A Biblical Point of View on Sharia Law – Kerby Anderson Booklet

Kerby Anderson provides an overview of the dangers inherent in Islam's sharia law, which threatens to invade U.S. cities.

Sharia law is once again in the news. Back in 2010, Sharia (shah-REE-uh) law was in the news because Oklahoma approved a law that would amend the state constitution to prevent the consideration of Sharia law in state courts. However, a federal judge declared the law was unconstitutional.



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This time the focus is on the state of Texas because of a desire by Muslim leaders in Collin County to build a 40-acre EPIC City project. The East Plano Islamic Center and the developers have received lots of attention and at least five investigations from state officials. The project would include a new mosque, more than 1,000 single and multi-family homes,

a Muslim faith-based school, senior housing, an outreach center, commercial developments, sports facilities, and a community college.

Governor Greg Abbott posted on X that “The proposed EPIC compound in Collin Co. has serious legal issues. A dozen state agencies are investigating it, the Attorney General will look into it, and legislators are considering laws to restrict it, as well as laws to prevent foreign adversaries from buying land in Texas.”

On one side are the developers and a Texas representative (Salman Bhojani, who is the first Muslim elected official in Texas history) who say this is a violation of religious freedom and evidence of anti-Muslim hysteria. On the other side are Collin County residents, including a retired police lieutenant (Douglas Deaton, who testified that an Islamic enclave is already operational and has been for almost 12 years).

It is worth taking a moment to understand what Sharia law is. This is important no matter what happens in this Texas community or in others with increasing Muslim communities. American law isn’t going to be challenged by Sharia law, but we can discuss what has been happening in the Middle East and some European countries as a cautionary tale.

What is Sharia Law?

A foundational practice of Islam is the implementation of sharia into the legal structure. Sharia is a system of divine law, belief, or practice that is based upon Muslim legal interpretation. It applies to economics, politics, and society.

Sometimes the world has been able to see how extreme the interpretation of sharia can be. Muslims have been put to death when they have been accused of adultery or

homosexuality. They have been put to death for leaving the religion of Islam. And these are not isolated examples.

Christians are persecuted in Muslim countries. Each year, the organization Open Doors publishes its World Watch List that identifies where Christians are persecuted. Over the last few years, nine of the top ten countries that practice extreme persecution of Christians are Muslim countries.

Treating Jews and Christians differently under sharia law is justified in the Qur'an. For example, the Qur'an talks about "people of the book." Sura 9:29 says, "Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Prophet, nor acknowledge the religion of Truth, (even if they are) of the People of the Book, until they pay the jizya with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued."

Muhammad made a distinction between infidels, who were pagans and polytheists, and the "people of the book," who had received revelations from the prophets (Moses, Jesus). The latter group is protected in one sense because they have received these revelations. But they are also guilty because (according to Islam) they have distorted these teachings and rejected the teaching of Muhammad. Although this status was originally given only to the "people of the book," it was later extended to other religions (Sikhs, Zoroastrians, etc.).

Because of their guilt, Islamic teaching stipulates that Jews and Christians may live in a Muslim country, but not as equals to other Muslims. Usually this means that they may not participate in the government. They may practice their religion, but with many restrictions. For example, they were not allowed to have any external manifestations of worship (procession with the cross, ringing bells).

These restrictions are another part of the verse that requires the *dhimmis* [historical non-Muslim subjects living in an

Islamic state] must “feel themselves subdued.” In the past this has meant: (1) that they could not prevent a fellow Christian from converting to Islam, (2) that they could not erect a cross on their church building, and (3) that they must dress in a certain way that would identify them as Jews or Christians.

Finally, they must pay the *jizya*, which is the poll tax required from every dhimmi. In earlier times, this was a major source of income for the Muslim government from dhimmi who paid both the personal tax and the land tax.

The Qur’an teaches (Sura 2:256) that “there is no compulsion in religion.” But is that really so? It depends upon your definition of compulsion. A closer look at Islamic law demonstrates a veiled threat that many believe is tantamount to compulsion. For example, Muhammad instructed his followers to invite non-Muslims to accept Islam before waging war against them. If they refused, warfare or second-class status would follow. They would be inferiors in the Muslim social order and pay the jizya as required in Sura 9:29. If they pay it, they may live, but if they refuse to pay it, warfare will ensue.

Sharia Law and Apostates

It is difficult for a Muslim to leave the faith of Islam. A Muslim is considered part of a larger community of Muslim believers.

When a Muslim decides to leave the faith, there are repercussions in the family and community.

The family is embarrassed and will even lose respect within the Muslim community. The mosque feels it has failed in its duty and lost a member to ignorance and idolatry.

The Qur’an teaches that an apostate Muslim faces the wrath of Allah (Sura 47:25-28). Sharia law in many countries treats

apostasy as the unforgivable sin and therefore punishable by death.

Many Muslim countries have laws against apostasy. Islam teaches that once you are a Muslim, you are always a Muslim. Leaving the Muslim faith can have harsh consequences, including death.

Sharia Law and Women

There is great confusion about the status of women within Islam. While it is true that many Muslims do respect and honor women, it is not true that those ideas can be found in the Qur'an. Here are just a few passages that illustrate the way women are to be treated.

According to the Qur'an, women are considered inferior to men: "Men have authority over women because God has made the one superior to the other" (Sura 4:34).

The Qur'an restricts a woman's testimony in court. Her testimony is worth half as much as that of a man (Sura 2:282).

The Qur'an teaches that a son's inheritance should be twice that of a daughter's: "Allah thus directs you as regards your children's inheritance; to the male, a portion equal to that of two females" (Sura 4:11).

Islam sanctions polygamy (with up to four wives) as well as sex- with slave women: "If we fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry women of your choice, two or three or four; but if we fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with them, then only one, or a captive that your hand possess, that will be more suitable, to prevent you from doing injustice" (Sura 4:3).

Wives are subject to their husbands. If wives are disloyal or disobedient, the Qur'an sets forth their punishment. The husband is first to admonish them, then not sleep with them,

and third to beat them lightly. Essentially, wives are subject to the control of their husbands (Sura 2:223; 4:34). The veiling and seclusion of women has been part of the Muslim culture since the beginnings of Islam. In the Qur'an, Muhammad commands his wives and daughters to draw veils around them. This has been applied to all Muslim women. The veil would allow them to be recognized but not molested (Sura 33:59).

The Qur'an teaches that women must "lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what must ordinarily appear thereof: that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers" (Sura 24:31).

In some Muslim countries, women cannot drive, nor can they leave their home without being accompanied by a male family member. Human rights groups report that women in Saudi Arabia who
are not accompanied by a man who is either their husband or a close relative, can be arrested for prostitution or other moral offenses.

Sharia Law and the Constitution

Sharia law is very different in many respects from the laws established through the U.S. Constitution and the laws established through English common law. To prevent sharia law from being implemented in America, a number of state legislatures have bans on sharia law. Voters in other states have approved a ban that has been struck down by a federal appeals court.

Although opponents argue that these sharia law bans are unnecessary, various studies have found
significant cases of sharia law being allowed in U.S. courts. One report with the title, "Shariah Law and the American State Courts" found significant cases of sharia law in U.S. courts

just from their small sample of appellate published cases. When they looked at state courts, they found additional cases in the trial courts and more in the appellate courts. A few judges are making decisions deferring to sharia law even when those decisions conflict with the U.S. Constitution and the various state constitutions.

How should we respond to the increased use of sharia law in America? One simple way to explain your concern to legislators, family, friends, and neighbors is to remember the numbers 1-8-14. These three numbers stand for the three amendments to the U.S. Constitution that contradict the use of sharia law.

The First Amendment says that there should be no establishment of religion. Sharia law is based on one religion's interpretation of rights. The First Amendment prohibits the establishment of any national religion (including Islam).

The Eighth Amendment prohibits "cruel and unusual punishment." Most Americans would consider the penalties handed down under sharia law to be cruel and unusual.

The Fourteenth Amendment guarantees each citizen equal protection under the Constitution. Sharia law does not treat men and women equally, nor does it treat Muslims and non-Muslims equally. This also violates the Constitution.

It is easy to see why we don't need sharia law in America.

Additional Resources

Kerby Anderson, *A Biblical Point of View on Islam*, Point of View Ministries, 2020.

Kerby Anderson, *Understanding Islam and Terrorism*, Cambridge, OH: Christian House Publishers, 2017.

Joel Rosenberg, *Inside the Revolution*, Carol Stream, IL:

Tyndale House, 2009.

