



Trump Announces Support for Prison Reform Bill After Major Evangelical Backing

President Donald Trump officially announced his support, on 14 November, for a prison reform bill called the FIRST STEP Act, and hailed pastors such as Paula White for fighting for it. "Today, I'm thrilled to announce my support for this bipartisan bill that will make our communities safer and give former inmates a second chance at life after they have served their time. So important," Trump said at the White House on Wednesday while surrounded by bipartisan leaders backing the bill.

"We're all better off when former inmates can receive and re-enter society as law-abiding, productive citizens. And

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SCOTLAND BECOMES FIRST COUNTRY TO REQUIRE SCHOOLS TO TEACH LGBT CURRICULUM



Scotland has become the first country in the world to require its public schools nationwide to add LGBT history and inclusion to their curriculums. Deputy First Minister John Swinney has told parliament that the Scottish government will mandate all state schools to "teach LGBTI equality and inclusion" to different age groups across different subjects.

According to Swinney, the Scottish government has accepted all 33 recommendations from its LGBTI Inclusive Education Working Group, which was created to "improve the learning experience for LGBTI young people." The government will start working immediately to implement the recommendations. According to a press release,

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15-Y-O Pakistani Christian Boy Brutally Tortured, Bones on Foot Exposed by Islamic Radicals



A 15-year-old Christian teen was severely beaten and tortured by Islamic radicals in Pakistan, with his father describing the horrific extent of his injuries.

"The religiously motivated group thrashed him badly. His foot was hit with some sharp weapon causing the skin on his foot to peel off, exposing the bones," Yousef, the father of Cecil, the Christian boy, a news agency. "Cecil is still under medical treatment and his life is being threatened," he added, noting that the torture occurred in August in

Karachi. The Christian family has been warned not to press on with their case, or else face further attacks.

The conflict began earlier this year when Cecil stood up to a group of Islamic seminary students who apparently wanted to forcefully convert Christians to Islam in his neighborhood. At first, Cecil was only mocked, but after that a mob attacked the family house.

"In February, an armed mob attacked our house and tortured

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EARLY DEPICTION OF JESUS DISCOVERED IN ISRAEL: CURLY HAIR, LONG FACE, 'NOT LIKE WESTERN IMAGE'



A newly discovered artistic depiction of Jesus in the ruins of an ancient Israeli church portrays Christ differently from Western conceptions, with curly hair and a long face. Art historian Emma Maayan-Fanar told that the painting was discovered in the ruins of Shivta, formally a Byzantine farming village in Israel's Negev desert. "His face is right there, looking at us," Maayan-Fanar said of the eroded painting found at the ruins of a church, meant to depict Jesus' baptism.

She explained that unlike Western perceptions that often portray Jesus with flowing long hair, the Shivta painting depicts Him with short curly hair, a long face and an elongated nose. The exact date of the artwork is not yet known, though Shivta is believed to have

been founded sometime in the 2nd century C.E.

Another painting of Jesus in the ruins of Shivta discovered earlier symbolizes the transfiguration, but does not depict His face. Though the ancient village was first discovered in 1871 and has been the subject of much archaeological work, Maayan-Fanar believes she is the first to discover it is Christ's image underneath the centuries of dirt on the painting.

"I was there at the right time, at the right place with the right angle of light and, suddenly, I saw eyes," the art historian recalled. "It was the face of Jesus at His baptism, looking at us."

Dror Maayan, her husband, took hi-res photographs of the site, which further allow the image lost for over 1,500 years to become clearer. The find is said to be "extremely rare," given that early depictions of Jesus' physical appearance are practically non-existent in Israel.

The question of what Jesus really looked like has long been the subject of debate by historians and theologians. A book earlier in 2018 by Joan E. Taylor, professor of Christian origins and Second Temple Judaism at King's College London, tackled that precise question, and looking at what His skin and hair color, height, and attire might have been. "The early depictions of Jesus that set the template for the way he continues to be depicted today were based on the image of an enthroned emperor and influenced by presentations of pagan gods. The long hair and beard are imported specifically from the iconography of the Graeco-Roman world. Some of the oldest surviving depictions of Jesus portray him as essentially a younger version of Jupiter, Neptune or Serapis," Taylor wrote in The Irish Times.

He said that in reality, Judeans of Jesus' time were closest biologically to modern-day Iraqi Jews. "In terms of a colour palette then, think dark-brown to black hair, deep brown eyes, olive-brown skin. Jesus would have been a man of Middle Eastern appearance. In terms of height, an average man of this time stood 166 cm (5 ft 5 in) tall," the author of What Did Jesus Look Like? suggested.

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YOUR KEY TO PEACE AND **BLESSING:** DON'T STEAL FROM GOD!

PASTOR SIMON VARGHESE,
BHOPAL

In the last week of August 2003, I attended a seminar in the Campion School Auditorium, Bhopal, India, organised by a servant of God from Chennai and his colleagues. I was a member of the Organising committee also. The 10-day seminar was a great blessing for the people of the city as well as for me. On the last day of the seminar, an offering was taken for the expenses of the seminar. An announcement was also made that any amount would be acceptable. The

servant of God asked us to take the money in your hand and pray for a blessing on it, before putting it in the offering box kept near the stage. As the servant of God was praying from the stage, I also took some money and prayed for it. After the prayer, when I was about to put the offering, a missionary friend of mine sitting beside asked me, "Pastor, is it necessary to give offering to this man, who married a foreign lady and has a lot of money, when there are a lot of poor servants of God in this city itself?"

