



THE STAND

April 2025

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SHEPHERD**

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THE STAND

VOLUME 49, NO. 3

The Stand magazine is a publication of American Family Association. Except for a combined January/February issue, *The Stand* is published monthly.

AFA's mission is to inform, equip, and activate individuals and families to transform American culture and to give aid to the church, here and abroad, in its calling to fulfill the Great Commission.

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Activate Summit

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To learn more, visit activate.afa.net/summit.

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BY WESLEY WILDMON
AFA VICE PRESIDENT

Everything rises and falls on leadership

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of wartime leadership; just ask the British.

During the darkest days of Nazi aggression against the British Empire, Prime Minister Winston Churchill rallied the British people with his inspiring speeches that kept morale high and motivated the nation to defy Hitler's Germany.

Additionally, Churchill's planning, decision-making, determination, and strong personality solidified the alliance between Britain, Russia, and the United States, ultimately defeating the Axis powers and preserving civilization.

It appears that Churchill's tenacity and never-surrender attitude have inspired President Donald Trump, who displayed a bust of "The British Bulldog" in the Oval Office during his previous term. Since taking office less than 90 days ago, the new president has positioned himself as a wartime leader, swiftly taking action based on the mandate given to him by the American public this past November.

Here are three such actions that give American Christians hope for the coming years:

► **Trump pardoned 23 pro-lifers targeted by the previous administration's Department of Justice under the FACE Act.** In the summer of 2020, ANTIFA and Black Lives Matter activists were allowed to burn American cities with few or no criminal charges against them. Yet, under the Biden administration, Christians who were ministering and praying at abortion clinics were targeted, and some of these individuals received prison sentences of up to two years. (See p. 7.)

► **Trump reversed President Joe Biden's first executive order signed January 20, 2021.** The order was officially named *Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government*. According to the Trump administration, the Biden order "forced illegal and immoral discrimination programs, going by the name 'diversity, equity, and inclusion' (DEI), into virtually all aspects of the Federal Government." Trump signed his own executive order exactly four years later and characterized his action as "ending radical and wasteful government programs and preferencing."

► **Trump issued an executive order titled *Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government*.** In short, President Trump affirmed that the federal government will only recognize two genders. (See p. 22.) The executive order declared that:

Across the country, ideologues who deny the biological reality of sex have increasingly used legal and other socially coercive means to permit men to self-identify as women and gain access to intimate single-sex spaces and activities designed for women, from women's domestic abuse shelters to women's workplace showers. This is wrong. ... Basing Federal policy on truth is critical to scientific inquiry, public safety, morale, and trust in government itself.

Author, speaker, and pastor John Maxwell is credited with coining the phrase, "Everything rises and falls on leadership."

My papa, AFA Founder Don Wildmon, shared that quote with me many times during my beginning days here at AFA, and he took it to heart himself as he led AFA.




The Wildmon family at the Christian Inaugural Gala in Washington, D.C.

I reflected on Papa's leadership and legacy as my family and I were surrounded by Christian leaders at the Christian Inaugural Gala and Watch Party in Washington, D.C. Being in our nation's capital during a presidential inauguration was everything you could imagine. But being among hundreds of other Christian leaders was that much sweeter.

Leadership at all levels is crucial to a nation's well-being. That's why Paul exhorts Christians in 1 Timothy 2:1-2 to offer "prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings ... for kings and all who are in authority."

To guide your prayers, we have produced a bookmark that includes a prayer for President Trump. Packs of 10 bookmarks are available at resources.afa.net for a suggested donation of \$5 per pack to help cover printing and postage.

As Easter approaches, let us be thankful for God's mercy on our nation and in our lives. And let us be reminded that everything truly does rise and fall on leadership. May this season of positive change continue as America regains her greatness and God is honored. 

Issues@Hand

AFA initiatives • Christian activism • News briefs

AFA ends Target boycott

For the past nine years, American Family Association (AFA) has led a boycott of the Target Corporation over the retailer's decision to allow men into its restrooms and changing areas used by women and girls. This boycott was one of the largest in U.S. history, as the petition reached over 1 million signatures in a matter of weeks. To date, the boycott petition has over 1.5 million signatures.

Since the start of the boycott in April 2016, Target has:

- Lost over \$2 billion in stock value.
- Added single-occupancy restrooms to their stores.
- Scaled back LGBTQ Pride Month products (as of May 2024).
- Recently announced (in 2025) that it will no longer participate in the Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index, a benchmarking tool that gauges corporate treatment of LGBTQ employees.

"While Target is far from a good actor in the culture war, we firmly believe the boycott served its purpose," said AFA Vice

President Walker Wildmon. "Although Target didn't officially rescind its misguided policy, we believe the boycott caused Target to rethink how it promotes left-wing policies."

In addition, the Target boycott reshaped how America addresses the issue of transgenderism and helped launch the controversial subject to the forefront of the cultural debate, especially during the 2024 elections.

"Therefore, having examined the overall effect of this effort, AFA is officially ending its boycott of the Target Corporation," Wildmon announced in February.

"We want to thank the millions of families that shopped elsewhere in response to the boycott," he added.



UPCOMING

Activate Summit

- ▶ June 12-14, 2025
- ▶ Tupelo, Mississippi
- ▶ activate.afa.net/summit
- ▶ Registration ends April 18.

Weekend With AFA

- ▶ October 2-4, 2025
- ▶ Tupelo, Mississippi
- ▶ afa.net/weekend

Share-a-thon set for April 8-10

American Family Radio (AFR) is getting ready to host its Spring 2025 Share-a-thon. The theme of the three-day fundraising effort is "Pour Your Spirit Out," taken from Isaiah 44:3 and inspired by a Thrive Worship song with the same title.

"We are calling on God to pour out His Spirit on this ministry once again," said Jonathan Coker, director of AFR. "It is evident that God's Spirit has been at work through this ministry since its founding, and we are eternally grateful for that! Therefore, we are waiting in expectation of what He is going to do in and through our upcoming Share-a-thon."

Share-a-thon donations can be given via phone by calling 877-616-2396 or online at afr.net during April 8-10.

AFR adds new history podcast

AFR continues to expand its offerings to advance the gospel and further God's kingdom. A recent addition includes a new podcast titled **America's Providential History**.

Hosted by historian Stephen McDowell, this podcast is an online exclusive that presents the real story of America by exploring the hand of God in the nation's history. Listen anytime at afr.net/podcasts.



Stephen McDowell



Vance pledges pro-life support

Stay involved, informed

- ▶ [afa.net](#) – Sign up for AFA Alert emails, and stay informed on issues that affect the family.
- ▶ [afr.net](#) – American Family Radio broadcasts on 164 stations in three formats – AFR talk, AFR inspiration (music and podcasts), and AFR hybrid.
- ▶ [afa.net/thestand](#) – AFA's official blog addresses culture, faith, and family issues. This site also includes online access to *The Stand* magazine.
- ▶ [afajournal.org](#) – This site archives past issues of AFA Journal (1993-2021).
- ▶ [afr.net/podcasts/the-stand-radio](#) – A weekly radio show featuring topics covered in *The Stand* magazine and blog.
- ▶ [stream.afa.net](#) – This platform hosts all AFA-produced video content.
- ▶ [activate.afa.net](#) – Activate is an in-depth educational worldview training course designed to provide Christians with biblical teaching on the core issues AFA addresses.
- ▶ [afn.net](#) – Find up-to-the-minute news at AFA's online news service.
- ▶ [onemillionmoms.com](#) – Take action to protect children from objectionable elements in entertainment outlets.

Contact elected officials

- ▶ **The President**
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500
Salutation: Dear Mr./Madam President
Comment line: 202.456.1111
Switch Board: 202.456.1414
TTY: 202.456.2613
[whitehouse.gov/contact](#)
- ▶ **The Vice President**
Old Executive Office Building
Washington, DC 20501
Salutation: Dear Mr./Madam Vice President
Other contact information, same as above.
- ▶ **U.S. House of Representatives**
The Honorable (Full Name)
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
Salutation: Dear Mr./Mrs. (Surname)
- ▶ **U.S. Senate**
The Honorable (Full Name)
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510
Salutation: Dear Senator (Surname)
- ▶ U.S. Capitol switchboard: 202.224.3121
TTY: 202.225.1904

U.S. Vice President J.D. Vance was a key speaker at the 52nd annual March for Life in Washington, D.C., on January 24, 2025. In his speech, Vance made assurances of the Trump administration's commitment to the sanctity of human life.

Vance emphasized the multi-faceted challenge of being pro-life – protecting the unborn in recognition that “every single child is a miracle and a gift from God” – and creating a culture that values and supports healthy families.

“By and large, our society, our country has not yet stepped up in the way you have,” Vance told the pro-life gathering. “And our government certainly has failed in that important responsibility. We failed a generation not only by permitting a culture of abortion on demand but also by neglecting to help young parents achieve the ingredients they need to [live] a happy and meaningful life. A culture of radical individualism took root, one where the responsibilities and joys of family life were seen as obstacles to overcome, not as personal fulfillment or personal blessings.”

Vance also said it is the task of our government to make it easier for families



Vance at Cincinnati Right to Life's Mini-March for Life in January 2022. Image taken by Cincinnati Right to Life.

to afford to have children and to welcome them as blessings.

