

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2026

THE

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REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



WHAT *THE YEAR* REVEALED



An architect working at a desk.
GETTY IMAGES

You Were Designed to Be Creative

Creativity is not exclusive to the famous painters, composers and inventors of history. Anyone can nurture and develop this trait.
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Front Cover: Top left, a man struggles in deep water as he carries a young child on his shoulders to board a migrant dinghy in the English Channel in Gravelines, France (Aug. 25, 2025). Top right, firefighters work as the Hughes Fire burns in Castaic, California (Jan. 22, 2025). Bottom left, cracked soil at Big Cypress National Preserve as the Florida Everglades experience a severe drought (May 19, 2025). Bottom right, a protester stands in the haze from a smoke grenade outside of a downtown U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility in Portland, Oregon (Oct. 4, 2025).

TOP LEFT, CARL COURT/GETTY IMAGES; TOP RIGHT, BRANDON BELL/GETTY IMAGES; BOTTOM LEFT, JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGES; BOTTOM RIGHT, SPENCER PLATT/GETTY IMAGES

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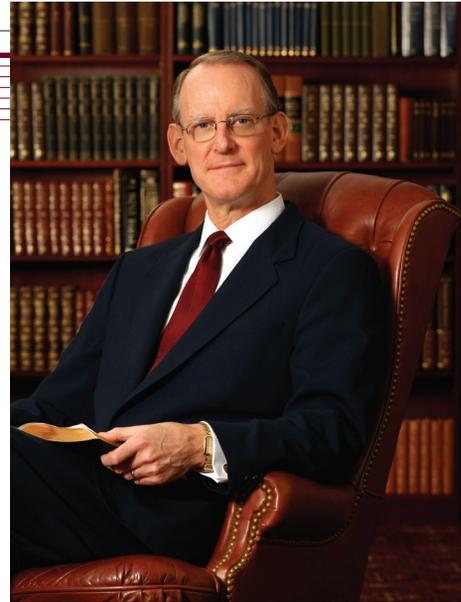
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PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



The 10 Laws That Could Change the World

WHEN GOD opened my mind to the truth in spring of 1966, I was shocked to learn He would one day set up a Kingdom *on Earth*. While my understanding of that Kingdom has grown, one thing that has all the while remained constant is that for a kingdom to exist—*any* kingdom!—it must have four components: leaders, territory, subjects and laws.

Lacking even one of these elements, a nation, country or kingdom—however classified—cannot function.

All-too-often vain attempts at securing the right *leaders*, who have the interests of a nation's citizens at heart, consume politics. So does the subject of immigration—*who* is allowed and not allowed into the *territory* that defines how big or small the nation is.

The fourth component—*law*—is just as important. I encourage you to read, either online or by ordering a free hardcopy, our book *The Ten Commandments – “Nailed to the Cross” or Required for Salvation?* It explains God's view of law—how important it is, and what it encompasses.

Psalm 19:7 makes a stark statement: “The law of the LORD is PERFECT...” It is not like man's laws—subject to endless interpretation, debate and revision. It does not, as is the case with the United States, require hundreds of lawmakers, or nine judges over thousands of others, to render decisions. None of this is what God intended and the horrible laws and judgments themselves prove why!

This confusion was on full display when six American lawmakers sought to sow confusion and division among U.S. servicemen and women by telling them to “refuse unlawful orders.”

Absent from their counsel was any kind of explanation of what *is* lawful versus unlawful.

After Moses' death, ancient Israel eventually reached a time when “every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judg. 21:25). We have entered a parallel time.

God's laws are different, not subject to debate. Jesus Christ explained the foundation of this law in Matthew 22. A Pharisee tempted Him, asking: “Master, which is the great commandment in the

law?” (vs. 36). Christ’s answer was, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (vs. 37-40).

What law was He citing? Just three chapters earlier, Jesus was asked *another* question: “Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?” (Matt. 19:16).

Jesus, in turn, asked His own plain, impossible-to-misunderstand follow-up question and gave a related statement: “Why call you Me good? There is none good but one, that is, God: but if you will enter into life, keep the commandments” (vs. 17). The natural question was *which* commandments (vs. 18).

To remove all doubt, Jesus listed several of the 10: “You shall do no murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and your mother: and, you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (vs. 18-19).

While the world today does not look to the Bible for answers, there will be a time in the near future when all mankind will read and keep these 10 basic laws outlined thousands of years ago in Exodus 20.

Imagine a world where everyone understands the nature of the true God and what He expects of people on Earth. All competing, false religions would be abolished. Everyone would understand “You shall have no other

gods before Me”—the first commandment.

Idols and graven images of every kind would be outlawed. This would include the thought-to-be “Christian cross,” which is not something God or Jesus Christ wants followers to venerate. Think. This was Christ’s instrument of death—not something we should look to! With all physical items of “worship” gone—across every religion—all people will understand and keep the second commandment: “You shall not make unto you any graven image, or any likeness of *any thing* that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD your God am a jealous God...”

Swearing of every form—taking God’s name in vain or lightly—will disappear (the third commandment).

All people, Christians of this world included, will come to understand the seventh-day *Saturday* Sabbath is God’s true day of rest. Everyone will “remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy”—the fourth commandment. This will be a sign not only between God and His “little flock” on Earth today, but a sign between He and all mankind in the future!

The elders in society are no longer respected. Children in great numbers no longer obey their parents. This will change. All will learn to respect and “honor their father and mother” (the fifth commandment), and live prosperous lives as a result!

The next three commandments are almost universally understood and accepted, but are far too often disobeyed! Killing will be outlawed (the sixth commandment). So will adultery and other sex-related sins (the seventh commandment). Thievery will not be permitted (the eighth commandment).

“Bearing false witness”—the ninth commandment—will no longer be allowed. Much of society today is not founded in truth. The lies that hurt others—sometimes even imprison others or otherwise destroy lives—will not be tolerated.

The culture of materialism has destroyed values in the Western world. Life is now about who can get the most—to the detriment of character. Growing numbers are never satisfied with what they have. All will learn not to covet (the 10th commandment). The apostle Paul learned this, too, explaining that “*Godliness with contentment is great gain*” (1 Tim. 6:6).

The world is oblivious to, or chooses to ignore, these 10 bedrock commands that *ensure* the abundant life God always intended all human beings to live. Yet *you* CAN keep these laws *now*—before God intervenes and *enforces* the way to peace, now just ahead!

As you consider reading *The Ten Commandments – “Nailed to the Cross” or Required for Salvation?*, and perhaps even attending God’s true Church where they are taught and kept, expand your mind and spend time imagining how different a commandment-keeping world will be! □



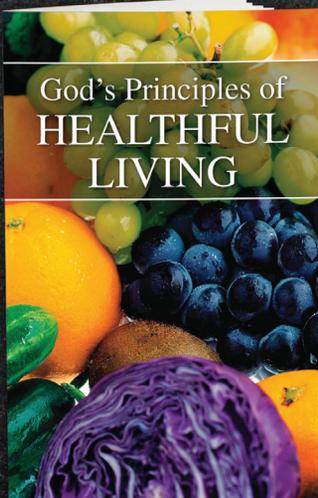
God Did Not Throw Out the Ten Commandments!