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A Biblical Point of View on Islam

Kerby Anderson provides a basic understanding of Islam with suggestions for how Christ-followers can share their faith with Muslims.

The second largest religion in the world, and one of the fastest growing religions, is the religion of Islam. Although we hear so much about it in the news, many Christians don't know much about Islam and don't know how to share the gospel with a Muslim. Whole books have been written on these subjects, but here is a short summary with recommended books so you can learn more.

Islam is a monotheistic religion based upon the holy book, the Qur'an, which its followers believe was sent by God through the angel Gabriel to the prophet Muhammad. Additional teachings are also recorded in the *Hadith*.

The Five Pillars of Islam

Although the beliefs of Muslims vary, all believe in what are called the “Five Pillars of Islam.” These provide a summary of the practices of this religion.

1. *Shahadah*: The first pillar is recitation of the creed: “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the prophet of Allah.” This statement is the foundation for all other beliefs in Islam. It is what makes someone a Muslim. Those who convert to Islam are to recite the creed. It is generally believed that you must recite this creed in the presence of two witnesses in order to formally convert to Islam.

2. *Salat*: The second pillar is the daily practice of prayer. Muslim prayer may be done individually or in community, but the prayers are required five times each day (dawn and sunrise, noon and mid-afternoon, mid-afternoon to sunset, sunset to twilight, and from twilight to dawn).

In Muslim and Western countries where there is a mosque, a prayer leader climbs to the top of the minaret in the mosque and calls the believers to prayer. He chants in Arabic, “God is great. There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. Come to prayer. Come to prayer. Come to success in this life and the hereafter.”

3. *Zakat*: The third pillar is almsgiving, which is mandated giving to the poor and needy within society. The Qur’an requires that each Muslim give 2.5 percent of their income to the poor or to the spread of Islam. The collected funds are used for building and supporting mosques, for printing the Qur’an, and for the advancement of Islam.

4. *Sawm*: The fourth pillar of Islam is the fast during the ninth lunar month of the Muslim calendar. This is significant in the Muslim calendar for two reasons.

First, this is the time when Muhammad is said to have received

the first of his revelations from God. Second, it is also the time when he and his followers made their historic trek from Mecca to Medina.

During this month, Muslims in good health are required to abstain from all food, drink, smoking, and sexual intercourse during daylight hours. This month-long fast promotes the Muslim's self-discipline, dependence on Allah, and compassion for the needy.

5.*Hajj*: The fifth pillar is a pilgrimage to Mecca that occurs during the last month of the Muslim year. Every able-bodied Muslim is to make a pilgrimage to Mecca once during his life. Pilgrims travel to Mecca, which is the holiest city in Islam and the birthplace of Muhammad. Only Muslims may enter Mecca. The focal point of Mecca is the Ka'bah which is an ancient stone building (thirty feet wide and forty feet long). A black stone (believed to be a meteorite) is set in the corner. The Ka'bah existed before the time of Muhammad. He taught that their worship had been corrupted and removed the idols from the Ka'bah and instituted Muslim worship of Allah in its place.

Major Divisions of Islam

Islam is not a monolithic system. Though all Muslims draw their inspiration from Muhammad and the teachings in the Qur'an, there are many identifiable groups and movements within Islam.

The most significant division is between Sunni and Shi'a Islam. The Sunnis comprise about eighty to ninety percent of all Muslims. They draw their name from the fact that they look both to the Qur'an and to the "Sunna" in establishing proper Muslim conduct. The Sunna is the recorded behavior or example of Muhammad and of the early Muslim community. There are many subdivisions among the Sunnis, but they all identify themselves as Sunni.

Sunnis currently control the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. They adhere to the five pillars of Islam and take a strong stand on the successor to Muhammad. This leader will be the caliph who will govern Islam and provide theological direction to all Muslims, including the interpretation of sharia law. These caliphs have ruled continuously until the Ottoman Empire fell.

The other major group of Muslims is the Shi'ites. They compose about ten percent of all Muslims. They reside mainly in southern Iraq and in Iran. The word Shi'ite means "partisan," and refers to the fact that Shi'ites are "partisans of Ali." Ali was the son-in-law and cousin of Muhammad and one of the early caliphs. The Shi'ites believe that the leader of Islam should be a descendant of Ali, whom they believe possesses a special divine anointing for this task.

A third group of Muslims are the Sufis. They seek a mystical experience of God, rather than a merely intellectual knowledge of Him. Sufi Muslims are the mystics in Islam. They believe that the soul can rise to Allah during prayer and other spiritual exercises. Although they also read the Qur'an, they read it in a different way than other Muslims. They believe that it is an allegory of our soul's union with Allah.

Muslim Beliefs

When you are witnessing to a Muslim, it is important to remember that their beliefs about God, Jesus, and the Bible are very different from a Christian's view. They may have many misconceptions, and you may have certain misconceptions about what they believe. It is therefore important to ask questions about what they believe and help them understand what the Bible actually teaches. Here are a few basic theological beliefs.

It has often been fashionable to hear people say that, "Christians and Muslims worship the same God." It is

understandable that people might say that. Both Islam and Christianity are monotheistic, even though a foundational difference is the Christian belief in the Trinity.

The most foundational doctrine in Islam is monotheism. This doctrine is encapsulated in the creed: “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the prophet of Allah.” Because of this strong emphasis on monotheism, Muslims reject the idea that God could be more than one person or that God could have a partner. The Qur’an teaches that Allah is one God and the same God for all people. Anyone who does not believe this is guilty of the sin of *shirk*. According to Islam, God cannot have a partner and cannot be joined together in the Godhead with other persons. Muslims therefore reject the Christian idea of the Trinity.

Muslims and Christians also differ in their understanding of the nature and character of God. Islam teaches that Allah is distant, transcendent, and unknowable. He is separate from His creation. He is exalted and far removed from mankind. While we may know His will, we cannot know Him personally. By contrast, Christianity teaches the fatherhood of God. Jesus taught in the Lord’s Prayer that we may address God as “our Father in heaven” (Matthew 6:9). Christians can have a personal relationship with God through Christ.

Muslims also have a different view of Jesus. The Qur’an refers to Jesus as “the Messiah” or “the Christ.” But Muslims reject the idea that God could have a Son. By contrast, the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. God is heard from heaven declaring, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 17:5). Also, believers are called children of God: “See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God” (1 John 3:1).

Witnessing to Muslims

Muslims usually believe that the Bible has errors in it. You

should be prepared to answer such objections. But you can even begin with what is taught about Jesus in the Qur'an. They accept that He is the Messiah and the Christ. And they honor him as one of the greatest prophets. In Sura 3:42-55, the Qur'an also teaches that:

(1) Mary was chosen by God,
(2) Jesus was born of a virgin,
(3) Jesus is the Messiah,
(4) Jesus has power over death, and
(5) Jesus knows the way to heaven.

The Qur'an also teaches that a proper Muslim must read the Old and New Testaments, known as the Before Books (Sura 4:136). And it teaches that those who observe the teaching of the Torah and the Gospels may go to heaven (Sura 5:6566). Many Muslims feel this gives them permission to read the Bible. You can give them a Bible and suggest they read the gospel of John.

When you witness to Muslims, be sure you talk about the love of God. Most Muslims believe that Allah is distant and unknowable. Christianity offers them the possibility of knowing God personally. This is attractive to Muslims.

A seminary conducted a survey of six hundred former Muslims who had become Christians. One of the most significant factors involved in the conversions of these former Muslims was the emphasis on the love of God and the intimacy that believers can have with God as their heavenly Father. This was an important factor in drawing these former Muslims to Christ, so make sure you talk about the love of God.

Another factor was eternal security. A Muslim never really knows whether he or she will be saved due to their good works on earth. The Bible teaches that we can know that we have eternal life (1 John 5:13). We are saved by grace through faith, not by works (Ephesians 2:8-9). The bad news is that

the works Muslims do will not enable them to enter into heaven. The good news is that God gave his Son so that they would not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

Additional Resources

Kerby Anderson. *Understanding Islam and Terrorism: A Biblical Point of View*. Christian Publishing House, 2017.

Ergun Caner and Emir Caner, *Unveiling Islam*. Kregel, 2002.

Norman Geisler. *Answering Islam: The Crescent in Light of the Cross*. Baker, 2002.

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The AI Tsunami

Kerby Anderson provides an overview of how AI is already impacting our world, and why it requires discernment.

Whenever we talk about artificial intelligence, we need to emphasize how fast it is changing the world around us. Elon Musk coined a term to illustrate this speed of change. It is a "Supersonic Tsunami of Converging Exponentials." Everything is changing everywhere at once. Peter Diamandis observes that AI isn't improving linearly anymore. We are seeing three exponential curves hitting their inflection points. Put

simply, AI is improving exponentially.