“We need a culture that celebrates life at all stages, one that recognizes and truly believes that the benchmark of national success is not our GDP [gross domestic product] number or our stock market, but whether people feel that they can raise thriving and healthy families in our country.”

nregister.com, 1/24/25;
thedailywire.com, 1/24/25

Abortion: The leading cause of death globally



According to the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately 73 million abortions occur annually worldwide. However, another data source, Worldometer ([worldometers.info](#)), reveals that 45 million preborn babies were aborted globally in 2024. Even with this lower estimate, abortion remained the leading cause of the 62.4 million deaths recorded by WHO in 2024. This alarming statistic was fol-

lowed by nearly 18 million deaths from heart disease and almost 10 million deaths caused by cancer.

The data also indicated that nearly one-third (29%) of all pregnancies ended in abortion last year. In the United States, certain state-based studies show that more than 40% of abortions are performed on black females each year.

worldometers.info, 12/31/24;
crosswalk.com, 1/6/25; congress.gov; who.int

Persecuted, prosecuted pro-lifers pardoned

On January 23, President Donald Trump granted pardons for 23 pro-lifers who had been prosecuted by the former administration's Department of Justice, which was apparently acting in retaliation for the 2022 overturn of *Roe v. Wade*. (See *The Stand*, 6/24.)

Under the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act, the pro-life advocates had been unjustly prosecuted, convicted, fined, and – in some cases – imprisoned for peacefully protesting and participating in rescue missions at abortion clinics, according to the Thomas More Society (TMS).

Attorneys from TMS submitted to the

Trump administration formal requests for 21 of the 23 pardons.

After the pardons were granted, Steve Crampton, TMS senior counsel, said, "Today, freedom rings in our great nation."

Crampton explained that the wrongs against the pro-lifers could not be erased, but the pardons were "a huge step toward restoring justice."

Peter Breen, the executive vice president of TMS, emphasized the necessity of abolishing the law that enabled these prosecutions.

"We urge Congress to act swiftly in repealing the FACE Act to make sure that the Justice Department can never again



Pro-life activist Bevelyn Williams was pardoned from federal prison and returned home to her husband and their young daughter. Image taken from a February 3, 2025, interview conducted by Live Action.

weaponize this law to target peaceful pro-lifers with severe charges," Breen said.

thomasmoresociety.org, 1/23/25



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- ▶ **Receive His salvation, and begin your new life (Romans 10:9).**

Need more counsel or insight?

▶ **Need Him Global**

This ministry was founded in 1996 by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and other evangelical ministries to help persons come to faith in Christ.
needhim.org
888.633.3446

▶ **AFA**

Contact Pastor Joseph Parker, AFA director of outreach and intercession.
jparker@afa.net
662.844.5036 x381

Meta ends DEI programs amid corporate shift

Meta, the tech giant company that owns Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, has announced the termination of its diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs. The decision aligns with similar actions taken by Walmart, McDonald's, Ford, and Target, who are scaling back or getting rid of their DEI initiatives.

The move follows Meta's recent decision to end third-party fact-checking on its platforms. According to Janelle Gale, Meta's vice president of human resources, the changes reflect broader societal trends, including the 2023 Supreme Court ruling against affirmative action in college admissions.

"The legal and policy landscape surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in the United States is changing," Gale said.

The rollback reflects a growing corporate



trend to retreat from DEI initiatives. The shift is driven by a national conservative swing and skepticism about DEI's impact on business outcomes. While companies like Apple and Costco continue to defend their policies, Meta and others are apparently navigating and adapting to changing public sentiment.

axios.com, 1/10/25; msn.com, 1/10/25; reuters.com, 1/24/25



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Lower educational standards impact kids and parents

Multiple polls reveal that American parents are dissatisfied with big government's woke control of their children's education. Parents Defending Education found that 52% of parents polled want to see the United States Department of Education scaled back, with 77% wanting states to have more flexibility in managing local public school districts.

For parents in New Jersey, the battle over public education took a major downturn on January 1, 2025, when Act 1669 went into effect. With its implementation, prospective teachers in New Jersey are no longer required to pass a reading, writing, and mathematics test to be certified as state educators.



Considering that 2024 educational testing data showed over 48% of all New Jersey students did not meet English language arts standards, and 60% did not meet basic math requirements, parents are concerned over the negative impact that poorly prepared teachers might have on their children's already-low testing scores.

pjmedia.com, 1/5/25;

breitbart.com, 1/7/25;

hamiltonstrategies.com, 1/20/25

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Todd and Debbie, members since 2009

Turning the Bible upside down

Zondervan Publishing's recent release of the *NIV Upside-Down Kingdom Bible* elicited a warning for Christians from Ken Ham, founder and CEO of Answers in Genesis: "Stay away from this compromised, woke study Bible!" Edited by Preston Sprinkle, founder of the Center for Faith, Sexuality, and Gender, this new study Bible includes articles from "a diverse set of trusted Christian voices," according to the product description.

An article under the heading of "Science" begins with this comment: "Did God really create a man instantaneously, place him in a garden, and then form a woman from his side? Are they then the sole progenitors of every human being who has ever lived? While varying views existed before the rise of modern science, evolutionary theory has certainly

complicated the situation."

A commentary under the heading of "Migration" includes this statement: "Forced displacement due to famine is becoming increasingly common as global warming inequitably decreases arable land in the majority world." (*Editor's note: The "majority world" is new terminology for what has previously been called the "developing world" or the "Third World."*)

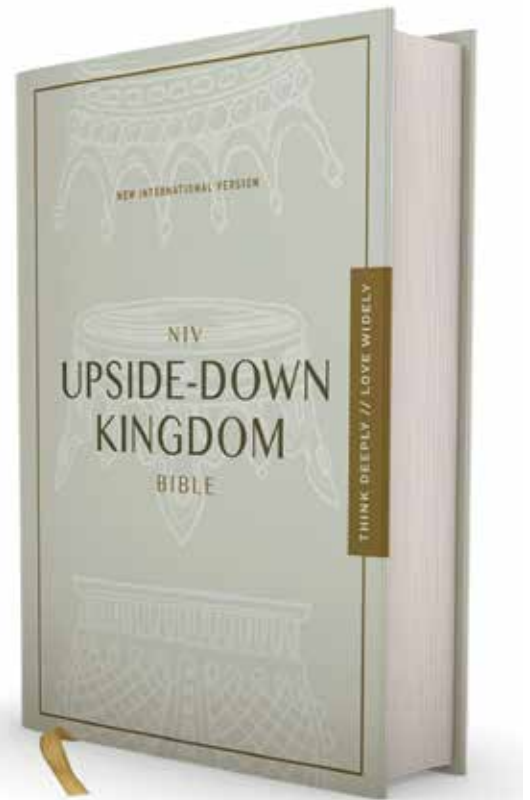
In a January email alert, Monica Cole, director of AFA's One Million Moms, stated that the *Upside-Down Kingdom Bible* "can be more accurately described as upside-down theology because it includes interpretations of Scripture from a woke mindset."

notthebee.com, 1/5/25;

harbingersdaily.com, 1/17/25;

faithgateway.com;

onemillionmoms.com



GOOD NEWS in uncertain times



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Islam and communism drive most Christian persecution



Trump reverses U.S. policy on transgenderism

During President Donald Trump's first days in office, he signed executive orders that turned around "U.S. policy on the scourge of transgenderism," according to *The American Spectator*.

For example, in late January, Trump signed an executive order ending federal support for gender transition surgery for those under the age of 19, following through with his commitment to protect America's children from "surgical and chemical mutilation."

"It is the policy of the United States that it will not fund, sponsor, promote, assist, or support the so-called 'transition' of a child from one sex to another, and it will rigorously enforce all laws that prohibit or limit these destructive and life-altering procedures," the order stated.

In a follow-up statement from the White House, the Trump administration declared that the order was "already having its intended effect – preventing children from being maimed and sterilized by adults perpetuating a radical, false claim that they can somehow change a child's sex. Hospitals around the country are taking action to downsize or eliminate their so-called 'gender-affirming care' programs."

On the coattails of that order, another executive order barred transgender participation in women's sports.

According to DailyMail.com, "The order uses Title IX, a law against sex discrimination in taxpayer-funded education programs, to ban transgender girls and women [who are bio-

logically boys and men] from participating in female school sports activities."

Trump also said he would make every effort to keep men from participating in women's sports at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. He clarified that "America categorically rejects transgender lunacy."

Trump added, "We want them to change everything having to do with the Olympics and having to do with this absolutely ridiculous subject."

As of press time, executive orders addressing transgenderism were being met with backlash from the Left.

apnews.com, 1/28/25; whitehouse.gov, 1/28/25, 2/3/25; spectator.org, 2/4/25; dailymail.co.uk, 2/5/25



Even death could not dissuade the

SEEKING, SAVING SHEPHERD



By Ed Vitagliano,
AFA executive vice president

Redeeming lost souls was not an easy thing, even for the Creator of the universe.

It required suffering by the Son of God. There was deep humiliation at the hands of worthless men and betrayal by close friends; there was excruciating pain and anguish, followed by the torment of crucifixion. And beyond that, there was what seems to have been a deep and unfathomable sense of utter loneliness, leading to the mournful cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46).