Order your free copy of our book *The Ten Commandments – “Nailed to the Cross” or Required for Salvation?* at rcg.org/syotc

Learn the Keys to Health

The human body was NOT designed to become ill and feel run-down! To learn how you can experience good health, read the booklet *God's Principles of Healthful Living*. It details guidelines from the Bible that, when applied, can reinvigorate your health.

Order your free copy today at rcg.org/glohl.



What 2025 **REVEALED**

A year of war, disaster, division and unrest tested the foundations of modern life. What stood—and what failed—revealed far more than headlines ever could.

BY SAMUEL C. BAXTER AND
GARRICK R. OXLEY

“IN A TIME of crisis, it’s so funny what you learn about yourself, in terms of what to save,” a Los Angeles resident told *People* after being forced to flee as wildfires tore through Southern California in the first days of 2025.

Evacuation orders came with little warning as the fires rapidly spread through dry hillsides and neighborhoods. There was no time for careful decisions. People left with whatever they could carry. Many reached instinctively for family photographs, children’s artwork and handwritten letters—things that could not be replaced.

Others left with nothing at all, focused only on getting loved ones to safety.

In the heat and confusion, something else surfaced: character. Neighbors knocked on doors to warn those who had not seen alerts. Some stayed longer than advised to help the elderly or guide strangers through smoke-filled streets. Firefighters pushed past exhaustion.



The fires caused real loss and hardship—the estimated cost of the damage is \$250 billion—but they also revealed a deeper truth about life. Trials and tragedy have a way of exposing what we are really made of and what truly matters.

The Bible explains how hardship works. The apostle Paul wrote that human lives and efforts are like materials used in construction—“gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble” (I Cor. 3:12). When testing comes, it burns away what is temporary and leaves what endures. “Every man’s work shall be made manifest...because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is” (vs. 13).

In moments of trial, the reality beneath the surface is laid bare. The heat of life reveals the truth.

And 2025 sure did have a lot of heat. Wars in Ukraine and Gaza pressed on into yet another year, leaving cities in ruins and tens of thousands dead. In Sudan, millions were driven from their homes as fighting deepened one of the world’s worst humanitarian crises. By summer, tensions in the Middle East flared sharply, with U.S. strikes on Iranian nuclear sites raising fears of wider war. Protests toppled governments in Nepal and Bulgaria. Record heatwaves scorched Europe. Monsoon floods across Asia swallowed villages and displaced millions.

The pace did not ease as the year closed. In Australia, a mass shooting at a crowded beach during Hannukah celebrations left many dead. In Syria, U.S. service members were killed amid renewed violence and extremist attacks. In Rhode Island, a shooting at Brown University devastated yet another school campus.

The last 12 months felt compressed, with events stacked tightly together applying pressure again and again. And as with the fires that opened the year, those events revealed lessons that are easy to miss in calmer times—truths about human nature, about the limits of institutions, about the world as it actually is.

Here is what 2025 revealed...

Page 5: Top left, a family pays respects at the scene of a terror attack in Manchester, England (Oct. 4, 2025). Top right, cars destroyed by the Eaton Fire in Altadena, California (Jan. 8, 2025). Bottom left, an aerial view of devastation in Gaza (Aug. 6, 2025). Bottom right, an ICE protester attends a rally in New York (June 14, 2025).

TOP LEFT, CHRISTOPHER FURLONG/GETTY IMAGES;
TOP RIGHT, JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES;
BOTTOM LEFT, JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES;
BOTTOM RIGHT, ALEX KENT/GETTY IMAGES

“IN MOMENTS OF TRIAL, THE REALITY BENEATH THE SURFACE IS LAID BARE. THE HEAT OF LIFE REVEALS THE TRUTH.”



A *FRACTURED* Republic

THE CALIFORNIA wildfires revealed more than the character or priorities of individuals—they exposed just how deeply divided the United States has become.

As flames spread, the White House publicly faulted state leadership, pointing to water management and land-use policies as failures that had worsened the disaster. California’s governor, a Democrat, rejected that account. He warned that the public was being battered by “hurricane-force winds of mis- and disinformation” about the fires and launched a state website to counter what his office described as false narratives.

The exchange put Americans in a familiar position: Watching politicians and pundits describe the same event in fundamentally different ways, each insisting the other was misleading the public. For the fires, the issue moved from how the blazes started to who could be trusted to tell the truth about them.

The prophet Isaiah’s words perfectly describe such conditions: “Judgment is turned away backward, and justice stands afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter...yes, truth fails” (59:14-15).

A billboard commemorates political activist Charlie Kirk, who was shot and killed on September 10, 2025, in Orem, Utah.

CHET STRANGE/GETTY IMAGES

FRACTURED REPUBLIC

While Americans could agree on little else in 2025, most shared the same uneasy conclusion: Judgment, justice and truth all felt increasingly fragile.

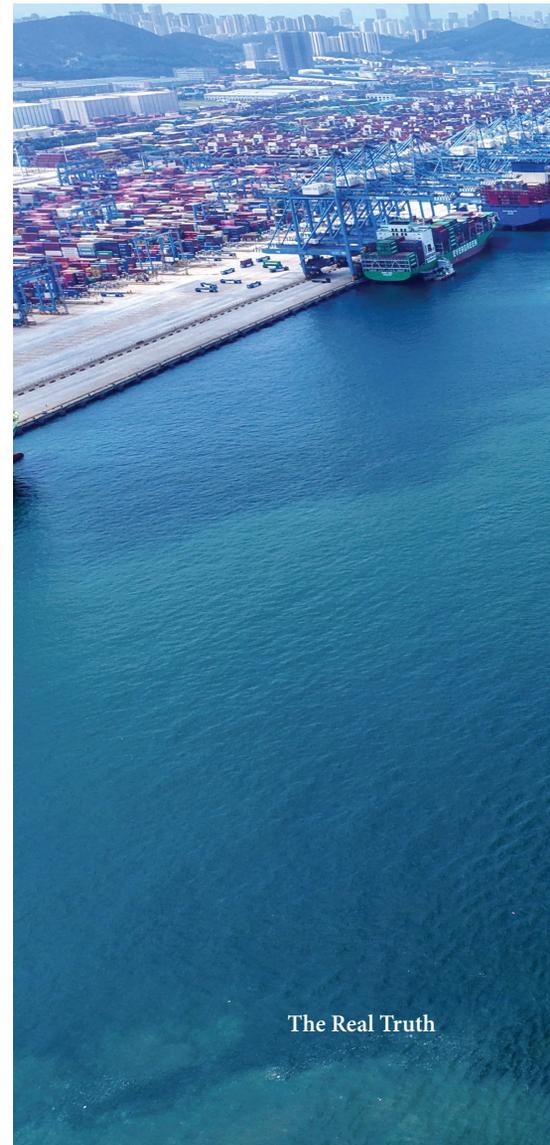
As the year progressed, that fragility became more visible—especially surrounding major decisions by a newly re-elected President Donald Trump. Event after event seemed to unfold in parallel realities:

Tariff policies were framed either as a long-overdue correction to decades of trade imbalance—or as a risky gambit that left American consumers paying more.