I also felt that it was a genuine question. I changed my decision and put

back the money in my wallet and said to my friend, "You are right. If he did not have money, how could he arrange such a seminar for 1000 pastors? He may have a lot of foreign money coming in." When people were putting their money in the offertory box, I, along with my friend, left the auditorium through the back door.

After the seminar, we faced much financial crunch in September and October months. There was a time when we did not have money to even buy milk for our daughter. For two weeks, we lived with rice por-

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ridge with salt. In any difficult situation we used to sit in God's presence in fasting and prayer. When the financial situation became grave, I began to ask God. Why is it that I am going through such a crisis, when I give my tithe and offering faithfully? The first day of fasting brought no result. On the second day also I did not get any answer. I fell face down and started praying. Then I heard the voice of God. "You stole my money." I started arguing with God. I had an account book. I said to the Lord, "I have given tithe of everything I received. I have never used the money I received for your work for my personal needs." God spoke to me again, "That's not the issue. Two months ago you stole the money you set aside for the expenses of the seminar." On hearing this, fear gripped me. God made me understand things. The lesson that the Lord taught me through this distressful time was "fulfilling our promises". It means to submit or give whatever we decide to give to the Lord.

The people of Israel conquered the city of Jericho under the leadership of Joshua. Soon after, 3,000 of them went with great confidence to fight Ai, but the people of Ai killed 36 of them and they lost the battle on that day. God showed them that they conquered Jericho not by the strength of their army or their war tactics. Every victory they had was a display of the power of God who led them. The victory, deliverance and healing of people are not by knowledge, power or medicine but by God alone.

The Israelites, who had only tasted victory, now got a taste of defeat too. It was then that they began to search out for the reasons of

their failure. Joshua lay face down in the presence of God (Joshua 7:10-12). God raised him up and showed him the reason for the defeat. But God did not reveal the person responsible for it. At last, Achan, the son of Carmi from the clan of Sahya of the tribe of Judah was caught. The sinner will be caught one day and Achan is an excellent evidence.

Sin of Achan

When Joshua demanded from Achan to confess his sins, he did so before the people of Israel. When the people of Jericho had closed themselves indoors for fear of the people of Israel, God gave them command in Joshua 6:17-19: "Now the city shall be doomed by the Lord to destruction, it and all who are in it. Only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all who are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent. And you, by all means abstain from the accursed things, lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. But all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are consecrated to the LORD; they shall come into the treasury of the LORD."

But when the city of Jericho was plundered, Achan grew greedy of the wealth that was designated to be stored in the treasury of God, took it and hid it in the ground in his tent. When this act of Achan brought a disaster upon him, his family and on the Israelites, will the storing of what rightfully belongs to the Lord in our houses or using it for our needs not bring curse and disaster upon us? Let us not bring a curse upon our family and our wealth, like Achan did (Joshua 7:24-26). (Lev. 27:28).

The Israelites were defeated before

a small town as Ai because they disobeyed the commandment of God. If we disobey the Word of God, we will be facing consequences. As the word says, "Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they have become doomed to destruction. Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you (Joshua 7:12-13). Just as Israel lost before a small town as Ai, we will also have to face consequences of various kinds. When the people of Israel got rid of the curse by an oath to God, He went with them. The city of Ai bowed their knees before Israel. They were victorious! Remember! If we possess anything that we promised to give to the Lord, it will kill our peace of mind. What belongs to God must be given to God. Do not use it for other needs.

Dear servants of God, the money meant for the work of the Lord should not be used for any other purpose. When any man offered sacrifice, the sons of Eli came with three-pronged flesh hooks in their hands and have taken away the flesh by force while it was in seething, before burning the fat and fattened them. It was then that the Lord changed the eternal covenant that he made with them. (1 Samuel 2:12-36) The destruction that fell upon that generation must not happen to us in our generation. Just as Achan's sin brought destruction not just for himself, but for his family and wealth, if we make what belongs to God our portion, we are inviting troubles for ourselves.

<http://theendtimenews.com/>

'THERE IS NO GOD' SAYS STEPHEN HAWKING IN FINAL BOOK



Published by John Murray, "Brief Answers to the Big Questions" is a selection of the late cosmologist's most profound, accessible, and timely reflections from his personal archive. "For centuries, it was believed that disabled people like me were living under a curse that was inflicted by God. Well, I suppose it's possible that I've upset someone up there, but I prefer to think that everything can be explained another way, by the laws of nature," he wrote in the chapter titled "Is There a God?"

Hawking, says he uses the word 'God' in an impersonal sense, like Albert Einstein did, for the laws of nature, so knowing the mind of God is knowing the laws of nature. "My prediction is that we will know the mind of God by the end of this century."

According to Hawking, who died in March, the universe is the ultimate free lunch and if the "universe adds up to nothing, then you don't need a God to create it". Did he have faith? He answers, "We are each free to believe what we want, and it's my view that the simplest explanation is that there is no God. No one created the universe and no one directs our fate."