The death of the Messiah on a Roman cross would not be the way any human would have chosen to accomplish redemption. This was the unexpected path to freedom. Easter demonstrates that redemption is *God’s* work, and the Lord of Glory asked for neither mankind’s counsel nor permission.

In the aftermath of the crucifixion, God passionately pursues lost souls – like a shepherd pursues a wayward sheep. In fact, some might say God gets downright pushy. But who could blame Him? If death could not dissuade the Son of God, why would anything else?

The God who answers

To get our attention, He uses means, both expected and unexpected, to break through the clutter and white noise of life, penetrating the blindness of closed minds and the deluded self-righteousness of hardened hearts.

That process can get pretty ugly. After all, we are slaves of sin who, by and large, love our chains. Thus, God often uses circumstances to alert us to our desperate situation, and this can make the cure seem worse than the disease.

For example, Psalm 107 presents four illustrations of situations whereby the Lord makes Himself known to the lost.

First, there are people wandering in a trackless desert, with no idea of how to find a town or city. They are hungry and thirsty, filled only by discouragement (vv. 4-9).

Then there are prisoners “in misery and chains;” darkness and death haunt their steps. The burdens of their lives humble them. They stumble about in distress, and humanly speaking, there is no one coming to help (vv. 10-16).

There are “fools” who have rebelled against God and are the cause of their own suffering (vv. 17-22).

Finally, in contrast, there are hardworking seafarers who simply get caught in a random, yet mighty, storm that threatens to sink and destroy them (vv. 23-32).

These circumstances are undoubtedly meant to represent the various troubles that afflict us all. It is certainly not an exhaustive list. Yet, we feel the desperation of those stricken by sin and misfortune.

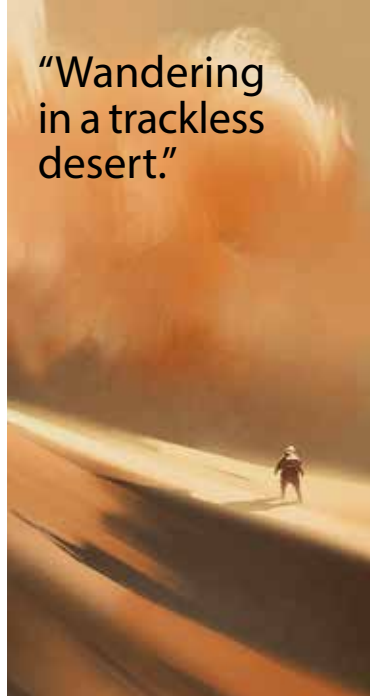
Those in all four groups respond in common fashion: “Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble” (vv. 6, 13, 19, 28). There is within them all a desperate plea for salvation, albeit of a natural and temporal kind. Still, it is a shadow of the deeper longing for eternal life that exists within the hearts of many of the lost.

We may take great encouragement in noting that these four groups of people in Psalm 107 also have something else in common – the answer of a merciful and gracious God. In each case, the Lord delivers and saves them: “He brought them out of their distresses” (v. 28).

The God who draws near

At the close of each section, after the afflicted have been rescued, the Psalmist exhorts them all: “Let them give thanks to the Lord for His lovingkindness, and for His wonders to the sons of men!” (vv. 8, 15, 21, 31).

We are not told if they honored the Lord in response to His gracious kindness. It is not uncommon for people to ignore the mercies of God. After all, only one leper returned to Jesus to thank Him for His healing power; the other nine, freshly made whole, moved on to enjoy their new lives without thinking “to give glory to God” (Luke 17:11-19).



“Wandering
in a trackless
desert.”

So, the Scripture reveals that the Lord often does *something else*: He draws near to people and makes His presence even clearer. Something happens that causes people to think about God.

For example, in the New Testament, Jesus (and later His church) performed miracles that shocked people, clearly indicating that God had drawn near. When confronted by the Pharisees, who declared that Jesus was operating miraculously according to demonic power, Jesus said, “But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Luke 11:20).

Sometimes, that’s how we see that God is near – in actions that are so stunning that we can say nothing else other than *that was “the finger of God.”*

However, such demonstrations of God’s power are, by definition, *rare*. They are miracles, signs, and wonders – acts that amaze and awe because they happen infrequently.

Fortunately for us, the nearness of God is more frequently made evident in less dramatic fashion. Perhaps, at the funeral of a friend, a person thinks about Him; someone else is overcome by a sense of the Divine during a violent thunderstorm or the timely coming of desperately needed rain; yet another senses God’s hand in the clearly intelligent design of nature.

Good works done by Christians in the name of Jesus Christ can point people to the Lord as well. When an act of mercy meets the desperate need of a neighbor, then they might “glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). Why? Because they know that God is near to them.

Moreover, as Christians, the love we have for Jesus can impact people and bear witness to His transforming power.

Author and humorist Garrison Keillor tells a story about a



“Caught in
a random,
yet mighty,
storm.”

Thanksgiving when his family gathered in Minnesota. They prepared to eat by asking a family member to pray and give thanks to God.

Everybody in the family knew that Uncle John couldn't pray without talking about the cross and crying. Sure enough, Uncle John prayed, talked about the cross, and cried. Meanwhile, the rest of us shifted nervously from one foot to the other and longed for the prayer to end. All of us knew that Jesus died on the cross for us, but Uncle John had never gotten over it.

While Keillor undoubtedly meant the story to be humorous, it is nevertheless a powerful testimony of the impact of the love of Jesus on Christians. And when it continues to impact us, people are made aware of God's nearness.

The God who pardons

While all these things can impact the sinner on behalf of a loving God, nothing cuts to the heart like God's perfect Word – preached, read, or shared and applied by the Holy Spirit to a sinner's heart. Nothing causes joy like the heartfelt acceptance of the pardon offered in the gospel.

During the ministry of Jesus, even miracles were not enough to convert stubborn sinners. Beautiful sunsets might cast God's shadow on the heart of a lost person, but sunsets cannot redeem a polluted soul. The kindness of a Christian might prick the conscience of the rebel, but the dark waters of rebellion, having receded for a time, often

flow right back into the estuary. Even the evidence of the Creator in His creation can be rejected and suppressed by the idolator who refuses to surrender his gods.

Without the clarion call of the gospel message, none of the above truly explains the *why* of what is happening. They can trigger a hunger and a thirst for righteousness, but only the clear, biblical gospel can point the wandering soul to that which satisfies his longings – God Himself.

Paul states, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16).

The proclamation of the good news is *divine power*, and it strikes deep into the heart. When the apostle Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, those present "were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?'" (Acts 2:37).

The God who knocks

The church must be ready with the answer to that question – especially at Easter.

Many of us who attend church faithfully have heard of "CEOs," or people who attend "Christmas-Easter Only." Some jokingly call them "Chreasters" for the same reason.

Yes, we might make fun of such sporadic attendance, but at least these folks are there with us. They might come for their own reasons – ones that have nothing to do with a hunger for God. Maybe they are honoring Mom or Dad and going to church with their parents while they're in town for the holidays.


The Lord Jesus wants them. Like the Messiah having dinner with sinners in the Gospels, God desires them to be with Him.


Even for the Christian, Jesus is pictured as knocking on the door and desiring fellowship with His people (Revelation 3:20).

Paul understood the heart of God toward lost people when he said in 2 Corinthians 5:20 that Christians are "ambassadors for Christ." We represent the Savior in a passionate manner: We *beg* people "on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

Most amazingly, Paul reveals the heart of the Father toward spiritual wanderers and prisoners, fools, and those drowning through no fault of their own. Paul says we are to plead with the lost to be reconciled to God "as though *God* were making an appeal through us."

God *pleading* with people to receive the peace that He offers only makes sense in light of the suffering of Christ on Golgotha long ago. He is the God who answers heartfelt cries for help. He draws near to people who have forgotten Him. He offers pardon through the gospel.

He is the God who knocks on closed doors. 



"He is the God who answers heartfelt cries for help."





9 REASONS to support AFA

- 1 AMERICAN FAMILY RADIO** reaches millions of families with news and analysis from both a Christian and conservative perspective. Through 165 stations in 30 states, the AFR app, and social media, AFR promotes the sanctity of human life as well as evangelism, discipleship, and Christian missions. Extending the network's reach, radio stations nationwide rebroadcast news gathered and distributed by American Family News.
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- 7 AFA'S STATED MISSION** is focused on God's kingdom. *The mission of American Family Association is to inform, equip, and activate individuals and families to transform American culture and to give aid to the church, here and abroad, in its calling to fulfill the Great Commission.*
- 8 AFA'S STEWARDSHIP RECORD** is trustworthy. With a strong track record spanning over 45 years, donors can trust AFA to use their gifts with integrity and frugality. AFA continues to operate debt-free and has received the highest approvals from independent audits and charity-rating groups.
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Your prayers and gifts underwrite a faithful, determined, and prayerful grassroots effort to restore America to her Christian moorings. Without your contributions, AFA would not exist.