Immigration enforcement was described either as a necessary effort to restore control at the border—or as a heavy-handed crackdown that punished the desperate.

Missile strikes against Venezuelan boats were portrayed either as a decisive move to disrupt drug trafficking and smuggling networks—or as a dangerous escalation that could constitute war crimes.

**“JUDGMENT, JUSTICE
AND TRUTH ALL FELT
INCREASINGLY FRAGILE.”**



In September, the assassination of political activist Charlie Kirk shocked the nation, with partisan finger pointing quickly following. Each side accused the other of inflaming political rhetoric and creating a climate that made violence more likely. The event warped reality further, with conspiracy theories casting doubt on the official account and further eroding trust in law enforcement and the media.

Soon after, the federal government reached gridlock with a prolonged shutdown. Each side blamed the other. Responsibility, like so much else in 2025, depended on who was telling the story.

After a year of rampant division, Jesus Christ’s words should serve as a harsh warning to the nation: “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand” (Matt. 12:25).



Top, U.S. Senate Majority Leader John Thune and Speaker of the House Mike Johnson speak during a news conference at the U.S. Capitol on the 10th day of the federal government shutdown, in Washington (Oct. 10, 2025).

ALEX WROBLEWSKI/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Left, a protester poses for a photo during a rally against ICE as thousands march in New York City (June 14, 2025).

ALEX KENT/GETTY IMAGES

Right, a container ship waits to berth at port in Qingdao, China (Aug. 4, 2025). Dozens of economies around the world faced higher U.S. tariffs over trade practices Washington deemed unfair.

STR/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



WARS

That *REFUSED*

to End

AS WARS drag on, some people lose hope while others continue to yearn for peace. When 2025 began, the world wondered if this would be the year that conflicts in Ukraine, Gaza and other places would finally be resolved. But as the months passed, optimism collided with reality. While some wars did slow down or reach shaky ceasefires, lasting peace remained elusive.

Proverbs 13:12 says, “Hope deferred makes the heart sick.” Seeing people hurt, killed and displaced in Sudan, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar and other places, and small children malnourished in Gaza, is indeed sickening. The hope for peace has been deferred yet again, to 2026 or some indefinite point in the future.

Ukraine entered its fourth year of grinding war with Russia. During the U.S. presidential campaign, Donald Trump said the conflict could be ended swiftly through negotiation. While various high-profile meetings took place, such as the Oval Office meeting in late February between Mr. Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy that ended in an explosive argument, and the August 15 meeting in Alaska with Mr. Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin, these talks did not produce peace.

Front lines moved little, while missile and drone attacks continued to strike cities and infrastructure. Ukraine refused to surrender territory, and Russia showed

Bottom, an aerial view of devastation in Gaza (Aug. 6, 2025).

JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES

no willingness to withdraw. As Scripture warns, “They shall seek peace, and there shall be none” (Ezek. 7:25).

In Gaza, the year exposed a different weakness: How easily ceasefires unravel. A temporary halt in fighting early in the year raised cautious hopes that devastation might ease. Those hopes faded as major Israeli operations resumed in the spring, plunging the territory back into violence and humanitarian crisis. By December, another ceasefire was in place, yet there have still been numerous attacks and military activities. The pattern repeated: Truces form under pressure, then erode by unresolved grievances.

Tensions between Israel and Iran simmered throughout the year, culminating in unprecedented direct strikes

Right, Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy meets with U.S. President Donald Trump during Pope Francis’s funeral at St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican (April 26, 2025).

SEAN GALLUP/GETTY IMAGES





between the two countries, with the U.S. getting involved to attack Iran’s nuclear facilities. Wider war was avoided, but only narrowly, showing how close the Middle East remains to broader escalation.

These conflicts reveal a sobering truth. Wars persist not merely because of weapons or alliances, but because of human nature. James 4:1 says directly that wars and conflicts come from “evil desires at war within you” (New Living Translation). Ambition, fear and pride are rooted deeply within the hearts of men. Leaders can negotiate and institutions can intervene, but no one can remove the evil within the human heart that provokes people to fight and kill.

Psalm 46:9 reveals the only Being who can end conflict: “He [God] makes wars to cease unto the end of the earth.” Peace remains elusive because humanity continues to look inward for answers.

Top, people look at damage to buildings in Nobonyad Square following Israeli airstrikes in Tehran, Iran (June 13, 2025).

TOP RIGHT, MAJID SAEEDI/GETTY IMAGES

Bottom, rescuers and civilians worked to pull victims from the rubble of a missile strike on a residential building resulting in two deaths and 54 injured in Kyiv, Ukraine (April 24, 2025).

KOSTIANTYN LIBEROV/LIBKOS/GETTY IMAGES



Shifting *WORLD* *ORDER*

FOR DECADES, global stability rested on a familiar idea: Major powers would cooperate to manage crises and preserve order. In 2025, that belief weakened under pressure, revealing a world less coordinated—and more divided—than many assumed.

The strain was evident at the G20 summit in Johannesburg, South Africa. Intended to display unity, the meeting instead highlighted fragmentation. The United States did not send a representative. “No U.S. Government Official will attend as long as [South Africa’s] Human Rights abuses continue,” the president said.

Other nations arrived with competing priorities, and meaningful consensus proved difficult. The prophet Amos observed, “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (3:3). The clear answer to this rhetorical question is NO.



China's posture reinforced that fragmentation. Beijing continued to assert itself as a parallel center of power, engaging selectively with Western-led institutions while expanding bilateral influence and alternative alliances.

Economic policy added further strain. America's renewed emphasis on tariffs and trade pressure brought uncertainty to traditional relations with the nation's allies. Supporters viewed the strategy as corrective, while critics warned of retaliation and instability.

Some citizens want America to show leadership in the world at large, while others want the U.S. to focus more exclusively on its own people and problems.

Across Europe, political realignment accelerated. Far-right and populist parties gained ground. France experienced repeated government upheaval, with prime ministers removed in rapid succession. In the United Kingdom, the rise of Reform UK reflected growing rejection of traditional parties.

Rivalry extended beyond politics into technology. Artificial intelligence became another arena of competition, with nations racing to secure advantages in development, regulation and military use. AI innovation was treated less as a shared advance and more like a strategic asset.

Global shifts like these reveal a greater purpose at work. The prophet Daniel recorded that God "removes kings, and sets up kings" (2:21). Psalm 33:10 adds, "The LORD foils the plans of the nations; He thwarts the purposes of the peoples" (New International Version).