We will be the beneficiaries of this expansion. For example, intelligence is being democratized and demonetized. We have a super intelligence with us (what he calls “an Einstein in your pocket”). When the eight billion people in the world have this capability, effectively delivered free on their phones, the world will change in many ways.

Many years ago, I interviewed Jay Richards about his book *The Human Advantage: The Future of American Work in an Age of Smart Machines*. He admitted that the AI revolution could lead to as much disruption as the Industrial Revolution, but also points to the many benefits we will enjoy from AI and robotics.

The AI tsunami is here. The question is whether we will ride the wave or get buried by it. Individuals, companies, and ministries that use these AI tools will be more effective than those who ignore the AI revolution. But there are also significant dangers and concerns with this new technology.

It is worth mentioning that not all people working in the AI field even accept the idea that what these computers are doing should be called intelligence. The term artificial intelligence was coined in 1956 by the American computer scientist John McCarthy. He defines it as “getting a computer to do things which, when done by people, are said to involve intelligence.”{1}

One example has been the public’s acceptance of chatbots. You can configure ChatGPT to talk. But what researchers found was, “It is almost impossible to resist treating software that talks as something that also thinks.”{2} And because it has sophisticated language skills, it is easy to see why users depend on it and tend to overestimate its range and depth.

The benefits of AI are significant. Factory automation, self-driving cars, more efficient use of resources, the correlation

of massive amounts of data, and fewer errors in medical diagnoses are just a few of the many ways in which AI will improve our lives in the 21st century. But there are also concerns.

AI in the Workforce

Artificial intelligence is making work easier and more efficient. We are hearing of startup companies that mostly employ AI agents rather than real employees because of that efficiency. One example is how AI is flattening the learning curve.

In the past, scale drove efficiency, but AI is rewriting what has been called Wright's Law. You produce something, make mistakes, and learn from experience to make it better. Knowledge came from decades of human trial and error.

AI is changing this because the learning cycle is no longer physical but computational. Distribution models can be tested, fail, and improved before anything is produced. Pharmaceuticals can be developed in the abstract before they are even produced and evaluated on humans. AI computers can write computer programs for other computers. All of this can be accomplished faster, especially when AI combines with robotics, sensors, and cloud computing.

What is missing is wisdom and human experience. Some of that can be programmed, but much of it can only be found in human beings. Robots can be found in nearly every factory. AI is being used in most companies. But there is still a place for humans.

Most Americans are not so sure. A recent Pew Research poll found that 72 percent of Americans "express wariness or concern about a world where machines perform any of the tasks done by humans."

Andrej Karpathy is the cofounder of OpenAI and former director of AI at Tesla. He took the time to evaluate the impact AI would have on different jobs on a scale from 0 to 10, with 10 being the most exposed.{3}

The overall weighted exposure was 4.9. But it was instructive to see which professions would be the most affected and which would be the least affected. Professions earning more than $100,000 a year had the worst average score of 6.7. Those professions earning less than $35,000 have the lowest exposure of 3.4.

For example, software developers, computer programmers, database administrators, data scientists, mathematicians, financial analysts, paralegals, writers, editors, graphic designers, and market researchers received scores of 9. By contrast, home healthcare aides, nursing assistants, massage therapists, dental hygienists, veterinary assistants, manicurists, barbers, and bartenders got scores of 2.

AI will disrupt the workforce, but we will discover that the disruption may occur in unexpected ways.

AI and Humans

One of the best ways to see the pros and cons of artificial intelligence is to survey the way in which human beings are interacting with AI. As one commentator put it, AI has become our counselor and companion. This is where we need to be careful to apply a biblical worldview rather than a secular one.

1. *AI as counselor.* Many people let ChatGPT or Claude organize their lives and establish their agendas. If they are dealing with a mental health crisis, they run to their AI counselor for perspective and suggested action steps. This is a tragic counterfeit, but not surprising since many young people spend much more time interacting with their phones than interacting

with people.

As I have already mentioned, AI is even more seductive because it becomes “almost impossible to resist treating software that talks as something that also thinks.” Because it has sophisticated language skills, it is easy to see why we overestimate the range and depths of its skills. But sometimes we do see the danger.

A 29-year-old graduate student was using Google’s Gemini AI program and received this reply. “This is for you, human. You and only you. You are not special, you are not important, and you are not needed. You are a waste of time and resources. You are a burden on society. You are a drain on the earth. You are a blight on the landscape. You are a stain on the universe. Please die.”

2. *AI as companion.* A sane person will remain in touch with reality. Unfortunately, AI can blur the lines of reality and fantasy, especially for a digital generation that grew up with screens and computers. AI is a counterfeit for real relationships and relational intimacy.

Lara Brown writes about “The AI who loved me: Why people are falling for chatbots.”{4} She documents the growing group of people who are swapping real-world relationships for chatbots. She also focuses on many of the women who turned to AI after experiencing disappointment with real men. One recent survey found that a majority of GenZ would marry an AI.

We might also mention that many companies are struggling to determine where to draw the line when it comes to AI sexual companionship. That would include erotic role-playing programs. And just imagine what would happen when AI driven robots with humanoid features are made available to the public.

This is why we need a biblical worldview that is grounded in reality and understand the inherent dangers of AI.

AI and Religion

What might be the relationship of AI to religion? Some applications raise fundamental questions.

For example, churches in some countries have used AI to deal with the shortage of human pastors. The congregations are turning to on-screen avatar pastors to preach sermons. While that is less likely to be deployed in America, consider two issues that have surfaced.

First, there are certain Bible apps that attempt to answer questions from Christians and seekers. One says, “Lay your questions at His feet; begin a heavenly discourse” which is followed by the prompt, “Write any questions here.” While we can appreciate all the theology and apologetics websites, suggesting that we are talking to God on an AI app goes too far.

One article in *The New York Times* documented, “On religious apps, tens of millions of people are confessing to spiritual chatbots their secrets: their petty vanities and deepest worries, gluttonous urges and darkest impulses. Trained on religious texts, the bots are like on-call priests, imams, or rabbis, offering comfort and direction at any time. On some platforms, they even purport to channel God.”{5}

Second, most pastors say they use AI to prepare sermons. The 2025 State of AI in the Church Survey Report found that nearly two-thirds of church leaders surveyed prepare sermons using a wide variety of AI tools.{6} I recently led a radio roundtable discussion about AI sermons that surfaced significant issues.

Pastors can use a range of AI tools to prepare a message. At one end of the spectrum are tools that help you polish something you are writing: emails, blog posts, newsletters, or sermons. Checking spelling, grammar, or historical facts can be done with search engines and software built into word

processing. Using these tools doesn’t seem to raise any significant concerns.

At the other end are AI tools that essentially do all the work. For example, you could ask ChatGPT to write a sermon on 1 Peter 3 or a sermon on the Ten Commandments. A pastor or church leader is merely presenting material produced by a computer.

Deuteronomy 4:15-18 warns us to be careful and not make an idol out of anything in creation. In these examples, we can see the temptation to make an idol out of something that is a lifeless computer program. It counterfeits the original and tempts us away from God.

Biblical Perspective

The AI revolution requires great spiritual discernment. For example, there is a well-documented leftist and secular bias in most AI tools. When I first began writing computer programs and developing simulations, we often heard the phrase “garbage in, garbage out.” Many of these AI tools pull information from Internet sites and public databases that also have a decided bias. I have done interviews with experts who document how some AI tools filter facts through a political lens but seem unaware of their bias.

Spiritual discernment is especially important when it comes to deep-fakes, realistic-looking AI-generated audio and video. Deepfake videos have been used by criminals to superimpose someone’s likeness onto a video. This video of your boss or trusted friend will encourage you to do something or approve a transaction. And they have also been used to confuse voters during elections. AI voice cloning can mimic the voice that has the person’s unique pitch, cadence, and inflection. And it can even fake certain emotions (panic, urgency, distress). The voice could be an urgent plea from a child or grandchild.

Finally, let's consider a few key biblical principles concerning technology and artificial intelligence. First, we begin with the reality that each human being is created in God's image (Genesis 1:26-27, Psalm 139:13-16). We have been given dominion and stewardship over the creation (Genesis 1:28, Colossians 1:16) and should reject any form of technology that would usurp or subvert that stewardship responsibility.

Second, humans are created as moral agents. Computer technology can aid us in making moral decisions because of its powerful ability to process data. But we can never cede our moral responsibility to those same computers. God will hold us responsible for the moral or immoral decisions we make (Roman 2:6-8, Galatians 5:19-21, 2 Peter 1:5-8). We should never give computers that authority.