FAMILY CAMP

A SUMMER TRADITION WITH A TWIST



By Matthew White

With summer just around the corner, many children and their parents dream of the long-standing tradition of going to summer camp for a few days, a week, or even longer. According to the American Camp Association, an organization that serves and offers accreditation for camps across the nation, approximately 26 million children attend some type of summer camp annually.

Most parents know the benefits of summer camp for children and youth – independence, excitement, adventure, new friendships, spiritual growth, time away from screens, and many more. But in recent years, increasing awareness of the prevalence of sexual predators and sexual abuse has led some parents to question whether it is a good idea to send their children away for a week or more to be cared for by strangers.

It's an unfortunate reality, but summer camp can sometimes expose children to bullying, pornography, and even sexual abuse.

Camping as a family

But what if there was a way to reduce or eliminate those potential problems while still offering the valuable benefits and experience of summer camp? Family camp may be the answer.

Although summer camps for children and youth have been a staple in American culture for decades, parents may be surprised to learn that many camps offer overnight, weekend, and weeklong experiences for the entire family.

Doug McClain, board member of the Christian Camp and Conference Association and vice president of operations with Sky Ranch, shared his thoughts with *The Stand* about the importance of family camps.

Sky Ranch (skyranch.org) is a camp ministry located in multiple states, including two Colorado locations that offer camps especially designed for families.

“Family camp is about intentional time with family,” McClain explained. “It’s a time where you can focus on being with each other and loving and investing in each other, as opposed to trying to figure out what you are going to do next [for] a traditional vacation.”

Those moments could happen during a horseback ride when a father enjoys a one-on-one conversation with his daughter, or on a challenge course where a mother teaches her children the importance of trying new things and overcoming fears.

“Our main ministry at Sky Ranch ... has been pouring into youth by sharing the gospel and promoting Christian growth through discipleship,” McClain said. “And one way to pour into those youth is by investing in families, because healthy families lead to healthy kids.”

Sky Ranch is only one of many ministries that offer family camps. With hundreds to choose from, families can find one that fits their interests and needs.

For example, families who want to take a step back in time may find Fort Rock Family Camp and Retreat Center (fortrock.org)



Many Christian camps and conference centers are members of the Christian Camp and Conference Association (CCCA). For the almost 900 camps in its membership, CCCA provides tools, resources, and training to maximize the camp experience. It is an invaluable resource for those interested in finding a camp that aligns with their beliefs and provides an experience to be remembered for a lifetime. Visit cca.org to learn more.

appealing. Nestled in the Ozark Mountains of Northwest Arkansas, Fort Rock's family camp is a re-created 1800s-style fort and Western town. Campers can visit the rifle and archery ranges, hone their tomahawk-throwing skills, and slide through a 200-foot-long mineshaft.

Lake-loving families might enjoy a week at WinShape Camps (camps.winshape.org) in Crandall, Georgia. Situated on a peninsula, the Cohutta Springs Conference Center hosts WinShape's annual weeklong family camp, which offers canoeing, lake-blobbering, banana-boating, zip-lining, and much more. WinShape also hosts a mom/daughter weekend as well as a dad/son weekend.

Families who want to experience "the funnest, most vacation-like vacation" should consider Pine Cove Family Camp (pinecove.com) with locations in South Carolina and Texas. Pine Cove focuses on fun and faith, with the overall goal of cultivating a relaxing environment where families grow closer to God while fortifying their bonds with each other. A college-age counselor is assigned to each family and plays a significant role in their lives that week.

Camps vary in scheduling, but most allow several hours of free time each day for families to explore and enjoy the camps offerings at their leisure.

Parents will be excited to learn that most camps offer all-inclusive packages, meaning lodging, meals, and snacks are all provided for the duration of the stay.

Connecting as a family

In addition to the activities camps offer, most also dedicate certain times of each day for fellowship, biblical teaching, worship, and family devotion.

While the camps are designed for the whole family, most recognize the need for parents to spend quality time together. Many camps provide counselors to hang out with older children, and some even offer childcare for the youngest of campers, ensuring Mom and Dad can enjoy a date night.



Jim and Angela Davis and their children at Pine Cove Family Camp.

Although activities and opportunities at Christian family camps differ, they share a common purpose: to help families connect, spend quality time together without distractions, and deepen their relationship with the Lord.


"In our culture, families are always going and doing, and when they're not, they're staring at their phones," McClain said. "So, the question is, how do we get families to slow down and connect, because I think there is a subconscious desire for that.

"I love Christian camping because I think it's one of the greatest tools ... for fostering relationships with the Lord," McClain continued. "And I think families are desperate for that real connection."

Finding a camp for the family

Locating a Christian family camp is not difficult. Retreathood (retreathood.com), a ministry devoted to helping people find Christian retreats and camps, lists over 260 family camps scattered across the United States.

From Washington to California, Maine to Florida, and nearly every state in-between, prospective campers can find a suitable location for a memorable, weeklong family experience.

"Pray about it and look into it," McClain urged. "I think it would be [a] life-changing experience for you and your family. It will be one of the most gratifying, fulfilling times you spend as a family and with your kids in a long time." 

Editor's Note: No endorsement is implied by highlighting various camps and websites in this article. The aim is to shed light on the growing trend of family camps and to present it as an option for readers.

As the 2024 Pine Cove Family Camp speakers at the South Carolina location, my husband, Jim, and I geared the teaching content toward a counseling/biblical approach to relationships and the implications that has in our relationship with God, as a couple and with our kids. We also participated in the camp and had a great time as a family. Our kids had discipleship time with other campers their age and college-age counselors. We had time dedicated to us as a couple and to our family. I absolutely loved the hybrid model as well as the family devotion time that helped us facilitate deeper discussions with our kids.

ANGELA DAVIS, SPEAKER, CHRISTIAN COUNSELOR, AND PASTOR'S WIFE

Pine Cove is really fun and a good bonding time. My favorite part was the big game between the parents and the kids and watching my parents play.

JAMES DAVIS, AGE 10

The college students on staff at Pine Cove were my favorite part. They were just a few years older than me and were great mentors. I also enjoyed the competition games with my family.

TURNER DAVIS, AGE 17

THIS IS MY FATHER'S WORLD

CLIMATE-CHANGE CLARITY FOR CHRISTIANS

By Jordan Chamblee

Climate change is one of the most contentious and complex scientific discussions of our time. Ideologically charged discourse has distorted what should be a straightforward examination of the planet's health, leading many Christians to feel either confused or divided about the best way to address the issue.

Dr. E. Calvin Beisner is the founder of the Cornwall Alliance (cornwallalliance.org), an organization that brings together evangelical Christian experts from various fields, including science, economics, theology, philosophy, and religious leadership. Its mission is to promote biblical principles for environmental stewardship through public education and policy advocacy.

In a recent interview with *The Stand*, Beisner explored key questions surrounding climate change.





The Stand: Are climate concerns legitimate?

E. Calvin Beisner: The concerns about climate change are in some ways legitimate and in some ways exaggerated. But generally, the responses to climate change that seem to dominate the discourse do very, very serious harm to the poor around the world and, frankly, to everybody else. The fears concerning climate change are exaggerated. They're not unjustified, but they are exaggerated. The best science tells us that there's a much more moderate sort of position that makes better sense.

TS: How do we know that concerns about climate change are exaggerated?

EB: The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change actually revealed that ... in its third assessment report in 2001. It explained that because the earth's climate is a *coupled non-linear fluid dynamic system*, it is, therefore, "impossible" – in the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's own words – to predict future global temperatures.

TS: So, are the current ways of predicting climate change faulty?

EB: What we do know is this: The computer climate models, on average, project two to three times as much warming in response to increased CO₂ in the atmosphere as actually observed. In fact, some of them project far more than that. But on average, they project two to three times as much warming as actually occurs.

TS: Is the earth getting warmer?

EB: The answer is *yes*, depending on what time frame you're looking at. If we're looking at a long enough time frame, we could say that even in the last hundred years or so, we've been getting cooler than it was 6,000 years ago. Six thousand years ago, during what geologists refer to as the Holocene Climate Optimum, the global average temperature was probably around 4 to 5 degrees Fahrenheit warmer than it is now – possibly even more. Now, on a shorter time scale, from about 1350 to about 1850, we had what's called the Little Ice Age. And that cooled considerably from the previous roughly 400-year period called the Medieval Warm Period. We've been coming up out of the Little Ice Age, so we have warmed probably by about 2 degrees since about the middle of the 19th century.

TS: To what degree are humans responsible for climate change?

EB: Since I'm not a climate scientist myself, I'll answer tentatively. Human contribution seems fairly small compared with natural contribution over the last couple of hundred years. But frankly, I don't think it matters. Because the warming that we're talking about is so small ... maybe 2.4 or 2.5 degrees Fahrenheit over the last 150 years. That's so small. None of us are worried about that in terms of the difference between nighttime low and daytime high or winter low and summer high.