God allows the countries of Earth to pursue certain plans of their own. Yet He also guides events to make sure that His overall plan for mankind stays on track. When nations' plans become at odds with God's purpose, He overthrows those plans. While we cannot always tell which is the case, seeing shifts like those in 2025 reminds us that God is at work.



Left, U.S. President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin arrive at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Anchorage, Alaska (Aug. 15, 2025).

ANDREW HARNIK/GETTY IMAGES

Below, China's President Xi Jinping attends a military parade marking the 80th anniversary of victory over Japan and the end of World War II, in Tiananmen Square, in Beijing, China (Sept. 3, 2025).

KEVIN FRAYER/GETTY IMAGES



TAKING to the ***STREETS***

THIS YEAR, public frustration boiled over in the form of widespread protests. Across continents, people moved into streets and campuses to express their frustration with the status quo.

Gen Z played a central role in this unrest. Organizing quickly through social media, protesters challenged political systems they believed no longer represented them. These protests were sparked by specific grievances but were also driven by long-simmering issues like widening inequality, economic uncertainty, corruption, and nepotism of leaders.

A deadly uprising in Nepal 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 mid-October, Madagascar's president was forced out of power and out of the country after a military mutiny, the culmination of weeks of demonstrations led by "Gen Z Madagascar."

Protesters march during the second "No Kings" protest in Washington (Oct. 18, 2025). On that day, over 7 million people took part in more than 2,700 events around the world.

NATHAN HOWARD/GETTY IMAGES

Other protests across the world took place in countries including the Philippines, Indonesia, Kenya, Peru and Morocco. Near the year's end, sustained protests in Bulgaria again contributed to government collapse.

In the U.S., protests branded under the slogan “No Kings” reflected similar frustration with political authority and institutions.

What these protests revealed is a lack of trust that cannot be easily restored. Officials resigned, governments reshuffled and reforms were promised. Yet citizens do not trust their governments to make good on their promises. Leaders cannot trust their citizens to support their decisions, as an uprising could remove them from office at any moment.

The book of Ecclesiastes shows that God is watching these events: “If you see the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province,

marvel not at the matter: for He that is higher than the highest regards” (5:8).

Throughout Scripture, God makes clear that He hates oppression and inequality. Proverbs 14:31 says, “He that oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker.” Yet God also shows that protesting is not the solution: “You shall not follow a multitude to do evil” (Ex. 23:2).

Proverbs 29:2 reveals what will solve the problem: “When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked bear rule, the people mourn.” One way to think of being “righteous” in modern language is having *character*. That is what makes the difference. When leaders possess good character, people can rely on them. And God would expect the same thing from citizens. He would not require righteousness from leaders while allowing unrighteousness from everyone else.

Until leaders and citizens can trust one another, the cycle of protesting is doomed to continue.





AGAINST the ELEMENTS

NOT EVERY force that shaped 2025 carried a human fingerprint. While politics and war dominated headlines, the weather delivered its own reminder of humanity's limits.

In Texas, catastrophic flooding in July followed record rainfall along the Guadalupe River, claiming lives and devastating communities. Familiar places became dangerous in a matter of hours. Just at Camp Mystic, a girls' summer camp in the area, 27 children were tragically killed.

One of the parents who lost a child in the disaster told *ABC News* that waiting for her daughter's body to be recovered felt like a "torture chamber of uncertainty."

Across Europe, prolonged heat waves strained power grids and overwhelmed health systems. Cities built for milder summers struggled as temperatures remained dangerously high. Wildfires spread across southern Europe—especially in Greece, Italy and Portugal—forcing evacuations and leaving scorched landscapes behind.

Elsewhere, powerful cyclones and typhoons struck the Philippines and Bangladesh, displacing communities and destroying crops. For poorer nations, recovery proved especially difficult.

Risks were known. Warnings were issued. Yet conditions exceeded what planning could handle. No matter how far society advances, the weather remains an untamable force. People feel powerless against it.

A member of the Emergency Military Unit works to extinguish a wildfire next to a village in Pepin, Spain (Aug. 19, 2025).

PABLO BLAZQUEZ DOMINGUEZ/GETTY IMAGES

AGAINST THE ELEMENTS



Top left, a woman stands among the debris of her house outside of London, Kentucky (May 18, 2025).

MICHAEL SWENSEN/GETTY IMAGES



Top right, cars destroyed by the Eaton Fire sit in the parking area of a burned auto shop, in Altadena, California (Jan. 8, 2025).

JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES

Bottom left, houses lie submerged in water arriving from the Lonza river following a landslide, in Blatten, Switzerland (Aug. 24, 2025).

SEAN GALLUP/GETTY IMAGES

Bottom right, swans swim in floodwater from the River Medway that broke its bank, in Watlington, United Kingdom (Jan. 7, 2025).

DAN KITWOOD/GETTY IMAGES



Prolonged drought also took a heavy toll in parts of Africa, the Middle East and southern Europe, shrinking reservoirs and damaging crops. In many regions, the slow crisis of water scarcity proved just as destructive as more sudden disasters. Even America's Rio Grande-Bravo water basin is in crisis.

Romans 8 speaks of how "the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now" (vs. 22). Verse 21 poetically speaks of the planet being "delivered from the bondage of corruption into...glorious liberty." The context makes clear that this will only happen after God establishes His Kingdom on Earth. Nature will not be in harmony until God brings it glorious liberty.

Violent weather ignores borders, wealth and ideology. Technology helps—but only to a point. Jesus Christ warned that storms test every foundation (Matt. 7:24-27). In 2025, nature once again revealed a familiar truth the world prefers to forget: Some forces remain beyond human control.

***"THE WHOLE CREATION
GROANS AND TRAVAILS IN PAIN
TOGETHER UNTIL NOW."***



January-February 2026



What **CANNOT** Be **SHAKEN**

FROM FIRES and floods to wars, protests and political collapse, the events of 2025 applied relentless pressure. They exposed fragile institutions and divided nations. They stripped away the illusion that human effort alone can solve this world's problems.

The last 365 days—and the lessons revealed through its events—offer a small preview of what lies ahead.

The prophet Haggai recorded God's declaration of a time yet to come: "Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land...and I will shake all nations" (2:6-7).

Paul later explained why such shaking is necessary. Quoting Haggai, he wrote that God will shake "not the earth only, but also heaven," so that "those things which cannot be shaken may remain" (Heb. 12:26-27).

God will shake the entire world to expose what is built on human reasoning—and what is built on His Way.

At that time, God will establish a Kingdom that replaces what cannot endure. Paul calls it "a Kingdom which cannot be moved" (vs. 28). This government of God will finally bring what the world has never been able to produce: A society free from corruption, fear and selfish leadership.

Until that time comes, periods of shaking will continue. We at *The Real Truth* will be here pointing readers to the biblical meaning behind world events—not merely what is happening, but what those events reveal.