He then goes on to write: "This leads me to a profound realisation – there is probably no heaven and afterlife either. I think belief in an afterlife is just wishful thinking. There is no reliable evidence for it, and it flies in the face of everything we know in science." After Hawking's death, his Estate decided to go forward with the

project of publishing the book. His daughter Lucy says communication was so important to Hawking in his lifetime and "we see this book as part of his legacy, bringing together his thoughts, humour, theories and writing into one beautiful edition".

Hawking, who is known for his work in cosmology and theoretical physics, notably for Hawking radiation and his work on black holes, was the director of research at the Centre for Theoretical Cosmology and Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at the University of Cambridge. At the age of 20, he was diagnosed with Motor Neuron Disease, also known as ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease and was given two years to live. His abilities to move and communicate were increasingly limited, as he was confined to a wheelchair and eventually forced to speak through a voice synthesiser.

When he died in March, at the age of 76, he was the longest living MND survivor. His battle with the disease was featured in the film "The Theory of Everything" for which actor Eddie Redmayne, who played Hawking, received 2015's Best Actor Oscar.

Hawking has authored "A Brief History of Time", which has sold over 13 million copies worldwide and shot back to the top of bestseller lists after his death, and many other books. A percentage of the royalties of the new book will go to the Motor Neuron Disease Association and the Stephen Hawking Foundation.

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family members which resulted in minor injuries to the family's women and head injuries to Cecil," Yousef said. "The mob made their way in, breaking the main gate of the house at midnight." "The attackers broke the doors, windows, fans, furniture, damaged the vehicle, and looted the valuables, including two laptops, four mobile phones, and cash," the father revealed.

Though a local church-led organization transferred Cecil to a safer location for six months, the move was unable to prevent the violent torture in August. Kashif Anthony, Coordinator for the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, said that the attack on the boy was "inhumane."

"This is [an] alarming situation for the religious minorities," Anthony told ICC. "The government must take sincere measures to curb religious extremism and promote religious harmony. Every citizen should enjoy religious freedom and protection as per constitutional guarantees."

Pakistan's human rights record has been making headline news around the world this past week with the Supreme Court acquittal of Asia Bibi, the Christian mother of five who spent eight years on death row for blasphemy. Although human rights advocates and persecution watchdog groups celebrated Bibi's freedom, several organizations warned that Christian minorities in Pakistan face increased dangers at the hands of angered Islamic hardliners.

"The world has watched her suffer but today, thanks to the grace of God, today the world rejoices. Her freedom can hardly be called justice and nothing will ever compensate her for her lost years," said Wilson Chowdhry, Chairman of the British Pakistani Christian Association.

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the school mandate is designed to help Scotland "lead the way in inclusive education."

As a result, schools must teach about LGBT terminology and identities, prejudice against the LGBT community, promote "awareness of the history of LGBTI equalities and movements" and tackle homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. "Scotland is already considered one of the most progressive countries in Europe for LGBTI equality," Swinney said in a statement. "I am delighted to announce we will be the first country in the world to have LGBTI inclusive education embedded within the curriculum."

CAMPAIGN FEATURES JESUS AS ORGAN DONOR



Christians are divided on their views of a controversial ad campaign in Australia showing Jesus becoming an organ donor while nailed to the cross. Over 30000 have signed an online petition in protest. The ad, published online on Oct.

14 by the Dying to Live organ donor campaign, features two Roman soldiers speaking with Jesus about becoming an organ donor in Australia.

The exchange ends with Christ agreeing to help others by donating His organs.

POLICE ATTACK AND THREATEN CHRISTIANS IN TAMIL NADU, INDIA.



Police officers rushed into a praise service at a house in Tamil Nadu state of India and began hitting worshippers in another violent month for Christians, sources said. A female police inspector and five police officers on Oct. 6 entered the house where Christians were spending the evening in praise and worship in Aralvaimozhi, Kanyakumari District, the pastor said.

"Female police inspector and five policemen rushed inside the house church and started abusing me in filthy language," Pastor P.

Yesudastold. "My wife and the believers asked her, 'What is our fault? Why are you abusing us?' But she came after them, and the constables who were accompanying her also started punching with their fists."

Female Inspector held Pastor Yesudas by the neck and struck him in his stomach and back, he said. "My wife and the believers tried to protect me, but they were also injured," he said. "We did not know what to do and tried to phone call pastors from neighboring areas."

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The guards explain some of the rules and procedures when it comes to registering to be an organ donor, including the need for a person's parents to be informed. That prompts two actors depicting Mary and Joseph, Jesus' earthly parents, to show up and give their approval.

A petition on Change.org seeking to ban the ad has been signed by over 30000 people as of the time of writing this article. "This advertisement is clearly mocking our Lord Jesus and it is offensive. No faith has suffered as much as Christianity and many Christians are martyred all around the globe for their faith," the petition states. "No other religion will ever tolerate this kind of mockery and disrespect. We are calling on you to make a stand and protect our faith by banning this disrespectful ad," it adds.