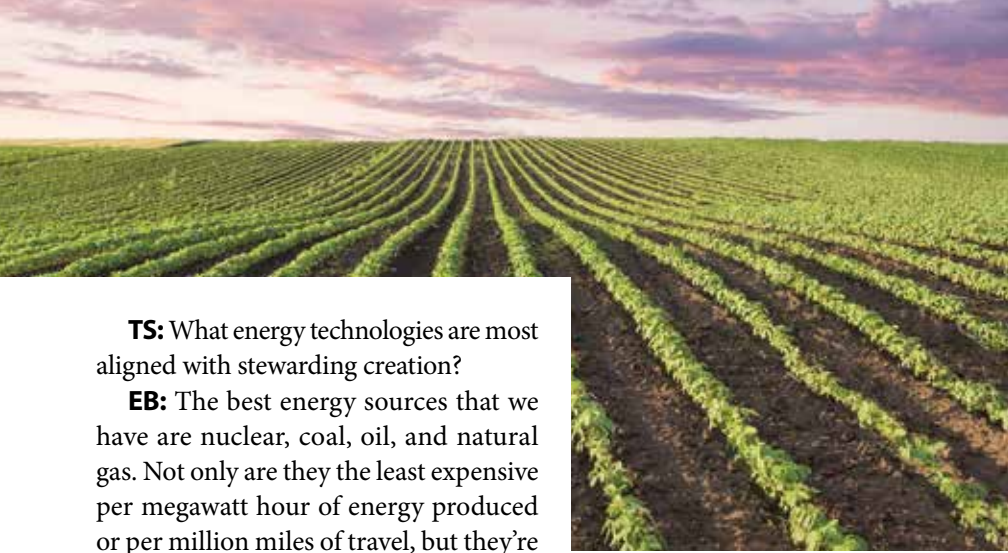


TS: What's driving the mainstream narrative concerning climate change?

EB: What history tells us is that the anti-population growth movement, which underlies much of the environmentalist movement, has driven the quest to find some rationale for depriving people of the abundant, affordable, reliable energy that is absolutely indispensable to producing plenty of food for a growing population. Our resource supplies can, in fact, far outgrow the population because people are not just consumers and polluters; we're also producers and stewards.



"Human contribution [to climate change] seems fairly small compared with natural contribution over the last couple of hundred years." DR. E.CALVIN BEISNER



TS: What energy technologies are most aligned with stewarding creation?

EB: The best energy sources that we have are nuclear, coal, oil, and natural gas. Not only are they the least expensive per megawatt hour of energy produced or per million miles of travel, but they're also cheaper and safer. And they are better for the planet than wind, solar, and other so-called renewables. Hydro is a very fine source, but only in very limited areas where you have an adequate flow of water in natural rivers and the like. Geothermal is great, but again, it is [available] in very, very limited areas where you have the right geology.

TS: What voices in the climate conversation should be disregarded by Christians?

EB: The climate change denialists, who espouse an "it's-all-a-hoax" way of thinking, which is totally unjustified scientifically – as well as in terms of biblical worldview. Or the opposite extreme, the alarmists: "We're all going to hell in a handbasket, the world is going to burn up, this is an existential threat," and so on. We're not anywhere near there.


TS: How should Christians think about the reality and potential impact of climate change?

EB: I would summarize it this way: Anthropogenic global warming is real, but it's unlikely to become catastrophic. It does bring some problems, but we can address those very well through adaptation rather than by trying to stop the warming. That warming could – but it won't necessarily – be moderated, prevented, or even reversed by a new natural cycle of global cooling.

TS: How does biblical stewardship of creation come into play concerning climate change?

EB: The cost-benefit ratio of adapting to whatever future climate we face is better than the cost-benefit ratio of mitigation.



Mitigation is the idea of trying to slow, stop, or reverse the warming. The costs of that enormously exceed the benefits of it. Whereas the benefits of adaptation enormously exceed the costs. And if we choose adaptation over mitigation, life after climate change will most likely be far better than it is today or ever has been. 



Joel Salatin

Everyday biblical stewardship

Joel Salatin of Swoope, Virginia, is a farmer, author, and advocate for sustainable agriculture. He is also a Christian who models biblical stewardship of creation. Salatin is known for his work at Polyface Farms (polyfacefarms.com).

In practicing biblical stewardship, Salatin argues that humans have a God-given responsibility to care for the land and animals in a way that honors the Creator. In a YouTube video (use QR code to watch the video) from April 8, 2024, titled "Why Christians Should Care About the Environment With Joel Salatin," he made the following comment:

"If this is all God's – and it is – what do you think He's thinking when we have a dead zone the size of

Rhode Island in the Gulf of Mexico? Or when DDT [a synthetic pesticide] makes eagles' eggs that won't hatch, or [creates] infertile frogs? . . . Stewardship is about [this]: 'It's not mine; it's somebody else's, and do I return it in better shape than I found it? . . . I think there's a real imperative in our lives and our living, leaving more . . . than was here before.'"





THE STAND RADIO

Jeff Chamblee,
producer/host of **The Stand Radio**



Tune in to **The Stand Radio** on AFR, Saturdays at 4 p.m. and Sundays at 8 p.m. Central, or listen to the podcast anytime at afr.net or by scanning the QR code.

eternal

WEIGHT OF GLORY

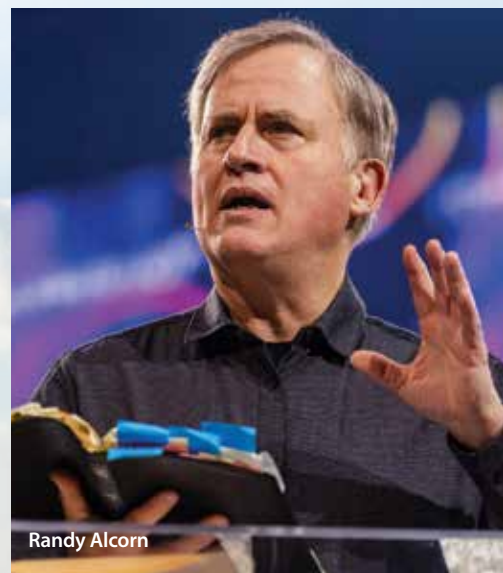
with **Randy Alcorn**

Few people have studied and written more about Heaven than Randy Alcorn, founder and president of Eternal Perspective Ministries. As a highly anticipated guest, he joined me on **The Stand Radio** to describe the glory and wonders awaiting every follower of Jesus. I was captivated as he explained the differences between the present Heaven, where deceased believers now reside, and the future Heaven, where a redeemed Earth will overflow with creativity, pleasure, and purpose in the presence of God.

Randy shared how a decades-long study of Heaven prepared him for a season of grief following the 2022 loss of his wife, Nanci. What began as a high school friendship blossomed into a 47-year marriage, during which Heaven

often became a topic of conversation. With the intensity of someone who has experienced profound loss, he explained that the believer's hope in Heaven is not merely wishful thinking; it is "a blood-bought hope that Jesus gave His life for, and we can take it to the bank."

On **The Stand Radio**, our goal is to feature guests, such as Randy Alcorn, who help believers view the Christian life through the lens of eternity, reminding us of the words of the apostle Paul, when he wrote, "For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison" (2 Corinthians 4:17).



Randy Alcorn



TRUMP'S EXECUTIVE ORDER ENDS 'TRANS' TYRANNY AND PROTECTS FEMALES

By Robert Gagnon, *guest writer*

Editor's Note: The article below was originally published in January in The American Spectator and can be found at spectator.org/trump-executive-order-end-trans-tyranny-protect/.

Thanks to Donald Trump's new executive order titled *Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government* (whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions), the federal government is no longer coming after you for not recognizing "transwomen" as women or "transmen" as men in schools, workplaces, and public accommodations.

This is a major about-face from the Biden-Harris administration's insidious promotion of all things "trans," endangering children (indoctrination, chemical castration, "trans" mutilation surgery), females (privacy and safety), and faithful Christians everywhere (mandatory speech requirements in employment and education).

Trump's fidelity to his election promise

Trump was true to his commitment, [made] over a year ago, to work against the "left-wing gender insanity being pushed on our children [which] is an act of child abuse" and "to stop the chemical, physical, and emotional mutilation of our youth." The executive order fleshed out what was arguably the greatest line in his inaugural address: "As of today, it will henceforth be the official policy of the United States government that there are only two genders, male and female."

This one action alone justifies the outcome of the election (there are, of course, other reasons), because the eradication of any non-circular definition of "woman" and "man" (or "male" and "female") does inestimable damage to this most essential element of human civilization.

The problem for women

The opening "Purpose" section artfully summarizes the problem by presenting it as a problem for women: "Ideologues who deny the biological reality of sex have ... used ... coercive means to permit men to ... gain access to intimate single-sex spaces ... designed for women. ... This is wrong." Such efforts "attack women by depriving them of their dignity, safety, and well-being." Moreover, "basing Federal policy on truth is critical to scientific inquiry, public safety, morale, and trust in government itself."

Trump's executive order rightfully pinpoints the locus of confusion as "replacing the immutable biological reality of sex with an internal, fluid, and subjective sense of self unmoored from biological facts." The sad result is that laws originally designed to protect women are perverted to "undermine them, replacing longstanding, cherished legal rights and values with an identity-based, inchoate social concept."

In order to preserve the original intent of legislation to protect women, the government has no choice but to revert back to a biologically based definition of what a woman is and what a man is.

[The order states:] "Accordingly, my Administration will defend women's rights and protect freedom of conscience by using clear and accurate language and policies that recognize women are biologically female, and men are biologically male."