With each passing year, the contrast grows clearer between what mankind builds and what God is bringing—between this "present evil world" (Gal. 1:4) and the wonderful "world to come" (Luke 18:30).

The events of 2025 revealed how fragile this present world truly is. But we can look forward to something unshakable: His Kingdom to come. When everything else is shaken, only what God builds will stand. □

Entitlement Programs: What They Can't Fix

As lawmakers debate how to care for the vulnerable, the Bible reveals the ultimate answer, one that human-led governments will never reach on their own.

BY EDWARD L. WINKFIELD



WHAT KIND of nation lets food assistance and health-care for millions hang in the balance over politics?

That is the question many asked during the longest government shut-down in American history—a 43-day stalemate that brought federal operations to a crawl.

On center stage were two programs most Americans either rely on

or have strong opinions about: SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and the Affordable Care Act (often called Obamacare). These are policies that impact how people obtain food, access medical care and navigate difficult economic circumstances.

Depending on who you ask, these programs are either compassionate safety nets or expensive government

overreach. Some argue these options protect the vulnerable and stabilize the economy. Others point to fraud, inefficiency and long-term dependency—seeing entitlement programs as a system that discourages work.

People wait in line to pick up groceries from an anti-hunger nonprofit in Detroit, Michigan (Nov. 4, 2025).

JIM WEST/UCCG/UNIVERSAL IMAGES GROUP VIA GETTY IMAGES

The debate is clear: How far should a society go to care for its people? And what happens when doing so becomes unaffordable?

At its core, there is a larger concern. Human government, even with the best intentions, keeps hitting a wall. And there is a reason for that. It is not just a political problem. It is a spiritual one.

The Bible explains: “The way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walks to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23). This stark limitation of human governance helps explain why even well-intended systems repeatedly fall short.

SNAP and the ACA

These two programs, SNAP and ACA, despite their complexity, boil down to addressing two very basic human needs: Food and healthcare.

SNAP benefits have helped low-income individuals and families afford groceries since the 1960s, initially through paper food stamps and now via electronic benefits transfer (EBT). As of 2024, approximately 42 million Americans, including families with children, the elderly, people with disabilities, and many working poor, rely on SNAP—making it one of the country’s largest safety net programs.

The ACA was passed in 2010 under President Barack Obama with the aim of making health insurance more accessible and affordable. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, more than 21 million Americans receive coverage through the program’s insurance exchanges, and the number of uninsured has dropped significantly over the past decade, from 45.2 million in 2013 to 26.4 million in 2022.

To supporters, programs like these represent basic decency in a wealthy nation. They are seen as a way to protect the vulnerable and ensure that access to food or medical care does not depend entirely on income or circumstance.

Critics, however, view these same programs as government overreach. They argue that federally managed assistance is costly, inefficient and

readily abused—and that it places an increased burden on taxpayers while discouraging personal responsibility.

These are more than disagreements over budgets or bureaucracy. They raise deeper moral questions about how a society should function, and what it owes to its people.

The Case for These Programs

Supporters of entitlement programs argue that these efforts are not only moral but practical. They maintain that such programs save lives, stabilize families and prevent the kind of deep poverty that leads to generational despair.

In other words, citizens are *entitled* to these basic human needs. From this perspective, access to food and basic healthcare is viewed not as a privilege, but as a societal responsibility—particularly in a wealthy nation.

The scope of need is significant. Millions of Americans rely on SNAP for basic nutrition, and research indicates the program has helped reduce poverty, particularly among families with children. Supporters argue that ensuring consistent access to food contributes to better health, improved educational outcomes and greater long-term stability.

Every extra dollar spent on benefits generates \$1.54 in economic activity, as households shop at over 250,000 local stores, boosting local economies across the country.

Advocates make similar claims about healthcare. Beyond reducing the number of uninsured, the Affordable Care Act has expanded access to preventive care, which supporters say can lower long-term medical costs and improve overall public health.

Beyond dramatically reducing the number of uninsured Americans, the ACA has made affordable health coverage more accessible, thanks to federal subsidies.

Taken together, these programs are often presented as investments meant to protect the vulnerable and strengthen communities, as well as reflect values such as compassion, fairness and shared responsibility.

Supporters argue that how a society treats its most vulnerable members is a measure of its character.

The Case Against These Programs

Critics of entitlement programs like SNAP and the ACA do not necessarily deny the needs they address. Instead, they question whether these programs are sustainable—or effective—over the long term.

A primary concern is cost. SNAP spent \$99.8 billion in 2024, and ACA subsidies have continued to grow with expanded enrollment and rising healthcare costs. Opponents argue that these expenses contribute to long-term fiscal strain on taxpayers and government budgets.

Reports of improper payments in SNAP have increased in recent years, with overpayment rates rising from approximately 2 percent in 2012 to nearly 12 percent in 2023—an estimated annual cost of about \$10 billion to taxpayers, according to the Mercatus Center at George Mason University.

Critics argue that large, federally managed programs are difficult to monitor and vulnerable to abuse—reducing public trust and diverting resources from those in legitimate need. In addition, SNAP allows the purchase of sodas, candy, processed snacks and fast food—which many argue undermines its health mission to provide access to nutritious meals. There are also “benefit cliffs,” which can unintentionally discourage recipients from increasing their income for fear of losing assistance.

At a deeper level, opponents raise concerns about dependency and the role of government itself. They argue that long-term reliance on entitlement programs can undermine personal responsibility—and that compulsory redistribution through taxation should not be a substitute for voluntary charity.

From this perspective, the issue is not whether people should be helped, but how—and whether government programs can do so without creating new problems in the process.

Why the Debate Remains Stuck

If both sides of the entitlement debate raise legitimate concerns, why does nothing ever seem to get resolved?

The answer lies in a familiar pattern: Supporters and critics alike tend to emphasize their strongest arguments while minimizing their weaknesses. Those who prioritize compassion point to lives helped and poverty reduced, but often downplay issues of cost, inefficiency and long-term dependency. Those who stress fiscal responsibility highlight waste and abuse, yet often underestimate the real human consequences of reducing support.

The result is a cycle of stalemate—budget battles, shutdown threats and temporary fixes. Each side advances a partial solution while resisting the concessions needed to address the full problem.

At its core, this impasse is not merely political. It is moral. One side emphasizes care and protection for the vulnerable; the other emphasizes fairness, accountability and personal responsibility. All these values matter—but they cannot be fully implemented through human ability alone.

This is why the same questions persist, decade after decade:

- How do you ensure compassion without enabling abuse?
- How do you promote responsibility without abandoning those in genuine need?
- How do you fund assistance without creating resentment, dependence or unsustainable debt?

These are not simply technical questions. They expose a deeper limitation.

Jeremiah 10:23 bears repeating: “The way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walks to direct his steps.” Even well-intended systems are shaped by imperfect judgment and competing priorities.

God’s Way

What is missing from both sides of the debate is not just better policy. It is a different kind of government—one that embodies both compassion and

accountability, and mercy and responsibility, in equal balance.