But others disagree. "It uses the self-sacrificial example of Jesus to communicate an important message," Anglican Bishop of South Sydney, Michael Stead, told The Daily Telegraph.

Beside Christians signing the petition, some Muslims have also been offended by the way Jesus was depicted. Founder of the Islamic Friendship Association of Australia, KeyserTrad, argued that the ad "showed irreverence toward venerated figures." Keyser added that the video "will cause offence to some Muslims and some Christians."

Filmmaker Richard Todd who's responsible for the ad said that it's supposed to raise awareness for organ donation, given that 36 percent of citizens are registered donors, yet 70 percent have said they're willing to donate. "That is why it's important for every Australian to know they can register online via www.dyingtolive.com.au, and to have a conversation with their family. Even if you have already registered, your family can still veto your decision in the hospital during what is of course a very distressing time, and it's important therefore to 'own' this decision together," Todd said.

Truth



Rev. Manuel P Joseph Th. M

THE ULTIMATE TRUTHS ABOUT GOD'S TESTS

Do you think it was real? Do you think it was easy for Abraham to prepare for such a thing? What do you think was in the mind of Abraham as he was travelling with Isaac to the mount Gerizim? How much do you think he struggled to bind his own son Isaac to that altar? God's tests in our lives are so real. They are often severe, but there is always an intervention of God in the tests that fall on us. At the age of 75 Abraham was called by God and the rest of His journey with the Lord was cyclical, full of spiritual peaks and valleys. In his life, we see him leaving His father's household to go to a Land yet unseen, at God's command. He fathered a child (Ishmael) as was compelled by his wife and that was a failure. He expressed his courage by leading an alliance to go and rescue Lot and the people of Sodom while destroying 5 Kings. His cowardice came to light on more than one occasion when he lied because he was afraid of being killed because of his wife's beauty. He interceded and appealed to God not to destroy the righteous of Sodom with the sinners. He had to learn to wait 25 years for the fulfillment of God's promise of a son. He was 100 years old when the son of

promise, Isaac, was born. His life was full of spiritual peaks and valleys. In our text today, Abraham is at least 115 years old and his son Isaac 15 or 16. His life with the Lord was so real for the past 40 years. He went through various moulds and preparations of God and finally he is being tested by God. This portion of the test of Abraham instructs us as to what we should do about God's tests in our lives.

1. THE TEST OF GOD IS REAL (*Genesis 22:1-2*)

The greatest test in the life of Abraham came after he received promised son Isaac following a long wait. He had waited 25 years for this son. And he has looked after him another 15 years and then God brings a real test. God literally asked Abraham to take his son to the Mount Moriah and offer him there as a burnt offering. This test was designed to prove the faith of Abraham and it was so real. To make it so real, it had to defy logic. It had to be something Abraham wanted to resist. God had told the patriarch to send Ishmael away (21:12-13) and that was very easy for Abraham and he did it. Now He told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, but he would not want to kill Isaac as it is very difficult for any father

to kill his own son. Consider how unreasonable God's request was. Isaac was Abraham's only son, and the future of the covenant rested in him. Isaac was a miracle child, the gift of God to Abraham and Sarah in response to their faith. Abraham and Sarah loved Isaac very much and had built their whole future around him. When God asked Abraham to offer his son, He was testing Abraham's faith, hope, and love; and it looked like God was wiping out everything Abraham and Sarah had lived for. This tailor made test for Abraham seemed very real as God was asking him do something unreasonable.

This very day, we must realize that God's tests in our lives are so real. It happens to every child of God. God's tests are unique to the individual. It means that you may not have to go through a test like this one Abraham had gone through. Each test is tailor made. Job once proclaimed, "But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold." (Job 23:10 NIV). Job is speaking about the reality of tests of God and gives the result of such tests. James, Jesus' half-brother, said the same thing in

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Pastor Satyaseelan, who goes by a single name, told he hurried over to Aralvaimozhi from Anjugramam in 10 minutes after receiving a call from Pastor Yesudas. "Pastor and his wife were injured and howling in pain," Pastor Satyaseelan said. "Chairs and Bibles could be seen thrown aside. One of the constables was manhandling the believers while Inspector continued abusing in foul language. I can't repeat those words. She was raging in anger."

Satyaseelan and other Christians submitted a petition to the district's superintendent of police and the district collector with the help of senior pastors, but no action has been taken against Female Inspector and her subordinates, he said. Police officials in Kanyakumari are under the control of a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader elected as the member of Parliament from the district, said a local source who requested anonymity. "Female Inspector is close associate to local RSS leaders," the source said.

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was sentenced to hanging in 2010.

After the Supreme Court ruled last month to acquit Bibi of the charges, thousands of radical Muslims took to the streets in protests that rocked several cities across Pakistan. The protests were led by the political party Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan, which staunchly supports the blasphemy law. As Muslims demonstrated for days in response to Bibi's acquittal, Bibi remained in jail and a deal was reportedly reached between the TLP and government officials in which the party leaders would call off the demonstrations in exchange for the Supreme Court reviewing its petition asking for the reversal of Bibi's acquittal.

A spokesperson for the papal charity Aid to the Church in Need told CNN that Bibi is with her family in a secured location as they wait to leave Pakistan. Bibi's release from prison comes as her family has been seeking asylum from western nations due to the threats against their lives by radical Muslims.