Definition of sex and of male and female

The second section of "Policy and Definitions" pulls the rug out from under the house of cards that stands atop "gender ideology" and "gender identity" by re-establishing a secure basis for "sex."

Under Trump's watch, the federal government will no longer



define a *male* and *female* by subjective identity but solely by objective biological identity, i.e., by gametes or reproductive function. “*Female* means a person belonging, at conception, to the sex that produces the large reproductive cell [i.e., egg cell or ovum]. *Male* means a person belonging, at conception, to the sex that produces the small reproductive cell [i.e., the sperm cell].”

Impact on federal law and policy

Sections 3 through 8 largely spell out the practical effects on federal policy and regulations of reverting back to biologically objective definitions of *sex* that are based on male-female reproductive complementarity.

Perhaps the biggest hit was rescinding part of Biden’s executive order, which had redefined the prohibition of “sex discrimination” in Title IX of the Educational Amendments Act to include not only “sexual orientation discrimination” but also “gender identity discrimination.” In schools that receive federal funding, males will no longer be allowed into female restrooms, locker rooms, female living facilities, and sports (the latter two were still being worked on at the time of the Biden administration’s revisions to Title IX in April 2024).

Biden’s Title IX executive order had recently faced challenges. With lawsuits from 26 Republican attorneys general, the Biden administration’s revision of Title IX was on hold in their states. Earlier this month, a federal judge ruled that Biden’s revision was unconstitutional. [Then]the House of Representatives passed a bill prohibiting men from competing in women’s school

sports. It now goes to the Senate [as of press time].

Also, according to Trump’s ... executive order, as regards facilities that receive federal funding, “males are not [to be] detained in women’s prisons or housed in women’s detention centers” or allowed into female-only “rape shelters.” And “no federal funds are [to be] expended for any medical procedure, treatment, or drug for the purpose of conforming an inmate’s appearance to that of the opposite sex.

“Intimate spaces designated for women, girls, or females (or for men, boys, or males) are [to be] designated by sex and not identity.”

This would include, of course, restrooms, locker rooms, and showers.

“Agencies shall remove all ... regulations ... that promote or otherwise inculcate gender ideology. ... Agencies shall take all necessary steps ... to end the Federal funding of gender ideology,” including in federal grants. “Government-issued identification documents, including passports, visas, and Global Entry cards, [shall] accurately reflect the holder’s sex,” as also all “applicable personnel records.”

All federal guidance publications from previous administrations inconsistent with this new executive order are to be immediately rescinded, including (here, I offer a selection of a much fuller list than in the executive order): *The White House Toolkit on Transgender Equality*; *Creating Inclusive and Nondiscriminatory School Environments for LGBTQI+ Students*; *Supporting LGBTQI+ Youth and Families in School*; *Supporting Intersex Students*; *Supporting Transgender Youth in School*;

Confronting Anti-LGBTQI+ Harassment in Schools; *Enforcement of Title IX ... With Respect to Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Light of Bostock v. Clayton County*; *Enforcement Guidance on Harassment [of LGBTQI+ Persons] in the Workplace*.

In addition, the attorney general is charged with issuing “guidance to ensure the freedom to express the binary nature of sex and the right to single-sex spaces in workplaces and federally funded entities covered by the Civil Rights Act of 1964.” Presumably, this would include protection for teachers in schools who decline to use “trans” pronouns for students, teachers, and staff.

Undoubtedly, this executive order will be challenged in the courts, especially in relation to the Supreme Court’s decision in *Bostock v. Clayton County* (2020), which addressed Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This underscores the importance of strong court appointments. The executive order would not affect areas over which the federal government does not have authority. But it is an excellent start to the Trump administration. ^{afa}

ROBERT A. J. GAGNON is a visiting scholar at Wesley Biblical Seminary in Ridgeland, Mississippi, and has taught previously at Middlebury College, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, and Houston Christian University. He has degrees from Dartmouth College (B.A.), Harvard Divinity School (M.T.S.), and Princeton Theological Seminary (Ph.D.). He has published a number of works, including *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* (Abingdon Press).



Sounds of hope

By Joy Lucius

Americans are anxious.

The latest American Psychiatric Association poll revealed that 43% of adults felt more anxious in 2024 than they had in the previous year, while the National Institutes of Health reported that 1 in 5 adults have an anxiety disorder.

These alarming statistics do not account for the 10% of youth who also suffer from an anxiety disorder. Additionally, these numbers do not reflect the 8% increase in suicide rates among children ages 8 to 12 in 2024, nor the fact that suicide is now the fifth leading cause of death in preteens.



Steve Siler

Yes, Americans are anxious, and in response to this anxiety epidemic, Music for the Soul (MFTS) released its latest project, **What Hope Says**.

For award-winning songwriter Steve Siler, the founder and director of MFTS (musicforthesoul.org), this project is a culmination of research, interviews, collaborations, and prayer.

I love that His words in Matthew 6 about anxiety are very clear. When Jesus said, 'Do not be anxious,' He meant it. STEVE SILER

Identifying the need

"When I attended the 2023 American Association of Christian Counselors conference," Siler told *The Stand*, "I polled many of those therapists on a possible topic of our next Music for the Soul project. They all said, 'Anxiety!'"

So, Siler began researching the topic before carrying the idea to MFTS's advisory board of Christian therapists. With their blessing, **What Hope Says** got its official start.

MFTS was established in 2001 to unite music industry professionals with donors, therapists, pastors, and others. The goal was to create healing songs and stories that conveyed the redemptive love of Jesus to individuals enduring deep pain.

Since then, MFTS has released 20 full-length projects and multiple singles addressing 44 painful topics, including abortion, grief, addiction, and suicide. MFTS also offers project discussion guides, devotionals, written and spoken testimonies, books, music videos, and the **Music for the Soul** podcast.

However, the latest project, **What Hope Says**, opens with a slightly different approach.

Beginning with prayer

"With each project," Siler explained, "we usually start with a song capturing the pain of the topic because we've learned that people won't trust you for their hope until you really understand their pain. But this collection starts with 'Prayer for the Anxious.' It's a gentle reminder of God's promise to always be with us, no matter what."

Then, the 12-song project takes listeners on a musical journey through the overwhelming stresses of today's technology-driven world. It realistically examines past traumas and promises that those traumas do not have to define one's future.


With songs written by Scott Krippayne, Tony Wood, and Siler, **What Hope Says** showcases a variety of tempos, styles, topics, and talented singers. The lyrics highlight what God's hope says about life's anxious situations.

Finding God's hope

One of the project's most powerful messages comes from the song "Right Now." Inspired by Psalm 46:10 and sung by Denise Carite, it is a tender invitation to give all anxiety to God, rest in His presence, and simply "be still and know" that He is God.

The words of "Hope Says There's a Way," another song on the album, speak directly to the heart of the project's message:

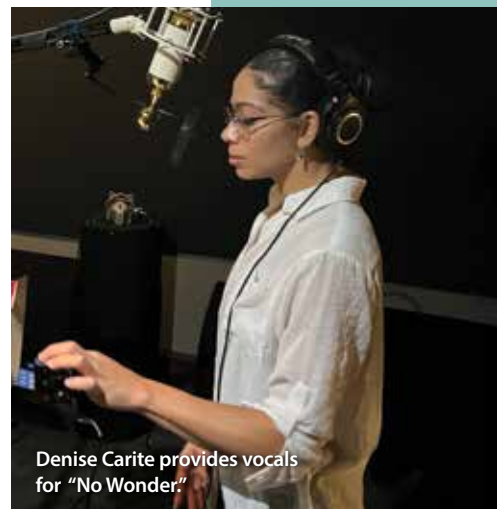
*Hope says keep knocking,
And a door will be opened.
Hope says there's a way
When it seems all is lost.
Hope says tomorrow is a brand
new day.
Hold on, 'cause that's what hope says.*

Siler firmly believes that hope is found in Jesus: "I love that His words in Matthew 6 about anxiety are very clear. When Jesus said, 'Do not be anxious,' He meant it." 

Music for the Soul has an expansive musical library, including **What Hope Says**. All of the downloadable resources are available at musicforthesoul.org and can be accessed individually for a donation of **any** amount per project.



Ally Jackson is featured on "Imagine God's Best."



Denise Carite provides vocals for "No Wonder."



"Overwhelmed" features Carlos Santiago.

'Send me where no one wants to go'



By Stacy Singh

While growing up under missionary parents in the jungles of the South Philippines island of Mindanao, Carole Ward was molded with passion and fearlessness for sharing the gospel with Islamic extremists. Her grandparents had also been missionaries; they were Wycliffe Bible translators in China, where Ward's mother was in a Communist prison camp at 12 years old.

In Mindanao, where Ward grew up, the presence of communism was paralleled with Islamic terrorism.

"We knew missionaries were being executed and imprisoned in these dangerous jungles," Ward explained, "and my father refused to leave. He said, 'I'm going to go home to Heaven serving rather than sitting.' So, with four children, he was living with a price on his head for 45 years.

"I watched a man of faith and prayer and dedication reach unreached people groups," she added. "I grew up in that environment, reading *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* every night before I went to bed and praying, 'Lord, could I have the same privilege of walking in these footsteps?'"