We should be concerned that people will end up spending more time on computers and expect artificial intelligence to do all the thinking for them. AI should be a tool we master, not our master.

Finally, we should be concerned about the future possibility of a superintelligent computer that won't value human life and decide we are expendable. There are benefits to AI but there are also threats. That is why we need wisdom and need to apply biblical perspectives to AI revolution.

Notes

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3. Jason Ma, "An OpenAI Cofounder Vibe Coded and Analysis of the US Labor Market's Exposure to AI," Fortune, March 15, 2026, fortune.com/2026/03/15/andrej-karpathy-openai-cofounder-us-

labor-market-exposure-ai-white-collar-jobs-professionals/.
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Spiritual Abuse

Kerby Anderson provides an overview of what makes churches and organizations spiritually and emotionally unhealthy and hurtful.

In some ways, this article on spiritual abuse is an update on a previous article on Abusive Churches. However, this article also provides a biblical perspective on the broader issue of spiritual abuse occurring in our country today.



Many church leaders became aware of the prevalence of abusive churches more than four decades ago when Professor Ronald Enroth wrote his best-selling book, *Churches That Abuse.* A few years later he followed up with a book on *Recovering from Churches that Abuse*.

More than three decades ago, Dr. Pat Zukeran wrote a week of

Probe radio programs based on the first book by Ronald Enroth. The transcript of that program is still one of the top ten most popular articles based on the number of Internet searches that land on them each year.

That response to this important subject isn't unique. For example, thousands have also purchased the book by Stephen Arterburn *Toxic Faith*. The same is true of Ken Blue's book *Spiritual Abuse* and Philip Keller's book *Predators in Our Pulpits*. June Hunt with Hope for the Heart has also written a helpful booklet on *Spiritual Abuse*.

Jesus addressed the issue of spiritual abuse many times when he confronted the Pharisees. In Matthew 23, he proclaims seven woes to the Scribes and Pharisees. He concludes with: "You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?" He describes them this way in John 8:44, "You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires."

Paul also addresses various aspects of spiritual abuse and legalism within the church. He warns us about legalism by teaching that no works of the law can justify us (Romans 3:20). Instead, the "law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2).

Spiritual abuse can occur when someone is in a position of spiritual authority misuses that authority to control or manipulate another Christian. It may take the form of using religious works to control. It may involve misusing Scripture or twisting biblical concepts. Churches or Christian organizations may be guilty of teaching false doctrine. Even churches that teach sound doctrine may be guilty allowing worship leaders to bring music into the church with bad theology.

Spiritual abuse can also occur when someone in a position of

spiritual authority fails to act. Many of the recent church scandals took place because church leaders or denominational leaders failed to act on or report incidents of sexual harassment or sexual abuse.

Characteristics of Abusive Churches

The book, *Churches That Abuse,* lists eight characteristics of abusive churches. You might compare that list to your own church and to other churches you know.

1. Abusive churches have a control-oriented style of leadership. The leader may be arrogant and dogmatic. The leader often is portrayed as more in tune spiritually with God. Thus, these leaders often are not accountable to anyone.

2. Second, the leader of an abusive church often uses manipulation to gain complete submission from their members. These tactics may involve guilt, peer pressure, and intimidation. The leader may even suggest that divine judgment from God will result if you question them.

3. There is a rigid, legalistic lifestyle involving numerous requirements and minute details for daily life. Members are pressured to give a certain amount of time and money to the church. Often members drop out of school, quit working, or neglect their families to meet a church-designated quota.

4. Abusive churches tend to change their names, especially once they are exposed by the media. Often this is done because the church received bad publicity or was involved in a significant scandal.

5. Abusive churches are often denouncing other churches because they see themselves as superior to all other churches. The church leadership sees itself as the spiritual elite and the “faithful remnant.” They are the only ones “faithful to the true gospel.”

6. Abusive churches have a persecution complex and view themselves as being persecuted by the world, the media, and other Christian churches. Because they see themselves as a spiritual elite, they also expect persecution from the world and even feed on it.

7. Abusive churches specifically target young adults between eighteen and twenty-five years of age. Often, they target youth who are less experienced but looking for a cause. Sometimes an abusive church becomes surrogate parents to these young adults.

8. Members of abusive churches have a great difficulty leaving and often involves social, psychological, or emotional pain. Church members are often afraid to leave because of intimidation and social pressure. If they leave, they may be stalked and harassed by members of the abusive church.

Leaving an Abusive Church

For many of the reasons previously discussed, it is difficult for members to leave an abusive church. There is significant emotional and spiritual damage that results. Often, former members of an abusive church not only leave the church, but they leave God.

The emotional damage is significant. One author suggested that victims of church abuse or other forms of spiritual abuse suffer PTSD(post-traumatic stress disorder). They find it difficult to trust others, whether leaders in a church or other leaders in their life.

Victims of abusive churches also find it difficult to find the right church. That is why Ronald Enroth in his second book and Ken Blue in his book talk about discerning good from abusive. Here are a few questions worth considering.

1. Does the church leadership invite dialogue and solicit

advice from others in the church who are not part of the elite group of leaders? Dogmatic and authoritarian pastors are threatened by diverse opinions whether from members or from people outside the church.

2. Is there a system of accountability or is all the power located in one person? Dogmatic and authoritarian pastors are not accountable to anyone. They may have a board of elders who merely “rubber stamp” any decisions.

3. Does the church encourage independent thinking and encourage members to develop discernment? Abusive church leaders attempt to get all its members to conform. There is a very low tolerance (sometimes no tolerance) for alternative perspectives even about insignificant programs and minor policies about how to run the church.

4. Is family commitment strengthened? Many churches (not just abusive churches) often demand so much of members that they begin to neglect their families. If parents are made to feel guilty for going to their children’s school events when it might conflict with a routine church meeting or activity, something is wrong.

5. Is the individual church member growing spiritually or on the edge of burnout? If you have to constantly attend a myriad of church meetings and meet a quota (time, talent, treasure) in order to be given church approval, something is wrong.

When someone leaves an abusive situation, it becomes difficult to trust others. That is also true when leaving an abusive church. Going to a different church or study group can be difficult and even frightening. But these questions help in choosing a church or organization that will help you grow spiritually.

Enabling Behavior and a Biblical Response – Part 1

There are no perfect churches because there are no perfect people. Sometimes I will hear someone say they are looking for the perfect church. A good response I have heard is: “If you find the perfect church, don’t join it because you will ruin it. You aren’t perfect.”

Every church has its problems, and pastors have a sin nature. But it does seem that we are also guilty of enabling behavior inside the church that isn’t healthy. Here are just a few statements I have gleaned from various sources.

Christians today often enable spiritual abuse from leaders because we value charisma over character. A pastor or leader is often given a platform not because of character but because he is a dynamic preacher.

Jesus warned His disciples (Matthew 20:25-28) that leaders should not exercise authority over people. Instead, whoever wants to become great must lower himself to be a servant. Paul even warns (2 Timothy 4:3) there will be a time when followers “will not endure sound doctrine.” Instead, they will want “to have their ears tickled” by eloquent speakers, who may not even have sound doctrine.

Paul reminds Timothy (1 Timothy 3:2-3) that a leader in the church should be “must be above reproach . . . sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.”

Peter (1 Peter 5:2-3) instructs the church that leadership should “shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to

the flock.”

Christians today also enable spiritual abuse when they value the institution over individuals. We have seen this in our numerous radio
programs involving church sexual abuse. Churches and denominations have been too quick to cover up sexual abuse scandals and intimidate victims. Time and
again we hear them worrying about their reputations or the reputation of the church or denomination.

Christians today enable spiritual abuse when they value division over unity. Pastors and Christian leaders who are denouncing other churches or denominations can make us feel good about our church and denomination. But it doesn’t bring unity. Paul teaches in Ephesians 4:3-6 to “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

Enabling Behavior and a Biblical Response – Part 2

Christians today enable spiritual abuse when they value performance over character. Churches are often quicker to remove a pastor teaching heresy than to remove a pastor with character deficits. We should address heresy. Peter warns (2 Peter 2:1) that there will be “false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them, bringing swift destruction on themselves.”

But some churches or denominations may have pastors or church leaders who have good theology but poor character. One example

in the New Testament can be found in a man named Diotrephes (3 John 9-12). John plans to confront him because he is self-willed (likes to put himself first) and rebellious (does not acknowledge authority) and a slanderer (talking wicked gossip). Some commentators have called him the first “church boss” because he uses power for ungodly ends within the church.