"Help us get out of Pakistan. We are extremely worried because our lives are in danger," Bibi's husband, Ashiq Masih, told Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need. "We no longer have even anything to eat, because we cannot leave the house to buy

food."

Bibi's lawyer, Saiful Malook, fled Pakistan this week to seek asylum in the Netherlands. Malook told on Thursday that Bibi has also filed an application for asylum in the Netherlands. Masih has also reportedly appealed to the United Kingdom, United States and Canada for help. The Italian government has also said that it's working to relocate Bibi and her family.

Although Prime Minister Imran Khan has condemned the Muslim extremist protests of Bibi's acquittal, he has also received criticism over the government agreement with TLP. Pakistan ranks as the fifth-worst nation in the world when it comes to Christian persecution, according to Open Doors USA's 2018 World Watch List.

Sparkling Wisdom!

- ❖ "God has a purpose behind every problem. He uses circumstances to develop our character. In fact, he depends more on circumstances to make us like Jesus than he depends on our reading the Bible."—**Rick Warren**
- ❖ "One hundred religious persons knit into a unity by careful organization do not constitute a church any more than eleven dead men make a football team."—**AW Tozer**
- ❖ "Religion says, 'I obey; therefore I am accepted.' Christianity says, 'I'm accepted, therefore I obey.'"—**Timothy Keller**
- ❖ "God is looking for those with whom He can do the impossible — what a pity that we plan only the things that we can do by ourselves."—**AW Tozer**
- ❖ "I have found the paradox, that if you love until it hurts, there can be no more hurt, only more love."—**Mother Teresa**
- ❖ "I'd rather be able to pray than to be a great preacher; Jesus Christ never taught his disciples how to preach, but only how to pray." - **D.L. Moody**
- ❖ "The preaching of Christ is the whip that flogs the devil. The preaching of Christ is the thunderbolt, the sound of which makes all hell shake." -- **Charles Spurgeon**
- ❖ Our greatest fear should not be of failure but of succeeding at things in life that don't really matter.
- ❖ God has given us two hands, one to receive with and the other to give with. **Billy Graham**
- ❖ If you are a Christian, you are not a citizen of this world trying to get to heaven; you are a citizen of heaven making your way through this world. **Dr. Vance Havner**

Abigail Thyvilayil John



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his epistle. He said, Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance (James 1:2-3). The tests of God are so real and we have to expect such trials from God.

2. THE TEST OF GOD IS OFTEN SEVERE (Genesis 22: 3-9)

Abraham had to offer his son Isaac. A father had to offer his son a burnt offering. The burnt offering was the greatest of all sacrifices, and consisted in the immolation of a MALE victim, either a sheep or goat of a year old; a bullock of three years old sometimes; and, more rarely, a young pigeon or turtle dove. It was always placed entire on the altar, and consumed in the fire (Lev 1:4.). Abraham was to burn his own son to ashes.

He heard God's word and immediately obeyed it by faith. Abraham's response was staggering - he gave instant, unquestioning obedience. He even got an early start! With no appearance of reluctance and delay, Abraham woke up early (v.3) as there was three days' journey from Beersheba to Moriah. It was about 50 miles. He saddled his donkey and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and went unto the place of which God had told him. He made every preparation for the sacrifice before setting out-the cleft wood, the knife, the donkey that was to convey the materials, and the servants that were to take charge of them on the journey to Moriah. All that time he had the dreadful secret pent up in his own bosom. He must have been so worried while the preparations were on. He must have been restless as he was cutting the wood pieces for the offering. He must have felt bad as he knew each piece of wood he cuts will finally burn his son. I know what must have been going through his mind while he sharpening the knife this time. Then the journey took at least two days. He must have got enough time to think on what he was supposed to do once reaching the designated place. He must have felt like going back. The feelings must have been so severe for Abraham. The test was so severe for this man as he went through such severe mental agony during the preparations.

On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the mountain from afar. Then Abraham requested his men to stay with the donkeys and he, along with his son and all

other things for the offering, started towards the mountain. He did not inform his servants of the object of his journey, for he must have apprehended that opposition would be made by them. Rather he assured that he and Isaac would return after worshipping God. What he had to encounter on the way was the question of Isaac concerning the animal for the offering. Isaac asked him: father, we have everything except the animal for the sacrifice. Abraham could not say, son you are the one to be sacrificed. He kept the secret to his bosom. And answered him, the Lord will provide for Him an animal for the offering. I guess as they were reaching near the mountain, his heart must have become so heavy, his hands must have got more fastened to the hands of Isaac, his voice got thinned and his eyes filled with tears and may be running out. The moment of losing his son was so close. In a few hours, the promised son will be ashes. This was so severe. The feelings run so deep and all what he remembered must have been the promises of God concerning Isaac. An emotional trauma is building up and all what he could was to go on with the sacrifice. I believe that Abraham was so remorseful while he was constructing the altar. While keeping the last batch of woods, his hands must have been shaking and eyes running out. The situation became severe as he was binding his son on the altar. Isaac must have been crying and asking his father to free him. He must have been making efforts to get out of the ropes. Abraham must have been so sorrowful and I believe he could never be calm except crying out loud. I won't blame as any father with a heart would do it. Hardly any father can avoid the cry of his son. This test was very severe for Abraham!