Fast forward, years later, to an inner-city nursing job in Oklahoma, where Ward was praying a similar prayer: "Lord, send me where no one else wants to go."

"[During that time,] I laid my body over maps on the floor, weeping for nations that have never heard the gospel," she said. "Northern Africa, India, [the] Middle East – we have left these places to the last because they're the most dangerous and the most difficult."

Just a prayer warrior

In 2002, Ward was invited to southern Uganda to work in a Bible school. At that time, Ugandan dictator Joseph Kony and his Lord's Resistance Army were terrorizing northern Uganda – committing atrocities later declared by the U.N. to be the worst since Hitler.

People came to Ward, weeping and asking, "Will you come to the North, where the war is going on?"

"Why are you asking *me*?" Ward questioned. "I'm just a nurse and a prayer warrior."

"Because no one else wants to come," they replied.

"I knew that was the answer to my prayer," Ward admitted.

It wasn't long before Ward was driving into the war zone while talking to the Lord.

"What are you doing?" the Lord asked me.

"Well, I'm obeying You," Ward replied.

"No, you're not. You're terrified. I can't use you in fear. Fear will paralyze you," the Lord said.

"What do I need, Lord?" she asked, to which He replied, "You don't have enough love. 'Perfect love casts out fear'" (1 John 4:18).

"In that car that day, ... I wept and wept and felt floods of love flowing over me like waves. I've never had fear since then. I go into ambushes; I go through bullets. I get called to nation after nation, and God moves."

Now a missionary

After crossing the Nile River into northern Uganda, Ward rented a small house and put out a sign: "House of Prayer, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m." For eight months, Ward prayed with some Ugandans. Then they organized a national prayer meeting where over 1,000 people prayed for 11 hours a day for 7 days.



Carole Ward of Favor International (favorintl.org)

"For seven days, we prayed, read the Word, prayed for the land," Ward explained. "As a result, the war stopped! Sometime later, Joseph Kony's right-hand general converted to Christianity and attended our Bible college. When he learned of the prayer gathering that we held and the specific time it happened, he testified that it was at the same time that Joseph Kony told him the demons who gave him power over the land had left him!"

For the next 10 years, Ward built upon the ministry she registered as Favor International (favorintl.org) in 2004. It grew to include Bible schools, church planting, orphan care, women's empowerment, trauma healing, and tens of thousands coming to Christ.

"We were in the middle of the most massive revival I've ever seen," Ward said. "We just kept praying, and they kept



coming, and God added to the church daily. Thousands upon thousands upon thousands came to Jesus and have never stopped coming.”

While God’s work in Uganda continues, Ward has spent the past 10 years bringing the same ministry to South Sudan – and her ministry there began with an equally miraculous start.

“On the road into Sudan, the vehicle was stopped, and there came two 7-foot Dinkas [natives of South Sudan]: scarred faces, angry,” she told *The Stand*. “They jumped in; slammed the door. I had a few seconds to talk to the Lord – grabbed a Bible and flipped around to the guy sitting on my left and said, ‘Have you ever seen one of these before? I’m so glad you’re in the car with us today. What’s your name?’”

“J-J-Jacob,” he choked out.

“Jacob, you’re famous,” Ward replied. “You’re in this book. Do you know who Jacob was? You’ve got to know him.”

So, Ward went through Bible story after Bible story and took the Dinkas through the whole Bible.

“By the time we reached our destination – three-and-a-half hours later – both men had prayed to receive Jesus into their hearts,” Ward explained.

“Jacob, I’m going to give you this,” she told the Dinka as she handed him the Bible. “He clutched it to his chest like I’d given him a million dollars.

“You read this every day, and tell somebody every day what you read,” Ward instructed him.


“I’ll do it,” he said.

“Jacob, that makes you a missionary,” Ward told him. “You got into this car as a murderer, and you got out as a missionary.”

Jacob asked Ward to come to his village to share the gospel. She and a team immediately went to the village and followed the same model of ministry that Ward started in Uganda: They established houses of prayer; prayed for national repentance, revival, and restoration; multiplied indigenous believers and trained them in Bible schools; and strengthened the communities by providing education, medical care, economic and vocational programs, and trauma counseling.

“In six months, God did what took six years to do in Uganda,” she said. “Within the first week, we opened the House of Prayer because we don’t start any mission work until we’ve started prayer. That’s where the power is – the spiritual warfare. It’s a prayer movement that becomes the foundation for a missions movement.”

Today, Favor International has over 1,000 indigenous missionaries in 10 African nations, including Uganda, South Sudan, Sudan, Chad, Ethiopia, Congo, Kenya, Central African Republic, Egypt, and Djibouti.

In 2024, Ward moved to Chad, a land occupied by Boko Haram terrorists, and laid the groundwork for another national ministry. 

Bring the power of prayer home

Carole Ward of Favor International believes, “If we don’t rise up as believers and go on the offense in spiritual warfare, we’ll lose lives and lose ground faster than we can count. Look at our own nation. The next generation is being stolen right from under our eyes, unless we wake up and start praying. Prayer movements take back territories that the Enemy has stolen. Turn every household into a prayer altar and begin crying out like you never have before.” For more, see p. 30.

More than a tradition

Rethinking your family's Easter celebration

By Jessica L. Peck DNP, APRN, CPNP-PC, CNE,
CNL, FAANP, FAAN



I'll never forget the Easter when my family was fighting the flu, leaving only my preteen daughter and me healthy enough to attend the Good Friday service at our church.

I remember sitting in the sanctuary, feeling grateful to be there, enjoying the music and message, and thinking as we walked out, "That was really nice."

As I got in the car and looked over at my precious girl, I was alarmed to see tears pouring from her eyes. I immediately asked her what was wrong, and she countered by asking what was wrong with *me*. She didn't understand how we had been in the same service; she had been moved to tears by her Savior's sacrifice for her, while I left thinking it was "nice." Just remembering the moment still deeply convicts me.

A sacred foundation

Easter represents a sacred foundation of the Christian faith; it celebrates Jesus' victory over sin, death, and the grave – forever – through His death, burial, and resurrection. Yet, many parents struggle to balance faith-based traditions with secular celebrations that dominate our culture, including egg hunts, Easter baskets, and a giant (let's be honest – usually creepy) bunny.

How do we best honor Christ in a world that pulls our attentions and affections in seemingly opposite directions?

It's essential to intentionally teach our children the spiritual significance of Easter. It's more than an annual tradition; it's a celebration of the greatest gift we've ever received. When we focus on the true meaning of Easter, we anchor our family traditions in faith, ensuring that the season becomes a meaningful time of worship and reflection.

Romans 14 reminds us to honor the Lord in our decisions while avoiding being a stumbling block to others. Start by seeking the Lord's wisdom, examining your heart, and committing to convictions that prioritize Christ as the center of your celebration. Share these convictions with your family, creating a nurturing environment where they feel confident to live them out.

If past traditions no longer align with your faith, it's OK to reset boundaries; discuss what has changed, share what God has revealed, and move forward with unity. Reflect together using guiding questions like: Is this honoring to God? Does it encourage others in their faith?

A significant stage

Having said that, it's also important to understand that children's brain development, particularly in the early years, is marked by rapid growth in imagination and slower growth in understanding abstract concepts. Young children often struggle to differentiate between fantasy and reality, which is why trying to reconcile messages like "the Easter Bunny isn't real, but Jesus is" can be confusing. Pairing a

tangible, curiously imaginative figure like the Easter Bunny with the abstract, faith-based concept of Jesus' resurrection is tricky territory.

To nurture their developing faith, it's important to explain who Jesus is in a clear and age-appropriate way, emphasizing the truth of His resurrection as a cornerstone of our beliefs, while prayerfully considering your engagement in other traditions. (See sidebar.)

One time, I saw an Easter-themed wall hanging in a craft store that simply read, "It's not about the bunny. It's about the Lamb." Yes, I absolutely purchased it and placed it in my home as a simple reminder for myself and my family to refocus our hearts and minds on the real reason for the season. Now every time I see an Easter Bunny, I immediately picture the Lamb of God, who took away the sin of the world.

A powerful opportunity

Easter is more than a three-day weekend. It's a sacred invitation to celebrate the hope, joy, and renewal found in Christ's resurrection. By keeping Christ at the center of it all, we transform Easter into a powerful opportunity to deepen our faith, strengthen family bonds, and reflect God's love to others.

This Easter, challenge your family to start a new Christ-centered tradition. Whether it's worshipping together, serving others, or creating meaningful memories together, these practices will help you celebrate the true reason for the season: the resurrection of our precious Savior, who gave His life to grant us eternal life with Him.

Now, that's something worthy of celebrating! [afa](https://afa.net)



Simple suggestions with spiritual significance

Traditions we intentionally curate have a lasting impact on our children's faith and values. It's a sacred privilege to steward well. By consistently incorporating Christ-centered practices into Easter celebrations, we provide permanent faith formations for developing hearts, minds, and souls. Simple but meaningful traditions will build your family's faith, creating core memories of God's Word applied in their lives.

Faith-focused family time

Worship together: As a family, attend Easter services, including Good Friday or sunrise services, to celebrate Christ's resurrection.