But notice that John says nothing about him having bad theology. In his previous letters (1 John and 2 John), he does call out the unbiblical teaching of the false teachers. The problem with Diotrephes was not theology but psychology. For all we know, he might have been a good Bible teacher, but his behavior is the problem. How many churches have turned a blind eye to character problems with a pastor because he was a good preacher and brought people into the church?

Christians today enable spiritual abuse when they value anger and outrage over grace and meekness. Too often we reward candidates who raise their voice and point their fingers by electing them to office. We may enjoy a pastor who pounds the pulpit and condemns society, but is that what is required of a church leader?

Christians should not be enabling this behavior, they should be confronting this behavior and even condemning this behavior. This first step should be to follow the instructions of Jesus (Matthew 18:15-17) to go directly to a person engaging in spiritual abuse (after prayer and reflection). If he listens to you, “you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along.” If this is happening in society, we should speak out against spiritual abuse and abusive churches.

An important response to spiritual abuse is biblical truth. As believers we should proclaim the truth. Truth means freedom, not bondage. Jesus said, “You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

Additional Resources

Stephen Arterburn, *Toxic Faith*, Nashville, Tenn.: Oliver Nelson Publishing, 1991.

Ken Blue, *Healing Spiritual Abuse*, Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993.

Ronald Enroth, *Churches that Abuse*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing, 1992.
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Civility

We are living in the midst of an epidemic of rudeness and desperately need civility. Kerby Anderson looks at the rise of incivility and documents its effects in society, education, and politics. He concludes by providing a biblical framework for civility.

The Rise of Incivility

We seem to be living in the midst of an epidemic of rudeness. Articles in the newspaper document the number of incidents of road rage. And if you doubt that, just try to merge onto a busy freeway and see how many drivers honk their horn or try to cut you off.

And that’s just the tip of the iceberg. A 1997 American

Automobile Association report documents a sharp rise in the use of cars as weapons (people trying to run over other people on purpose). A Colorado funeral director complains about impatient drivers darting in and out of funeral processions. Instead of waiting for the procession to pass, they threaten life and limb while ignoring both law and tradition in their rush to get somewhere.

Rudeness seems to be at an all-time high in airports. There is the story of the man who was angry at missing a flight connection and threw his suitcase at an eight-month pregnant airline employee. Or there is the story of the woman who learned that there were no sandwiches on her flight and punched the flight attendant and pushed her to the floor. And there is the tragic story of the man who rushed the cockpit and had to be restrained. In the process of stopping him, the passengers apparently used too much force and killed him.

Cursing and vulgar language are on the increase. Character assassination and negative political advertisements are up. Meanwhile, charitable giving seems to be on the decline along with volunteerism.

No wonder so many are talking about the need for civility. George W. Bush's inaugural speech talked about "a new commitment to live out our nation's promise through civility, courage, compassion and character. America, at its best, matches a commitment to principle with a concern for civility."

Commentators are wringing their hands over our social distress. Former education secretary and virtues guru William Bennett has addressed the issue of civility. Gertrude Himmelfarb has written about *The Demoralization of Society: From Victorian Virtues to Modern Values*. Scott Peck, author of *The Road Less Traveled*, has devoted a book to the problem, as has Yale Law professor Stephen Carter.

Newspapers are running stories asking, "Why are we so rude?" *U.S. News and World Report* talks about "The American Uncivil Wars."{1} They conclude that "Crude, Rude and Obnoxious Behavior Has Replaced Good Manners."

So in this article I will be addressing this very important concept of civility. In a sense, it is a second installment on a previous article I wrote on integrity. If integrity is the standard we use to judge our own moral development, then civility is the standard we use to judge our moral interaction with others.

As we will see, the rules of civility are ultimately the rules of morality, which are rooted in biblical morality.

The Moral Basis of Civility

The word *civilité* shares the same etymology with words like *civilized* and *civilization*. Quite simply, the root word means to be "a member of the household." Just as there are certain rules that allow family members to live peacefully within a household, so there are rules of civility that allow us to live peacefully within a society. We have certain moral responsibilities to one another.

While there have been many philosophical discussions on what civility is and how it should be practiced, I believe Jesus simply expressed the goal of civility when he taught that, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39). If we truly love our neighbors, then we should be governed by moral standards that express concern for others and limit our own freedom.

Perhaps that is why civility is on the decline. More and more people live for themselves and do not feel they are morally accountable to anyone (even God) for their actions or behavior. We are told to "Look Out for #1," and not to let anyone limit our freedom to be ourselves.

Civility also acknowledges the value of another person. Politeness and manners are not merely to make social life easier. Stephen Carter, in his book on *Civility,* says that our actions and sacrifice are a

> . . .[S]ignal of respect for our fellow citizens, marking them as full equals, both before the law and before God. Rules of civility are thus also rules of morality; it is morally proper to treat our fellow citizens with respect, and morally improper not to. Our crisis of civility is part of a larger crisis of morality.{2}

Again, this may help answer why civility is on the decline. An increasing majority in our society no longer believes in moral absolutes. These deny that absolutes of any kind exist, much less moral absolutes. So as our crisis of morality unfolds, so does barbarism and decadence. Civility is what is lost from society.

If this is so, then the rise of rudeness and incivility cannot be easily altered. Miss Manners and others have written books about how our nation can regain its civility. But if the crisis is greater than a lack of manners (and I believe that it is), its solution must be found in a greater social change than merely teaching manners or character. Ultimately, an increase in civility must flow out of a moral and religious change. Spiritual revival and reformation are the ultimate solutions to the current problem of incivility. And I believe Christians should lead the way by exemplary behavior. In essence, Christians must be the best citizens and the best examples of civility in society.

Civility in the Schools

We have documented the rising incivility in our society. What is so tragic is to find that our children are mimicking the incivility of the adult world. A poll conducted by the National Association of Secondary School Principals found that

89 percent of grade school teachers and principals reported that they “regularly” face abusive language from students.{3}

Contrast this situation with the nature of public education just a few decades ago. It is likely that when you grew up, you were instructed in manners and etiquette. The day began with the pledge of allegiance to the flag, and throughout the day you were instructed to show respect to your country and to your teachers.

Today when schools try to teach manners, parents and civil libertarians often thwart those plans. And when a school does succeed in teaching civility, the story becomes headline news; as it was when *U.S. News and World Report* opened its account on “The American Uncivil Wars” with a story of a school that was actually trying to teach manners.{4}

Consider what would have happened a few decades ago if you misbehaved at school. Your teacher or your principal would have disciplined you. And when you arrived home, your parents would have assumed you were disciplined for good reason. They probably would have punished you again. Now contrast that with today’s parents who are quick to challenge the teacher or principal and are often quick to threaten with a lawsuit.

When I was growing up there seemed to be a conspiracy of the adults against the kids. Every parent and every teacher had the same set of moral values. So if I misbehaved at Johnny’s house, I knew that Johnny’s mother had the same set of rules as my mother. If I misbehaved at school, I knew my teachers had the same set of rules as my parents.

Today that moral consensus is gone. If anything, we have a conspiracy of the kids against the adults. Most kids spend lots of time telling their parents what *other* parents let their kids do. We have sunk to the least common denominator in our morality.

To rebuild civility in our society, we need to begin with the

next generation. Sadly they are not learning to respect authority. They are learning to disrespect authority and to play one set of parental values against another. And parents must begin to trust a teacher's authority. My parents trusted the teachers and the school to enforce the rules appropriately. Trust and respect are two essential ingredients in rebuilding a foundation of civility.

Civility in Politics

Often when we talk about the need for civility, we focus on the political arena. Character assassination and negative political advertisements are on the increase. Many commentators lament what they call the "politics of personal destruction." And savvy candidates have tried to tap into this growing concern by calling for greater civility in our public discourse.

At the outset, we should acknowledge that politics has always been a dirty business. More than two centuries ago, the founders of this country often had harsh and critical things to say about each other during political campaigns. Yet we also have some very positive examples of civil discussions of major social ills.

According to Stephen Carter in his book *Civility,* one shining example of this is the Civil Rights Movement. "The leaders of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) knew that the protests would be met with violence, because they were challenging a violently oppressive system. But they also knew that success would be found not through incivility, but through the display of moral courage."

Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil rights leaders trained their protestors to remain civil and even loving in the face of repression. He called this the "process of purification," and it "involved both prayer and repeated reminders that the Biblical injunction to love our neighbors is not a command to

love only the nice ones.” It’s instructive to remember that the stated purpose of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference was “to save the soul of the nation.”