The Bible reveals that God deeply cares for the poor, the vulnerable and the sick. He commanded ancient Israel to build systems that addressed these needs *structurally*, not just through occasional charity. A special tithe—10 percent of income—was set aside every third year specifically to support the Levites, the stranger, the fatherless and the widow (Deut. 14:28-29). Gleaning laws ensured the poor could access food (Lev. 19:9-10). Debts were canceled every seven years, and inheritance was protected by law—measures designed to prevent generational poverty.

“The Bible reveals that God deeply cares for the poor, the vulnerable and the sick.”

God also addressed the attitude behind such care: “You shall open your hand wide unto your brother, to your poor, and to your needy, in your land” (Deut. 15:11).

At the same time, God does not tolerate fraud, laziness or abuse. He required honest weights and measures (Prov. 11:1), and the apostle Paul wrote plainly, “If any would not work, neither should he eat” (II Thes. 3:10).

Jesus Christ Himself perfectly embodied this balance. He condemned hypocrisy and selfishness while also healing the sick, feeding the hungry and preaching the gospel to the poor (Luke 4:18). God’s system neither ignores need nor excuses irresponsibility.

Most importantly, God’s plan is not confined to one nation, budget or election cycle. Scripture describes a coming Kingdom—ruled by God—that will administer justice across the entire Earth (Isa. 9:6-7). That government will not merely manage poverty,

but eliminate its root causes, including corruption, greed, broken families and failed leadership.

Until then, those striving to live God’s Way must rise above the debate. They should obey the laws of the land, including paying taxes (Luke 20:25) for entitlement programs like Social Security, SNAP or the ACA, which many rely on. Receiving lawful assistance is not unbiblical. Yet a Christian’s hope should not rest in human systems, which—even at their best—fall woefully short.

Long-Term Solution

Human efforts can ease suffering for a time, but they cannot resolve it completely. Entitlement programs may address immediate needs, yet they do not—and cannot—eliminate the deeper causes of poverty, inequality and social breakdown.

The Bible reveals the only lasting solution. God’s coming Kingdom will address these problems at their root, establishing justice, truth and accountability through righteous law. It will restructure society around divine principles—restoring families, ending corruption and replacing human misrule with lasting peace.

Until then, those striving to follow God’s Way are called to reflect His compassion in this present world. As Scripture instructs, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men” (Gal. 6:10). That includes showing care, obeying the law, and keeping present systems in proper perspective.

This does not require rejecting existing government programs outright. Many provide real, temporary help. But neither should they be mistaken for permanent solutions.

The debate over entitlement programs ultimately reveals something larger than policy disagreement. It highlights the limits of human governance—and the need for a better one. Only God’s government can bring the balance of compassion and justice that human efforts continue to seek, but never fully achieve. □



**YOU WERE
DESIGNED
TO BE
CREATIVE**



Creativity is not exclusive to the famous painters, composers and inventors of history. Anyone can nurture and develop this trait.

BY FRANK LYDICK

WHAT DOES it mean to be creative? History is littered with examples of people who stood out for their creativity.

The composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart is one of history's most striking examples of creative genius. Despite dying at just 35 years old, he produced more than 600 musical works, many of which are still performed and studied centuries later.

Mozart once said, "Silence is very important. The silence between the notes are as important as the notes themselves." His resourcefulness led him to use silence as a simple yet powerful tool to enhance his compositions.

Centuries later, Steve Jobs would demonstrate a similar way of thinking in the world of technology. As the co-founder of Apple Inc., Jobs helped revolutionize personal computing, mobile communication and digital media. His vision reshaped how billions of people interact with technology every day.

Jobs once explained his creative process this way: "Creativity is just connecting things. When you ask creative people how they did something, they feel a little guilty because they didn't really do it, they just saw something." In Jobs' case, creativity can be boiled down to finding connections that others did not see.

Few minds illustrate creativity better than physicist Albert Einstein. His theory of relativity transformed modern physics and permanently altered humanity's understanding of space, time and energy. Yet Einstein credited his breakthroughs not to superior intelligence, but to determination, famously saying, "It's not that I'm so smart, it's just that I stay with problems longer."

These pieces of advice, interesting as they may be, still do not quite get to the core of what made these men creative. What was their secret?

To answer this, we must travel further back in time, before Mozart, Einstein or Jobs were born. Long ago, God, the most creative Being in the universe, created all things. He made the planet, the animals, fish, trees and many other exquisite life forms and beautiful sights.

The end of Genesis 1 records the pinnacle of God's creative effort: "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness" (vs. 26). He made people. And being made in God's image means we reflect aspects of His nature—including the ability to think, design, solve problems and create.

Because we are made in God's image and likeness, we all have the potential to develop this same quality in our own lives.

God as the Creator

It is hard to fully appreciate all of God's creative prowess. He created the heavens and the Earth with incredible structure, intricacy and balance. He set laws into motion that to this day govern light and darkness and the seasons of the year here on this planet. He made the stars in the sky. God wired that same creative genius into people.

The first command God gave to man was to dress and keep the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:15). The first man, Adam, had a job on his hands right away.

Adam was responsible for both the plants and animals present there. He was also charged with naming the

animals that God created (vs. 19). This would have required him to be observant, discerning and creative with his choices.

Other famous Bible writers understood God's creative genius. Psalm 139:14 states: "I will praise You; for *I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are Your works*; and that my soul knows right well."

Psalm 8:5-6 states that God made man "a little lower than the angels," and "crowned him with glory and honor," and gave him "dominion over the works" of God's hands. Dominion implies responsibility, stewardship

and the ability to shape and build upon what God has made—activities that require creative thought.

Creativity is not always expressed in the most obvious ways. It is not just limited to artists, musicians or writers. It has fingerprints in science, agriculture, parenting, teaching and simple, everyday problem solving.

Stimulate Your Mind

Scientists have found that creativity can be linked to processes in the brain.

One of the most important keys to understanding creativity is that multiple regions of the brain are all work-

"Working with your hands is a powerful way to engage your senses and strengthen your focus."



ing together at the same time when you are creating something. One part, divergent thinking, gathers the pieces, and the other, convergent thinking, figures out how those pieces fit into the overall puzzle.

This might feel a little complicated. But there are simple, practical ways you can stimulate your mind.

If you are puzzling over a challenging problem, whether at work, at home with your family or related to a hobby or other pursuit, sometimes the best thing to do is take a moment to step away from the problem and focus on something else for a while.

A study by researchers at Stanford University found that taking a walk boosts creative output by 60 percent.

Other factors that can improve your creative thinking are being positive, spending time outside in nature and listening to edifying music.

Giving time for ideas to “stew” allows you to come back to working on them with a clearer outlook. Then, you can look at what you are doing with fresh eyes. The writer Henry David Thoreau once said: “...the moment my legs begin to move, my thoughts begin to flow.”