Read the resurrection story: Gather as a family and intentionally read together the Gospel accounts of Jesus' resurrection (Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, or John 20). For younger children, use picture books that help Bible stories come to life for young minds.

Faith-based home decorations: Make simple decorations, such as wreaths, garlands, wall art, or tablescapes, that feature crosses and messages of faith from Scripture.

Family service projects

Serve others: Volunteer as a family in a place where you can share the hope of the good news of Jesus.

Be a host: Invite someone to attend church with you on Easter Sunday. Extend the invitation to lunch to continue conversation and answer questions.

Create care baskets: Instead of an Easter basket, create a "care basket" for people in your community who may feel lonely or forgotten.

Faith-based fun

Family movie night: Prayerfully screen family films that convey messages of faith or retell the story of Easter, e.g., **Ben Hur**, **The Ten Commandments**, or biblical productions streamed through Sight & Sound TV (sight-sound.tv).

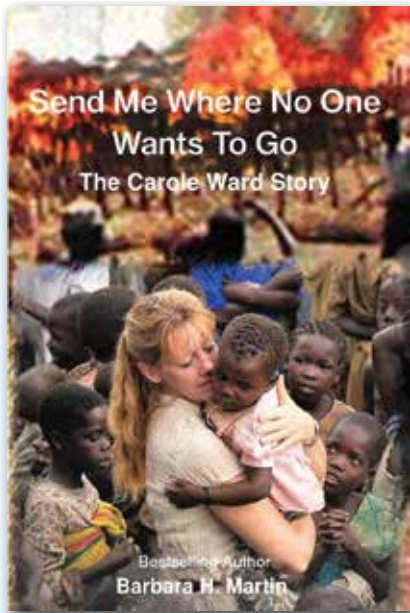
Resurrection eggs: Use an egg carton and 12 plastic eggs to hide small objects that each represent a portion of the story of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection.

Empty tomb rolls: Dip giant marshmallows in butter and cinnamon and then wrap them in crescent roll dough. The marshmallows disappear while baking, creating a simple but fun object lesson to explain the miracle of the resurrection.

Faith-inspired scavenger hunt: Create a scavenger hunt with Scripture-based clues leading to items that symbolize parts of the Easter story.

REVIEWS

Family entertainment • Documentaries • Resources for families • Books



Send Me Where No One Wants To Go

Send Me Where No One Wants To Go: The Carole Ward Story, written by best-selling author Barbara H. Martin, tells the inspiring and extraordinary true story of a woman who answered God's call to reach places others feared to enter. Ward became a vessel of God's redeeming work in Uganda and South Sudan amid deadly war. Through her efforts, God changed thousands of lives. Her story will inspire and strengthen readers' faith in powerful ways. (See p. 26.)

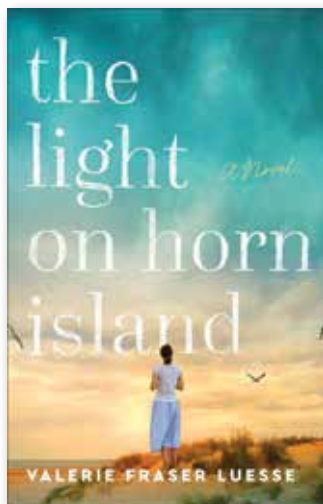
Read more about Ward in Martin's sequel titled *Lord, Send Us Where No One Wants To Go – The Great Commission Continues: The Carole Ward Story*.

Carly McGee
Self-published, 187 pages
Online booksellers

The Light on Horn Island

Bestselling author Valerie Fraser Luesse recently released a new novel that is set on the Gulf Coast of Mississippi. *The Light on Horn Island* is a masterfully woven tale of tragedy, loss, and love. With a multigenerational cast of colorful Southern characters, the story begins as Edie Gardner leaves New York to travel back to her grandmother's home in the tiny coastal town of Bayou du Chêne.

With the help of her grandmother and friends, Edie searches for stability, purpose, and hope. Through her new job at a mysterious antique shop, Edie is tasked with cataloging newly acquired photographs of the aftermath of Hurricane Camille. Those photographs, along with reports of a strange, transcendent light on a nearby barrier island, take Edie and her friends on a circuitous journey through decades of hidden hurts and loss. But will the Light be able to save and mend those broken hearts?



Joy Lucius
Revell, 320 pages
christianbook.com

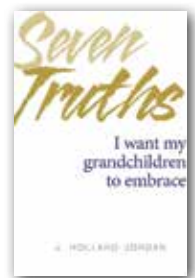
Seven Truths I Want My Grandchildren to Embrace

Author J. Holland Jordan uses a creative structure to spotlight the principles he and his wife strive to pass on to their grandchildren. "You Are Loved" and "Life Is Not Fair, But God Is!" are a couple of the practical truths he presents.

Each chapter follows an effective pattern that begins with personal family scenarios. Next, he illustrates the same principle by fictionalizing a "first-person" account of a person from Scripture. Third, the author summarizes what he calls the "truth to hold on to." Then, he concludes with a scriptural foundation.

Jordan's personal stories are sure to help other grandparents realize that their experiences can be of great wealth to their own grandchildren.

Randall Murphree
Self-published, 105 pages
Online booksellers



Whom Shall I Fear?

Voice of the Martyrs highlights 366 stirring Scriptures to answer the question, "Whom shall I fear?" It is perfect for a year of focused daily readings.

Each Scripture is accompanied by a brief real-life experience of a persecuted Christian, or a comment or question to inspire and challenge the reader.

Whom Shall I Fear: 366 Scriptures for Following Christ and Facing Persecution is organized in sections with subtitles such as "God's Assignment" and "Our Obedience." Another impactful element of the volume is a series of frequent two-to three-page accounts of Christians who have experienced true persecution around the world.

Randall Murphree
Voice of the Martyrs, 475 pages
christianbook.com



THE COST OF STAYING SILENT

By Heather Hefner, AFA Action director of communications

Upon taking office, President Donald Trump used executive orders to reverse many of the gender-ideology policies enacted during the Biden administration. (See pp. 4, 11, and 22.)

However, as of press time, Trump's Department of Justice had not sought dismissal of *United States v. Jonathan Skrmetti* (in which the Biden Department of Justice protested the state of Tennessee's ban on "gender transition" procedures); instead, it requested that the case continue. Although the new administration does not support the original argument for the U.S. government joining the lawsuit, it acknowledged that the Supreme Court's ruling on *Skrmetti* could impact pending cases in lower courts.

With that in mind, and in response to today's cultural and political shifts, Christians must ask this question: "What is the cost of staying silent?"

Proverbs 31:8-9 (NIV) instructs, "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. ... Defend the rights of the poor and needy."

Those verses urge believers to protect some of society's most vulnerable – children.

An attempt to deceive

Despite Trump's executive orders, an ongoing argument in current debates – unthinkable just a generation ago – is whether minors, whose brains are not fully developed, should make permanent decisions about their bodies.

The tragic story of Chloe Cole, who underwent gender-transition procedures as a minor and later detransitioned, underscores the irreversible harm such decisions cause. (See *The Stand*, 8/24.)

However, in late 2024, Justice Sonia Sotomayor downplayed the risks of transgender medical procedures for children, ignoring the profound, lifelong consequences of such "interventions." During oral arguments for *United States v. Jonathan Skrmetti*, Sotomayor said, "Every medical treatment has a risk ... even taking aspirin."

Advocacy groups such as the Human Rights Campaign push these procedures as "medically necessary," embedding transgender ideologies into public policy and education while normalizing confusion from a young age. The Left's use of manufactured terms, such as *gender-affirming care*, is both misleading and harmful. Such deception erodes safeguards

for the vulnerable and glorifies moral chaos over biblical truth.

But Isaiah 5:20 warns, "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil."

A call to action

The normalization of moral relativism – where truth is fluid and gender is interchangeable – exacts a heavy cost, not only on children whose lives are irreversibly altered, but also on the fabric of a nation that drifts from biblical principles.

It's not just a political debate; it's a moral one.


Jesus warned in Matthew 18:6: "But whoever causes one of these little ones ... to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea."

Temporary confusion does not justify permanent decisions.

Testimonies from detransitioners reveal the psychological toll of prioritizing transient *feelings* over immutable *truths*.

After all, Scripture clearly states that "the heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick" (Jeremiah 17:9).

That's why parents, pastors, policymakers – and all believers – must stand firm, rooted in God's Word, when it comes to the shifting sands of gender ideology that surround them. They must truly consider the cost of staying silent as a sea of sin threatens to engulf their children.

This is a call to action – not just to *speak up* but to *live out* the truth of God's Word and to defend what is right. The soul of America – and the souls of children – are depending on it. 

In the United States, between 2019 to 2023:

- 13,994 minors underwent sex change treatments.
- 5,747 minors had sex change surgeries.
- 8,579 minors received hormones and puberty blockers.
- 62,682 sex change prescriptions were written for minors.

Source: stoptheharmdatabase.com



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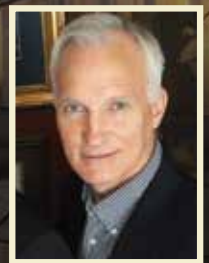
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