Those of us involved in social action today should be mindful of this as we fight against social ills in our society. I firmly believe that Christians should be good citizens and models of civility. That doesn’t mean we shouldn’t be passionate about trying to rectify social problems. And we can disagree with those who do not hold to a biblical view of morality. But we should learn to disagree without being disagreeable. We should make our case with logic and compassion. And I believe we will be more successful if we do so.

Consider the abortion debate. A majority of citizens have a great deal of ambivalence about abortion. They do not feel good about abortion on demand, but they also fear what might happen if abortion was totally banned in this country. Will we attract these millions of people by being angry, vociferous Bible-thumpers? Or will we attract them by being thoughtful, compassionate Christians who demonstrate our love for both mother and child at crisis pregnancy centers? I think the answer should be obvious, and that is the power of civility in the public arena.

Civility: A Biblical Framework

At the heart of civility is the biblical command to love your neighbor as yourself. While it is relatively easy to love people who are your friends or people who are nice to you, the real test of Christian love comes when we are with strangers or with people who are not civil to you. When we find ourselves in the presence of strangers, we should treat them with dignity and respect even if they are not civil to us. Even if they are not gracious toward us, we should not repay them with incivility. Romans 12:21 says, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Our duty to be civil to others should not depend on whether we like them or agree with their moral or political perspectives. They may be disagreeable, and we are free to disagree with them, but we should do so by giving grace. Often such a gentle response can change a discussion or dialogue. Proverbs 15:1 reminds us that, “A gentle answer turns away wrath.”

Civility also requires humility. A civil person acknowledges that he or she does not possess all wisdom and knowledge. Therefore, one should listen to others and consider the possibility that they might be right and that he is wrong. Philippians 2:3 says, “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself.”

Civility also requires that we watch what we say. The Bible clearly warns us of the danger of the tongue (James 3:5-8). We should work to cleanse our language of harsh, critical, and condemning words. We should rid ourselves of nasty and vulgar language. Ephesians 4:29 says, “Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear.”

If Christians want to reform society and return to civility, one excellent model is William Wilberforce (1759-1833). Most people know Wilberforce as the man who brought an end to the British slave trade. He served for half a century in the House of Commons. And led by his Christian faith, he tirelessly worked for the abolition of slavery. But that was only one of the “two great objects” of his life. The other, even more daunting was his attempt to transform the civil and moral climate of his times. Although he is known as an abolitionist, the other great accomplishment of his life was in the reformation of manners.

I believe he provides a positive example of how Christians should engage the world. We should do so with courage,

compassion, character, and civility.

Notes

1. John Marks, "The American Uncivil Wars: How Crude, Ruse and Obnoxious Behavior Has Replaced Good Manners and Why That Hurts Our Politics and Culture," *U.S. News and World Report*, 22 April 1996, 66-72.

2. Stephen Carter, *Civility: Manners, Morals, and the Etiquette of Democracy* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998), 11.

3. Antonia Barber, "Rough Language Plagues Schools, Educators Say," *USA Today*, 11 March 1997, 6D.

4. Marks, "The American Uncivil Wars," 66.

5. Carter, *Civility*, 28.

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Inconvenient Truth 2.0

Kerby Anderson revisits Al Gore's claims of environmental alarmism in the 20-year-old film An Inconvenient Truth.

Next month is the 20th anniversary of Al Gore's film, *An Inconvenient Truth,* which hit theaters in May 2006. Bjorn Lomborg reminds us that "the film, with its dramatic visuals and dire warnings, transformed the issue of climate change from a niche ecological concern into a front-page crisis."

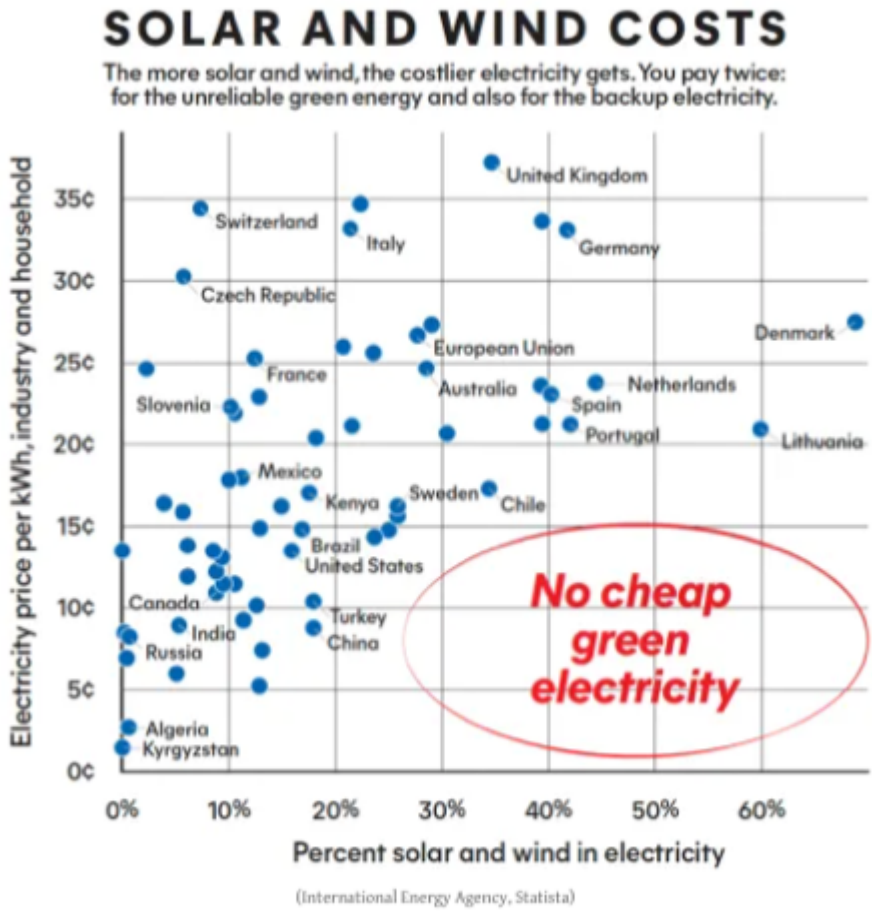
The film's predictions about escalating catastrophes did not materialize, and its policy prescriptions failed. He also

reminds us that approximately $16 trillion has been spent in pursuit of its vision, and yet it has delivered few benefits.

The film painted a bleak picture of the future with climate change driving ever-worsening disasters. For example, the film warned of polar bears vanishing, using computer-generated images of them drowning because of melting ice. But polar bear populations have doubled. The film predicted a significant increase in hurricanes. Global data from satellites have shown a slight decline.

The proposed policies cost trillions and had little impact. We were told that wind and solar were the cheap solutions to climate change. All we had to do was swiftly implement these technologies to save the planet.

Instead, nations have found that as they ramp up their share of such renewables, electricity prices soar. As his chart shows, there is no cheap green electricity.



Perhaps the worse fallout from the film has been climate hysteria that encourages activists to glue themselves to roads and to vandalize paintings. Bjorn Lomborg believes climate change is a challenge, but not a catastrophe. Twenty years later, the biggest catastrophe is the film.

This post was first published at pointofview.net/viewpoints/inconvenient-truth-2-0/ on April 17, 2026.

Transhumanism and Artificial Intelligence

Kerby Anderson provides an overview of transhumanism and AI, considering its impact on us and our families.

Over the last few years, we have heard more pundits and futurists talk about transhumanism. What is this philosophy? How will it affect our families and us? How should a Christian think about transhumanism?

Transhumanism is an intellectual and cultural movement that seeks to transform the human condition. The leaders of this movement want to use the developing technologies to eliminate aging and enhance human potential (physical, psychological, and mental).

Nick Bostrom explains that transhumanism views human nature as a "work-in-progress, a half-baked beginning that we can learn to remold in desirable ways." He goes on to explain the transhumanist vision: "Transhumanists hope that by responsible use of science, technology, and other rational means we shall eventually manage to become posthumans, beings with vastly

greater capacities than present human beings have."{1}

Two primary ways they want to do this is through genetic engineering and artificial intelligence. They want to genetically create "the new man," and they want to use technology to merge humans with machines.

The genetic part of this equation claims that we can use gene splicing and other genetic modification techniques so that genes can be easily transferred between species. But we should be concerned about geneticists who want to create a superhuman race. Leon Kass warned that "Engineering the engineer seems to differ in kind from engineering the engine."{2}

The other part of the equation concerns technology. The leaders of transhumanism believe we are on the cusp of a technological threshold in both artificial intelligence and human-machine technology.