The biblical patriarch Isaac applied this in his life. On a regular basis, he “went out to meditate in the field at eventide” (Gen. 24:63). One could conclude that he obviously had something on his mind and needed time to think. We can do the same thing. Read our article “Meditation – The Misunderstood Tool” at rcg.org/mtmt to learn more.

Allowing your brain and body to work together when you are solving a problem will elevate your creativity. A key is to be consistent. That will strengthen your brain’s adaptability and how you learn.

How to Develop a Creative Mindset

Creative people have natural curiosity. They are interested in how something works, and if there is a problem or issue, how to make it work better. They can attack a problem and emerge on the other side with a creative solution.

The word creativity is related to another word that we should focus on: talent. We all have favorite talents, hobbies and activities that are close to our hearts. Rather than ignoring them, we should be nurturing them.

Exodus 35 tells the story of a young man named Bezaleel, who used his talents. “And He [God] has filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship; and to devise curious works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in the cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of wood, to make any manner of cunning work” (vs. 31-33).

“Curious works” can mean imagination, invention, purpose, plan or machine. With God’s help, Bezaleel was able to be creative in his work! He exercised his talents in creating beautiful works of gold, silver, brass, stones and wood.

Verse 35 tells us about other individuals of that time who showed godly creativity: “Them has He [God] filled with wisdom of heart, to work all manner of work, of the engraver, and of the cunning workman, and of the embroiderer, in blue, and in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen, and of the weaver, even of them that do any work, and of those that devise cunning work.”

Where do you start your path to becoming more creative? Take time to make a list of all the projects you are working on, would like to start working on, and all the things in your life that take time and effort to complete. Then pick one or two items to really focus on.

Spending even a small amount of quality time each day on a creative endeavor can build your creativity. Even 10 to 15 minutes will help. That will help you build a habit to get better at something. Just be prepared to put the necessary work in.

Next, there is an important question you should be asking yourself: What is on your list that you really love to do? Find the time each day and set it aside for creativity.

What are some of the interests that you have in your life that you would

like to nurture? What about working with your hands? Want to become a better artist? Set aside 15 minutes to sketch each day. The same applies to music, comedy and athletics.

Working with your hands is a powerful way to engage your senses and strengthen your focus.

If you nurture your favorite interests, they can become creative outlets and influence how creative you are in other areas of your life. The same principles you apply to learning how to draw can help you solve problems in your workplace.

Ecclesiastes 9:10 says, “Whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with your might.” Might means force, capacity, means, produce or strength. God wants us to work to be creative, whether at our job, with our families and friends or when enjoying our hobbies and interests.

It is up to you to make the time to be creative.

Putting the Pieces Together

You were designed to be creative. Every human being was created in God’s image, as Genesis 1 states. God wants us to maintain a mindset of wanting to find a better way to do something. So much so that He made it a recognizable aspect of how our brains work. Once we understand the connection, creativity stops being a mystery and becomes a skill we can all develop.

Look for places and situations where you can nurture your creative fire. Begin with the things that you love to do. Also, do not forget that creativity can be used to solve problems in every area, from our community to parenting, family and the challenges of daily life.

Now you are armed with a better understanding of your potential to be creative. Make the decision to develop it until it becomes second nature to you. You can emulate creative greats like Wolfgang Mozart, Steve Jobs, Albert Einstein, Adam, Bezaleel, Isaac, and most importantly, the God who created all things. □

Marijuana Addiction Is Surging. Few Seek Help

The widespread acceptance of a popular drug has fueled a stigma about seeking treatment.

MEGAN FELLER smoked pot several times a day and could not eat, sleep or function without it. But at the time, she did not see the need to reach out for help.

“I didn’t think cannabis was a big deal,” the 24-year-old said. “It was really socially accepted.”

This attitude is common. As more states legalize marijuana, use has become more normalized and products have become more potent. But fewer of those who are addicted seek help for it.

Pot use among young adults reached historic levels in recent years, according to a federally supported survey. Daily use even outpaced daily drinking, with nearly 18 million Americans reporting in 2022 that they use marijuana every day or nearly every day, up from less than 1 million three decades earlier.

Studies show a corresponding increase in cannabis use disorder—when people crave marijuana and spend lots of time using it even though it causes problems at home, school, work or in relationships. It is a condi-

tion that researchers estimate affects about 3 in 10 pot users and can be mild, moderate or severe.

And it is an addiction—despite the common misconception that that is not possible with marijuana, said Dr. Smita Das, an addiction psychiatrist at Stanford University.

Meanwhile, the drug’s widespread acceptance has fueled a stigma about seeking treatment, said Dr. Jennifer Exo of the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation in Minnesota.

“There’s this pervasive belief that you can’t become addicted, it can’t

actually be a problem,” she said. “It has to do with this myth that cannabis is safe, natural and benign.”

Stronger Weed, Bigger Problems

While pot is not as harmful as harder drugs, frequent or heavy use has been linked to problems with learning, memory and attention as well as chronic nausea, vomiting and lung problems among those who smoke it. Some evidence has also linked it to earlier onset of psychosis in people with genetic risk factors for psychotic disorders like schizophrenia.

And today’s pot is not the same as that of the past.

Many people recall older relatives who “smoked a few doobies and ate some food and fell asleep,” Dr. Exo said. “But it’s absolutely different.”

In the 1960s, most pot that people smoked contained less than 5 percent THC, the ingredient that causes a high. Today, the THC potency in cannabis flower and concentrates sold in dispensaries can reach 40 percent or more, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

Teens are often vaping potent marijuana concentrates, Dr. Exo said, rather than eating brownies made with cannabis flower or taking a hit from a bong.

More Access to Marijuana, Rising ER Visits

Pot is also increasingly available. Though it is still a federal crime to possess it, 24 states allow recreational use by adults and 40 allow medical use as of late June, the National Conference of State Legislatures said. Dispensaries abound and more people are able to keep pot at home.

Research links the legalization of recreational marijuana with rising emergency room visits for “acute cannabis intoxication,” in which patients may experience a rapid heartbeat or feel dizzy, confused or paranoid.

A study last year focused on Michigan found that legalization was associated with an immediate increase in the rate of ER visits for this condi-

tion among people of all ages, especially middle-aged adults.

Dr. Das said increased access to cannabis, along with a growing number of cannabis products and with higher potency all contribute to rising ER visits. Edibles such as gummies can pose a particular problem because they take a little while to kick in so people may keep taking more because they do not yet feel the drug’s effects.

“Then, suddenly, they’re suffering from cannabis toxicity,” she said.

use disorder and has been sober from marijuana for almost a year.

“I’m so much happier now,” she said. “I don’t feel, like, shackled to a substance.”

Such treatment is often overlooked, said Brian Graves, a researcher at Florida Atlantic University.

He and his colleagues published a study this year showing that the share of people who got treatment for cannabis use disorder from their nationally representative sample dropped



Megan Feller arranges bouquets for a party at her apartment in Edina, Minnesota (Oct. 25, 2025). AP/MARK VANCELEAVE

Why Treatment Is Often Overlooked

Ms. Feller first tried pot at 16 and quickly went from smoking the plant to using vape cartridges that were easy to hide in her pocket. Soon, she could barely get by without it.