Sometimes God's tests will come in the unexpected time and what it will require of us will be something that is so close to our heart, something we cannot easily forsake, something on which we have built a tower of dreams, something on which, we think all our future rests, something or somebody who we think is the entire world to us. You will be asked to give away a precious thing or a precious person. Know that God's test are, at times, severe in intensity. You must be prepared for it.

3. THE TESTS OF GOD RESULTS IN HIS INTERVENTION (Genesis 22:10-14)

Finally, after looking at his son for a last time, Abraham took his sharpened knife and was

ready to chop the head of his son like he has done with all other animals. But God wouldn't allow it. He intervened! The Angel of the LORD stopped Abraham just as he took in his hand the sharpened knife to slay Isaac! Now God knew that Abraham would hold nothing back and that he did in fact fear God. Here, God's intervention happened in three ways: First of all, God attested the faith of Abraham and commended him for it. God said He is convinced of Abraham's fear of Him by not sparing his son Isaac from being offered on the altar. Secondly, God intervened and helped Isaac escape even without a scratch. He was saved from the sharp chopping knife. Lastly, God intervened and teaches Abraham a new lesson. Once Abraham took his eyes off Isaac, he saw a ram caught in the thicket by the horns. He offered it in sacrifice, regarding it as a substitute for his son, directly provided by God Himself for a burnt offering. Abraham learned that God will provide when there is a real need. Abraham discovered a new name for God — "Jehovah-jireh" — -which can be translated "The Lord will see to it" or "The Lord will be seen." The statement "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen" helps us understand some truths about the provision of the Lord. God intervened when Abraham needed help in such a severe test. God's intervention was acknowledged by Abraham as well.

The tests of God ensure His intervention in your life. When you are going through a trial, please realize that God intervenes and makes everything perfect. God's intervention will help you come out of the test as a victor like Abraham did. In every test God has his perfect plan in place. Every test is tailor-made. The tests of God are so real. They happen to any child of God. They are often severe too. Some tests, like this one Abraham had, are so painful and severe in intensity. But they ensure God's intervention. Like Abraham was helped by God, you will also experience the intervention of God in your tests! God does not leave anyone unattended.



CHINESE UNDERGROUND CHURCH IS 'UNSTOPPABLE' SAYS FRANCIS CHAN



The underground church in China is "unstoppable" despite extreme persecution because Chinese Christians are willing to suffer for the Gospel, Francis Chan has said.

Several years ago, the Crazy Love author sold his house and spent a year traveling through Southeast Asia, visiting churches and interacting with church leaders. Recently, he told attendees gathered at the "Rethink Church/Rethink Mission" event at McLean Bible Church in Vienna, Virginia, that during his time in China, he met with the pastor of an underground church.

The pastor told him that when China temporarily loosened its restrictions on religious freedom, he decided to hold a public, large church service "just like the Americans do." The church was attended by 2,000 believers in Shanghai, which had "never been done," Chan said. However, it wasn't long before the Chinese government arrested the pastor and closed the church, forcing the congregation to once again worship underground.

Chan said he was taken aback when the pastor told him, "Francis, that was

the greatest thing for our church. When we got up and started doing services, I couldn't get anyone to do anything — they just wanted to show up and listen to a sermon."

"Listen, we lost our whole DNA, and when we were forced back underground it was so refreshing," the pastor continued. "We got our DNA back, because the underground church was built upon these five pillars. One, we were devoted to the word of God. Two, we were deeply devoted to prayer. Three, we expected every single believer to be out sharing the Gospel. Four, there was a regular expectation of miracles. Five, we embraced suffering for the glory of Christ."

While embracing suffering and finding joy in hardship seems counterintuitive, Chan said that idea is in "every book in the New Testament." "The underground Chinese

church, he said, has grown so large because Chinese Christians "actually believed they could make disciples and start these gatherings because Jesus was enough." "I started to think, 'This is what made the underground church in China unstoppable. If you have a group of people that actually embrace suffering, how are you ever going to stop them?'" he asked.

Underground house churches are illegal in China, as they operate outside the guidelines of the government. Despite continued persecution, their membership is rapidly growing across regions and demographics. Fenggang Yang, of Purdue University's Center on Religion and Chinese Society, estimates that there are between 93 million and 115 million Protestants in China, with fewer than 30 million attending officially registered churches. Continuing his message, Chan argued that the problem with churches in the West is that they are "so stoppable the moment it gets too difficult." "What if you actually go, 'I want to suffer for Christ?'" Chan asked. "Will you suffer to obey these things? Will you actually sacrifice? Because it's a lot easier to come somewhere and be fed than to love [others] as much as Christ loved you, as much as the Father loves the Son, and to break bread with [others] thinking, 'Christ was tortured for me; would I do that for [others]?'"

The pastor encouraged attendees to become missionaries - wherever they are - and embrace suffering for the glory of Christ "because the Church is that beautiful and that important."