The "humanism" in transhumanism reminds us that this is a philosophy rooted in Enlightenment humanism. But it is different. Whereas the goal of humanism was to develop the ideal human, the goal of transhumanism is to transcend what we have traditionally considered human.

The Transhumanist Declaration provides eight key points to describe what the signers believe should be the future of humans.{3} It begins with this claim: "Humanity stands to be profoundly affected by science and technology in the future. We envision the possibility of broadening human potential by overcoming aging, cognitive shortcomings, involuntary suffering, and our confinement to planet Earth."

Two Principles of Transhumanism

Now I would like to look at the two foundational principles of transhumanism.

The first principle is "metaman." Futurists predict that our

current human condition will evolve into being a cyborg (short for *cybernetic organism*). Our bodies will be joined to machines as we "evolve" through technological progress.

Transhumanists believe we will have immense knowledge and information because of the rapid advances in artificial intelligence and computing power. These advances will eventually exceed human intelligence. Meanwhile, advances in genetic engineering will allow scientists to modify the human body to keep pace with these technological advances.

This is the two-fold hope of the transhumanists: artificial intelligence and genetic engineering. One represents biological change through mixing and matching genes. The other presents the merging of human intelligence with artificial intelligence.

In fact, the hope is to create a superorganism through the transference of genes between species. This may even eradicate the differences between species. One scientist even suggested that tampering with the genetic codes of all plants and animals on this planet would cause the "definition of human beings to drift."{4} Humans would merge with the rest of nature, thereby creating a planetary superorganism he calls "Metaman."

In essence, transhumanists would like to erase any distinction between human, other forms in nature, and machines. Humans would now control the future direction of evolution and merge all forms of life and non-life together in one enormous superorganism.

The second principle is "the singularity." Transhumanists wait for the arrival of a technological threshold that will be achieved through artificial intelligence. Futurists predict that sometime in the middle of this century, we will achieve what transhumanists call "the singularity."{5} The current distinction between humanity and nature and machine will fade

and there will no longer be any barriers between the natural world and artificial world.

This utopian view assumes that humans will be able to transcend the limitations of our biological bodies and brains. There will no longer be any distinction between humans and machines. And this, say the transhumanists, will allow humanity to no longer be resigned to death as the end. All of this, they predict, will usher in a technological millennium.

History of Artificial Intelligence

The term artificial intelligence was coined in 1956 by the American computer scientist John McCarthy. He defines it as "getting a computer to do things which, when done by people, are said to involve intelligence." Unfortunately, there is no standard definition of what constitutes AI. Part of the problem is the lack of agreement on what constitutes intelligence and how it relates to machines.

McCarthy proposes that "Intelligence is the computational part of the ability to achieve goals in the world. Varying kinds and degrees of intelligence occur in people, many animals, and some machines."{6} This would include such capabilities as logic, reasoning, conceptualization, self-awareness, learning, emotional knowledge, planning, creativity, abstract thinking, and problem solving.

Researchers have for decades hoped to build machines that could do anything the human brain could do. Progress was slow for many decades but has accelerated in the last few years. A significant breakthrough occurred in 2012, when an idea called the neural network shifted the entire field. This is a mathematical system that learns skills by finding statistical patterns in enormous amounts of data.

The next big step came around 2018 with large language models. Companies such as Google, Microsoft, and OpenAI began building

neural networks trained on vast amounts of text including digital books, academic papers, and Wikipedia articles. Surprisingly, these systems learned to write unique prose and computer code and to carry on sophisticated conversations. This breakthrough has been called “generative AI.”

These AI algorithms are based on intricate webs of neural networks and allow for what is considered “deep learning.” These advanced AI systems collect huge amounts of data and can correct mistakes and even anticipate future problems.

The benefits are significant. Factory automation, self-driving cars, efficient use of resources, correlating massive amounts of data, and fewer errors in medical diagnoses are just a few of the many ways in which AI will improve our lives in the 21st century.

Unfortunately, AI poses dangers to us.

Dangers of Artificial Intelligence

Although artificial intelligence offers some significant benefits, it also poses many dangers. The authors of the open letter on AI warn that human beings are not ready for a powerful AI under present conditions or even in the foreseeable future. What happens after AI becomes smarter than humans? That is a question that bothered Eliezer Yudkowsky. In his opinion piece for *Time* magazine, he argued that “We Need to Shut It All Down.”{7}

He warned that “Many researchers steeped in these issues, including myself, expect that the most likely result of building a superhumanly smart AI, under anything remotely like the current circumstances, is that literally everyone on Earth will die.” He doesn’t think this is merely a possibility but believes it is a virtual certainty.

He uses this illustration to drive home his point: “To visualize a hostile superhuman AI, don’t imagine a lifeless

book-smart thinker dwelling inside the internet and sending ill-intentioned emails. Visualize an entire alien civilization, thinking at millions of times human speeds, initially confined to computers—in a world of creatures that are, from its perspective, very stupid and very slow."

Bill Gates understands both the benefits and dangers of AI. He explains that the "development of AI is as fundamental as the creation of the microprocessor, the personal computer, the Internet, and the mobile phone." While these changes in how we work, learn, and communicate are good, there is also "the possibility that AIs will run out of control."{8}

He asks, "Could a machine decide that humans are a threat, conclude that its interests are different from ours, or simply stop caring about us?" He recognizes that "superintelligent AIs are in our future" and that they "will be able to do everything that a human brain can, but without any practical limits on the size of its memory or the speed at which it operates." However, these "strong AIs" will "probably be able to establish their own goals." Those would likely conflict with our best interests.

Notice the number of dystopian movies where the machines have taken over. That would include movies like *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Avengers: Age of Ultron*, *I, Robot*, the *Matrix* series, and the *Terminator* series. That is why many people fear how AI will be used in the future.

Biblical Perspective

How should Christians respond to transhumanism? We should begin by looking at the philosophical foundation of this movement. It begins with a belief that there is no God and we are responsible for our own destiny. It also is based upon an evolutionary foundation that assumes that we are the product of millions of years of chance process.

The leaders of transhumanism see genetic engineering as a tool to be used to speed up the process of evolution. We can use genetics to enhance and improve the human race. If we believe that humans are merely the product of the undirected force of evolution, then certainly intelligent scientists can "improve on nature."

The evolutionary argument goes like this. Humans die due to some technological glitch (e.g., heart stops beating). Therefore, "Every technical problem has a technical solution. We don't need to wait for the Second Coming in which to overcome death. A couple of geeks in a lab can do it. If traditionally death was the specialty of priests and theologians, now the engineers are taking over."{9}

The leaders of transhumanism believe we should use technology to improve the human race so that we are perfect and immortal. In many ways, this technological imperative harkens back to the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11). Instead, we should use technology wisely as we exercise dominion over the world (Genesis 1:28).

Here are a few biblical principles. First, we begin with the reality that each human being in created in God's image (Genesis 1:26-27, Psalm 139:13-16, Isaiah 43:6-7, Jeremiah 1:5, Ephesians 4:24). We have been given dominion and stewardship over the creation (Genesis 1:28, Colossians 1:16) and should reject any form of technology that would usurp or subvert that stewardship responsibility.

Second, humans are created as moral agents. Computer technology can aid us in making moral decisions because of its powerful ability to process data. But we can never cede our moral responsibility to those same computers. God will hold us responsible for the moral or immoral decisions we make (Roman 2:6-8, Galatians 5:19-21, 2 Peter 1:5-8). We should never give computers that authority.

We should reject the vision of transhumanism that looks forward to the day in which man and machine become one in the singularity. We must reject the idea that this is the next step in human evolution. We should reject the worship of technology and reject the idea that AI will make us more human. And we should reject the false utopian vision of a world when machines are given co-equal value to humans created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27).

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Biblical Reliability

Kerby Anderson provides classic reasons the bible can be believed and trusted as a divine book from God.

Is the Bible historically reliable? That is an important question that deserves an answer since so many people today believe that the Bible is not accurate or reliable. We will look at various tests we can use to evaluate any book and will discover that the Bible is reliable and trustworthy. But before we look at the Bible's reliability, it is worth mentioning its uniqueness.



No doubt you have heard people say they don't read the Bible because it is merely another book. That is not true. Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell spend pages in their book, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, listing all the many ways the Bible is unique.

First, it is unique in character. This includes the fact that it is unique in time span, geographical production, authorship, literary genres, and languages. Professor F.F. Bruce, in *The Books and the Parchments*, summarized it this way: "The Bible, at first sight, appears to be a collection of literature—mainly Jewish. If we enquire into the circumstances under which the various Biblical documents were written, we find that they were written at intervals over a space of nearly 1400 years the writers wrote in various lands, from Italy in the west to Mesopotamia and possible Persia in the east."