“I would wake up every morning for years, and until I smoked weed, I would throw up,” she said. Instead of trying to get high, she used it “to make these other symptoms go away.”

Ms. Feller was also drinking a lot and her parents sent her to a treatment center when she was around 18. It did not help because she was not ready to get well. After her mother died, her substance use worsened.

At 22, Ms. Feller entered Hazelden on her own—but only to get sober from alcohol, which she did.

She kept using pot on and off, then finally sought treatment for cannabis

from 19 percent in 2003 to 13 percent in 2019. An earlier study also found a marked decline and pointed to reasons that include “expanding cannabis legalization and more tolerant attitudes.”

Experts say people need to be educated that pot, like alcohol, can be misused and can cause real harm.

“Another important piece is helping people understand the risk before they start,” Dr. Exo said, “and then to feel safe enough to say, ‘Hey, I need help managing this.’”

Many people wait until their marijuana use causes problems in multiple parts of their lives before they seek treatment—if they ever do.

“If you’re changing your life because of weed, there might be an issue,” Ms. Feller added. “There are resources to get help and you are not alone.” □

Some States Now Require Public Schools to Teach Kids About Gun Safety

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) – This school year, students in elementary, middle and high schools in some states will get a new lesson on safety: What to do if they find a firearm.

Arkansas, Tennessee and Utah are the first states to enact laws that require public schools to teach children as young as 5 the basics of gun safety and how to properly store guns in the home. Only Utah's law allows students to opt out of the lesson if requested by parents or guardians.

A similar law in Arizona was vetoed by the Democratic governor, and lawmakers in at least five other states have introduced such proposals, putting schools at the forefront of yet another debate about gun violence.

In Tennessee, lesson plans could include stickers, games, quizzes or videos with music and colorful firearm illustrations, including a gun made out of Lego-style bricks and an explanation of what a muzzleloader is.

The reality is that many children in the U.S. grow up around firearms.

At Berclair Elementary School in Memphis, a class of 16 fifth graders were asked how many had seen a real gun. Nearly all raised their hands.

"It just shows you how much a class like this is needed," said Tammie Chapman, a health and physical education instructor, who has been leading the lessons at this school.

"While there is some controversy around guns, there doesn't always have to be," said Emily Buck, director of public relations for the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, which created a curriculum with the state Department of Education. "I think that having some education and foundational knowledge really can be beneficial in the long run."

Stop, Don't Touch, Leave Quickly, Tell an Adult

The lessons are often adapted from hunting safety courses already administered by state hunting and wildlife agencies, but with key differences.

Hunter safety courses typically involve hands-on instruction and explanations of how to safely handle and fire a gun. These classroom lessons, on the other hand, emphasize that children should not touch a firearm.

In Tennessee, the legislation prohibits any use of actual firearms, but in Arkansas, the law allows parents to opt into alternative curriculums, such as an off-campus firearm safety course that could include live guns.

The main takeaway is a series of steps for when a child finds a gun: Stop, don't touch, leave quickly, tell an adult. This is consistent with instructions created by other organizations, including one from the National Rifle Association that features animated characters, videos and coloring pages.

At Berclair Elementary School, the faculty designed a relay-race game to keep students engaged. In the gym, students took turns running to buckets that had different photos. Students who found a picture of a gun then reported it to one of the adults. They also listened to a catchy jingle emphasizing the steps.

Ms. Buck acknowledged that adults might be the ones responsible for creating unsafe situations at home and said children should be prepared if they find guns in unusual spots, like on shelves or under a mattress.

"We hope that maybe students will take some of what they learned back to their house, back to the parents and maybe they'll encourage their parents

to adjust their storage method," said Ms. Buck.

The Lessons Are Supposed to Be Neutral

Gun legislation is a partisan issue across the U.S., with Democratic-led states enacting more limits on access to guns and efforts to tighten gun laws often failing in Republican-controlled legislatures.

Republicans sponsored and supported the education bills in Arkansas, Tennessee and Utah. The legislation says the curriculum must have neutral viewpoints on any gun-related topics, such as gun ownership in general.

Voices for a Safer Tennessee, a non-partisan nonprofit created by parents after The Covenant School shooting in Nashville, supported the legislation. The organization supports gun ownership and advocates for policies like expanded background checks.

These lessons may encourage families to start necessary conversations, said Jessica Jaglois, director of communications for the organization.

"It could possibly prevent a firearm tragedy from occurring, because we know that a moment of access can lead to a lifetime of tragedy," said Ms. Jaglois.

In 2022, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that firearms were the leading cause of death among children and teens. Arkansas and Tennessee have rates of firearm deaths among children and teens that exceed the national average, according to an AP analysis. But some Democrats and gun control advocates argue this kind of legislation is the wrong approach to gun violence.

"Using the school day to teach kids about guns won't stop adults from leaving their firearms unsecured or keeping

deadly weapons out of dangerous hands,” said Meg Beauregard, policy counsel fellow at Everytown for Gun Safety, in a statement. “If lawmakers were serious about protecting students, they’d pass laws that hold adults accountable, such as secure storage—not put the burden on kids to keep themselves safe.”

How Will Schools Teach the Lessons?

The states gave school districts some discretion on whether to use provided lesson plans or go with other instructions that adhere to the laws’ language.

The schools also can decide which faculty or staff will lead the lessons, or in some instances bring in police officers to talk about gun safety.

In Arkansas, schools might choose to incorporate the lessons as a part of annual safety training, such as when they are practicing fire safety or tornado drills, said Spencer Griffith, a deputy director with Arkansas Game and Fish Commission.

“We hope they will interject this in a way that kind of helps to maybe prevent some of these accidents from occurring,

but not in a way that puts a political focus or fear around that, because it’s just not the place for that,” said Mr. Griffith.

Berclair Principal Clint Davis said the issue of children getting hurt in firearm accidents is not new, even if this curriculum is.

“It’s not something that’s necessarily just become a modern issue. It’s always been there,” said Mr. Davis. “And I think we’re just now really responding to the need to provide that sort of training in school.” □



Health and physical education teacher Tammie Chapman leads a gun safety lesson for elementary students at Berclair Elementary School in Memphis, Tennessee (Oct. 27, 2025).

AP/GEORGE WALKER IV

All this was made for you...



Ask yourself: When was the last time I took a walk during a gentle snowfall? Watched a documentary about snow leopards or polar bears? Stopped my routine and looked at the landscape around me?

Spending time in nature helps reduce stress and strengthens your immune system. It is also a place to contemplate your Creator and His Plan for you. When surrounded by the natural world, the hustle and bustle of modern life slips away—allowing you to more fully harness one of the crucial tools of Christian growth: MEDITATION. Be sure to read “Meditation – The Misunderstood Tool” and then step into the world God made for you.

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