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NOAH'S ARK 'REPLICA' UNVEILED IN KENTUCKY, USA



Nathaniel Jeanson is a Harvard-educated biologist. For the past year, he has been involved in a spectacular \$100 million project, designed to educate and astonish the world. His project, however, has left many scientists in despair.

For Dr Jeanson is one of the advisers of Ark Encounter – billed as “a life-sized Noah’s Ark.” The 510-ft long boat and its surrounding attractions, unveiled in Kentucky on Thursday, has sparked a wave of protests, but he insisted that, far from being an outrage, the theme park was a gift to humanity.

“This is not anti-science,” he said, speaking to The Telegraph on the eve of the theme park’s opening. “I would say we embrace all science.” “We are just teaching people to think differently.” Indeed, he admits that his thinking is radically different to that of many of his Harvard peers.

He and his Creationist colleagues believe that the Bible is a book of historic record. They argue that Genesis tells a factual story explaining that the Earth is only a few thousand years old, that man and dinosaur co-existed, and that Noah built an ark to save animals from

a flood. Evolution, he believes, is a myth: Darwin’s work has been misinterpreted.

But many scientists are in despair at the museum, created by controversial Australian Creationist Ken Ham, and funded by donations, junk bonds and tax incentives – which have been challenged in court. “To me, this is a perversion of what religion is intended to do,” said Dr James Krupa, who teaches evolutionary biology at the University of Kentucky.

More than four in 10 Americans continue to believe that God created humans in their present form 10,000 years ago. 50 per cent of Americans believe humans evolved, but the majority of these say God guided the evolutionary process. However, the percentage who say God was not involved is rising.

The park shows children alongside dinosaurs, and features a petting zoo, daily animal shows, zip lines, live entertainment and a 1,500-seat restaurant. Future phases of the project call for building “a walk through Biblical history”, as well as the Tower of Babel. Standard admission is \$40 for adults and \$28 for children, while parking will cost an additional \$10.

ASIA BIBI FREED AND LOOKS FOR ASYLUM IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

Pakistani Christian mother Asia Bibi has finally been freed from prison after spending over eight years on death row for allegedly committing “blasphemy” against Islam, but she and her family still remain in the Muslim-majority country awaiting asylum.

Government officials confirmed Thursday that the Catholic mother of five left a detention center in the Punjab province on Wednesday while aided by security due to radical Muslim death threats against her and her family following the news of her acquittal. Bibi was flown to Islamabad. While early reports had indicated that Bibi was flown out of the country, a spokesman for Pakistan’s foreign ministry told on Thursday that those reports are not true. “Let me state clearly that Asia Bibi remains at a safe place in Pakistan,” the spokesperson said during a press briefing. “I would also request all of you to verify such news before issuing them, in line with standards of objective, impartial journalism to prevent needless sensationalism and controversy.”



Bibi, a farm laborer from the Punjab province, was accused of insulting the Muslim prophet Muhammad in 2009 by Muslim farm workers after an argument over the Christian woman drinking from the same water supply as the Muslim women. As blasphemy is a crime punishable by death or life imprisonment in Pakistan, Bibi

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thanks to our booming economy, they now have a chance at more opportunities than they've ever had before. It is true. Our economy is so strong, that when people are getting out of jail, they're actually able to find jobs," the president continued.

"And I have three instances of companies that hired people coming out of prison, and they are so thrilled by the performance of these people. And now they're doing it more and more and more. And a lot of people are seeing this. It's great."

The FIRST STEP Act aims to reduce the federal recidivism rate by expanding training and educational programs that are helping inmates prepare for life outside of prison. Moreover, it would open up the door for eligible inmates to earn time credits to complete their sentences in halfway homes or in-home confinement.

The bill also seeks to ban the shackling of pregnant inmates in labor, and to place a 500-mile limit on how far inmates can be incarcerated from their families. The legislation has stalled in the Senate after it passed the House of Representatives by a 360-59 vote. The latest developments indicate that Senate leadership has now reached an agreement on language in the legislation with the White House.

Supporters of the bill, including black pastors who have met with Trump to discuss its benefits, had been hoping to secure the president's backing, which they now have, as he vowed to sign the document when presented before him. In his speech on Wednesday, Trump made special mention of his spiritual adviser, Paula White-Cain, who leads New

Destiny Christian Center in Florida.

When talking about the incentives for prisoners, he said that they include "vocational training, educational coursework, and faith-based programs. And I want to thank Paula White, very much, because I know you very much wanted that — thank you, Paula — that reduce their chances of recidivism, and, in other words, reduce their chances of going back to prison substantially."

Trump said that his administration has worked closely with law enforcement regarding the legislation, ensuring that it will remain "tough on crime" and support the "tremendous work of our police and the tremendous job that law enforcement does throughout our country."

White revealed on Twitter that more than 2,000 evangelical pastors signed a letter in support of the FIRST STEP Act, calling it "the most significant effort at criminal justice reform to be passed in a generation." Trump referenced the letter and said that the faith community in America has shown "unbelievable support" for the bill.

Major faith-based nonprofits serving prisoners and their families, such as Prison Fellowship, said that the agreement between Trump and the Senate is crucial. "Prison Fellowship applauds the President and the members of the Senate and House for reaching this agreement and taking a substantial step forward for justice," said James Ackerman, president and CEO of Prison Fellowship.

