a humanitarian force, UN workers question the departure from the established system.

Global humanitarian group Action Against Hunger had to abandon warehouses and operations in Fangak, Jonglei State, after an aerial bombing of a Doctors Without Borders hospital left seven dead in May.

“Our sites in these locations are now also flooded, submerged as we speak,” said Mr. Nkubizi.

Around 1.6 million people are at risk of displacement from flooding, as submerged farmland and failed harvests compound hunger in the climate-vulnerable country.

“Malnutrition is not just about food insecurity—cholera outbreaks, malaria and poor sanitation compound the problem,” said Shaun Hughes, the World Food Program’s regional emergency coordinator.

With more than 60 percent of the population defecating in the open, flooding turns contaminated water into a major health threat.

No Nutritional Support

At Maban County Hospital near the northern border with Sudan, 8-month-old Moussa Adil cries with hunger in his mother’s arms.

Moussa’s nutritionist, Butros Khalil, says there is no supplementary milk for the frail child that evening. The hospital received its last major consignment in March.

U.S. funding cuts forced international aid groups to reduce support to



Top, a man sells sorghum on the street from an old USAID bag and tin in Maban, South Sudan (Aug. 20, 2025). Bottom, women line up outside a hybrid distribution site to collect food, cash handouts and high-energy bars for children, in Maban (Aug. 20, 2025).

GUY PETERSON/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

this hospital. Mr. Khalil and dozens of colleagues have not been paid for six months. “Now we are just eating leaves from the bush,” he says, describing how the exorbitant cost of living makes it impossible to feed his 20-person family.

The neighboring war in Sudan has disrupted trade and driven up the cost of basic goods. Combined with soaring inflation, the economic pressure means

92 percent of South Sudanese live below the poverty line—a 12 percent increase from last year, according to the African Development Bank.

“People pull their kids out of school, they sell their cattle just to make ends meet, then they become the hungry people,” said Mr. Hughes.

Action Against Hunger says it had to halt school feeding after U.S. funding

was withdrawn, raising fears of children slipping from moderate to dangerous hunger levels.

In Maban’s camps near the Sudan border, refugees say World Food Program cash and dry food handouts no longer cover basic needs. With rations halved and over half the area’s population removed from the eligibility list, many face hunger—some even consider returning to war-torn Sudan.

Critics say years of aid dependence have exposed South Sudan. The government allocates just 1.3 percent of its budget to health—far below the 15 percent target set by the World Health Organization, according to a recent UNICEF report. Meanwhile, 80 percent of the health care system is funded by foreign donors.

Corruption

The UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan recently said billions of dollars had been lost to corruption, as public officials diverted revenue. The government called the allegations “absurd.”

Committee member Barney Afako said leaders were “breaching international laws which oblige governments to apply maximum available resources to realize the rights to food, health and education.”

The Commission Chairperson, Yasmin Sooka, said the funds siphoned off by elites could have built schools, staffed hospitals and secured food for the South Sudanese people.

“Corruption is killing South Sudanese. It’s not incidental—it’s the engine of South Sudan’s collapse, hollowing out its economy, gutting institutions, fueling conflict, and condemning its people to hunger and preventable death,” she said.

As the international community warns of a worsening crisis, it has already reached the hospital floors of South Sudan and the frail frames of children like Moussa and Adut. □