"Now it is critical for Members of the Senate to act in a swift manner to pass this amended bill."

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Lindell warned that Christians should "stay away from Yoga because of its demonic roots." "Participating at any level is potentiative the opening of your life, your home, your situation to the demonic," he warned. Lindell explained that there are three main components of yoga to achieve the goal to raising and expanding "consciousness for the purpose of experiencing peace, energy and divine presence." One of those elements is different body positions. "Every single body position has a meaning," Lindell said. "Let me say this, yoga positions were not designed by your local fitness instructor. They were designed and they were created with demonic intent to open you open you up to demonic power. Because Hinduism is demonic."

"Every false religion is demonic. Hinduism is not a mild, gentile, pacifist religion. Anybody who says that has not visited India," Lindell continued. "Neither is Buddhism. We may have a sanitized view of it in our Western culture but it is not pacifist. It is demonic. It is idle worship." Lindell contended that yoga salutation poses are designed to pay homage to the sun god Surya. "That is what all of those are doing. You are welcoming the sun god," Lindell said. Lindell also condemned the lotus position because it has "sexual connotations."

"Some may say that is not what it means to me," Lindell recognized. "Well, when you participate in yoga, that is what it means. To say that the positions of yoga are just exercise are tantamount to saying water baptisms is just aqua aerobics." According to Lindell, practitioners of Hatha yoga are sometimes given mantras to chant. Those mantras, he said, are typically the names of Hindu

gods or goddesses. He claims that chanting those mantras violate the first commandment to have no other gods but God.

"Yoga is diametrically opposed to Christianity," he warned. "Meditation in yoga brings a person to a consciousness of nothing around them, an awareness of nothing around them. It lowers the mind gate that God has established for a spiritual preservation spiritually speaking for a person."

As reported by a magazine, Lindell's remarks have drawn the ire of yoga practitioners in the area and seems to have impacted turnout at yoga classes in the area in the week following the sermon. Christian yoga practitioner Reggie Harris explained that he was "disappointed" and "angry" with Lindell's sermon. "I know my relationship with the Lord and my relationship with him has gotten deeper through yoga," Harris, who has been doing yoga for five years, explained. Harris told that "yoga transcends religion."

Submissions Invited

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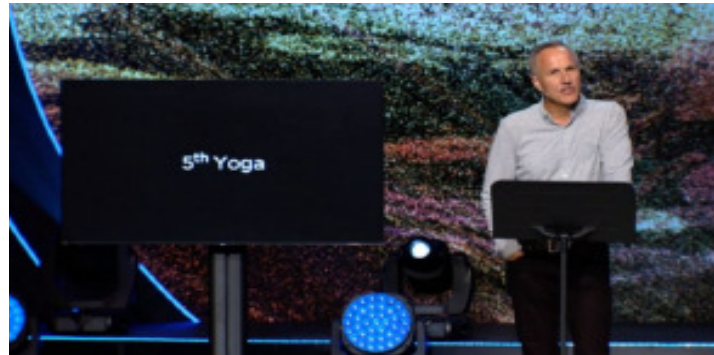
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YOGA HAS 'DEMONIC ROOTS AND IT'S DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSED TO CHRISTIANITY'

Missouri megachurch pastor John Lindell has warned his 10,000-member congregation not to participate in yoga, saying that positions associated with exercise and meditation activity were designed to "open you up to demonic power."

Lindell, the pastor of the James River Church in Ozark, gave a sermon titled "Pursuing the Paranormal" on the Sunday before Halloween in which he spoke out against "demonic influences" such as paganism, witchery, sorcery, fortune-telling, astrology and elements of Eastern mysticism such as yoga.

"I am doing this because it seems that our culture is becoming increasingly obsessed with all things paranormal," the Assemblies of God pastor said at the beginning of the sermon. "According to a Gallup poll, three-in-four Americans believe in the paranormal and in a recent Pew poll, 40 percent of Christians believe in psychics, 29 percent of Christians believe in reincarnation and 26 percent of



Christians believe in astrology. ... The entertainment industry has taken note by responding to a plethora of video games, television shows and movies."

"It seems the paranormal has become the new normal," he added. "It's not just haunted houses and witches at Halloween but it has worked its way into everyday life through things like Eastern mysticism and Mother Earth practices and philosophies."

Lindell said that one of the most pressing signs of today's "post-Christian" society is the mainstream acceptance of yoga by not

only the culture but Christians and Christian organizations as well. He argued that no matter what practitioners do during yoga, that the physical practice of Yoga cannot be separated from its "Hindu roots." Lindell admitted that it may seem strange to many that he is talking about yoga in a sermon about para-

normal influences. "That alone really for me is an indication of how far our society has drifted into a post-Christian culture," he stressed. "Earlier, it would have been a given that yoga is a form of Eastern mysticism that Christians should absolutely avoid but that is no longer the case. Yoga it seems is everywhere. For example, if you go to the local [YMCA] and you click on the 'Healthy Living' link, you will find no less than 31 references to yoga."

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To establish indigenous healthy growing churches that will make a significant gospel impact within the culture, people groups, communities, multiple generations in India.

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