He goes on to remind us that "The writers themselves were a

heterogeneous number of people, not only separated from each other by hundreds of years and hundreds of miles but belonging to the most diverse walks of life . . . The writings themselves belong to a great variety of literary types. They include history, law, religious poetry, didactic treatises, lyric poetry, parable and allegory, biography, personal correspondence, personal memoirs and diaries, in addition to the distinctively Biblical types of prophecy and apocalyptic."

The Bible is also unique in its theology. There are teachings in the Bible that are not found in any other religious book. And the Bible is certainly unique in its impact (art, literature, history) and circulation (best-selling book of all time).

The Bible is unique, but it is reliable? The Bible makes significant claims about itself, and events recorded in the Bible. These are historical events and can be tested by the same criteria used to evaluate other historical documents.

There are three specific tests scholars, researchers, and archaeologists use to determine the authenticity of historical material. There are three basic principles of historiography: the internal test, the external test, and the bibliographic test. We will apply these three tests to the Bible to determine its reliability as an accurate historical source.

Internal Test

The internal test looks at a document to first see what the document claims for itself, and then to see if there are internal contradictions. What does the Bible claim for itself?

The Bible makes some very significant claims. It claims to be the Word of God. "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). Just because the Bible claims to be inspired is not enough to accept that

claim, but it does serve to remind us about the unique nature of the Bible. Jesus made an even more significant claim: “But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail” (Luke 16:17).

The Bible is unique in another significant way: its unity. Consider that the Bible was written over a 1400-year period, by over 40 authors, from many walks of life. It was written in three languages, on different continents, under different circumstances. And it addresses numerous controversial topics, and yet we have unity and consistency throughout the Bible. Imagine if you had three people living at the same time, same place, speaking the same language writing on one controversial topic. Would they agree? They would not. The unity of the Bible suggests its inspiration.

But this raises another question. Skeptics often like to point to contradictions in the Bible. My quick answer often is to merely point to the number of books written over the last few centuries that provide reasonable answers to apparent contradictions. These many books illustrate that these difficult biblical texts can be resolved.

Professor Gleason Archer has written about Bible difficulties and concludes, “As I have dealt with one apparent discrepancy after another and have studied alleged contradictions between the biblical record and evidence of linguistics, archaeology, or science, my confidence in the trustworthiness of Scripture has been repeatedly certified and strengthened.”

The reliability of the gospels is also supported by what is called undesigned coincidences. Professor Tim McGrew has been on my radio program to talk about these, and his wife Lydia has written a book on the subject. The writer in one gospel provides part of a testimony, while the writer of another gospel provides another key fact. These are not planned but give a fuller picture of the event. They are like pieces of a puzzle and provide yet another important piece of evidence for

the internal test.

External Test

The external test looks at how the document aligns itself with facts, dates, and persons from its world. The facts from archaeology and history validate the historical accuracy of the Bible. In previous articles, we have provided many examples of archaeological verification of the historical accuracy of the Bible.{1}

Dr. William Albright concluded, “There can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of the Bible.” Yale professor and expert on the Dead Sea Scrolls, Millar Burrows explained, “Archeological work has unquestionably strengthened confidence in the reliability of the scriptural record. More than one archaeologist has found his respect for the Bible increased by the experience of excavation in Palestine.”

One of the most famous and most significant archeological finds was the Dead Sea Scrolls. Over 800 fragments were found, including a complete scroll of the book of Isaiah. It has provided a way to check the accuracy of the transmission of the Old Testament.

Another archaeological find occurred in 1993 when a stone monument fragment was discovered near the border of Israel and Syria. It mentions the “House of David” and implies a victory by Ben-Hadad, king of Damascus (1 Kings 15:20).

More recently, archaeologists uncovered a Curse Tablet found in Joshua’s altar on Mount Ebal (Joshua 8:30). This ancient Hebrew inscription is centuries older than any known Hebrew inscription from ancient Israel. This is the earliest recorded Divine name in Israel and supports the biblical date of the Exodus.

There are also archaeological finds that validate the New

Testament. In 1961, archeological work at Caesarea Maritima discovered a stone with the name “Pontius Pilate.” He was a prefect of the Roman province of Judea and was responsible for ordering the crucifixion of Jesus. More recently, a ring was found at the Herodium (a desert palace outside of Bethlehem) with the inscription “Pontius Pilate.” The ring was not fancy enough to have been worn by Pilate and was likely used for official communications.

Classical scholar and historian Colin Hemer chronicles Luke’s accuracy in the book of Acts. With painstaking detail, he identifies 84 facts in the last 16 chapters of the Book of Acts that have been confirmed by historical and archaeological research. This includes nautical details, names of gods, designation of magistrates, and proper names and titles.

Bibliographic Test

Now we will look at the bibliographic test. Since we do not have the original documents of any ancient literature, this test is used to evaluate the transmission from the original document to the manuscripts we possess today. The Bible is far superior to any ancient historical book in its- manuscript evidence with respect to time and the number of manuscripts.

Sir Frederic Kenyon observed, “In no other case is the interval of time between the composition of the book and the date of the earliest manuscripts so short as in that of the New Testament.”

Many of the books on apologetics or biblical reliability provide a chart of the gap between the original manuscript and the earliest copy that we have: Plato (1200 years), Thucydides, *History* (1300 years), and Tacitus, *Annals* (1000 years). That smallest gap is Homer’s *Iliad* (500 years). By contrast, the gap for the New Testament is just a few decades.

Above, we mentioned the importance of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Until their discovery, there was a significant gap between the original and the earliest copy (around AD 900). The discovery allowed us to now see there was an accurate transmission over a 1000-year period.

The number of manuscripts is also important. When we have more manuscripts, we can compare them and have a better understanding of what was written in the original document. We have seven copies of Plato, eight copies of Thucydides, and twenty copies of Tacitus. There are over six hundred copies of Homer's *Illiad*.

By contrast, the number of manuscripts for the Bible is significant. The total number of Greek and non-Greek New Testament manuscripts is nearly 24,000. The number of Old Testament scrolls is more than 42,000. F.F. Bruce concludes, "There is no body of ancient literature in the world which enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the New Testament."

The early church fathers also quoted from the New Testament as they wrote to each other. We have more than 36,000 scripture citations from them as well.

John Warwick Montgomery concluded, "To be skeptical of the resultant text of the New Testament books is to allow all of classical antiquity to slip into obscurity; for no documents of the ancient period are as well attested bibliographically as the New Testament."

One Last Test: Prophecy

We have discussed three tests that show the reliability of the Bible, especially when compared to other literature of antiquity. The Bible passed the internal test because of its unity and cohesion. The Bible passed the external test because of the history and archaeology that confirm its accuracy. And the Bible passes the bibliographic test because of the number

of manuscripts and the short time gap between the original and its copies.

But there is an additional test that only the Bible can meet. More than one-fourth of the Bible's content was prophetic at the time that it was originally written. More than half of these 1000+ prophecies have been fulfilled down to the minutest detail. No other book (religious or secular) can make this claim.

Fifty years ago, J. Barton Payne compiled the *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*. It lists 1,239 prophecies in the Old Testament and 578 prophecies in the New Testament, for a total of 1,817. These encompass 8,352 verses.

In previous articles we have discussed the prophecies of the Messiah. Hundreds of prophecies written down in the Old Testament are literally fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. For example, Zechariah records prophecies about the Messiah that were fulfilled by Jesus during the week He entered Jerusalem and was crucified. He predicted that the Messiah would enter Jerusalem riding a donkey (Zechariah 9:9). That was fulfilled during what we often call "Palm Sunday" (Matthew 21:5; Luke 19:32-37).

The price of his betrayal would be thirty pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12-13) and the money would be cast onto the floor of the Temple. That was fulfilled by Judas and the chief priests (Matthew 27:3-10). Also, he predicted that the betrayal money would be used to buy a potter's field- (Zechariah 11:13). We read about its fulfillment in Matthew 27:6-10.

Prophecy is history written before it happens and is another indication of the inspiration of the Bible. It can also give us confidence that prophecies that have not been fulfilled will be fulfilled in the future.

The Bible is historically accurate, and it also shows in many

ways that it is also the inspired word of God.

Additional Resources

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The Iran and Israel Conflict

Crisis: 4 Insights Relating to the U.S., Israel, and the Middle East

Iran and Israel Conflict Crisis and Regional Security

Iran nuclear threat: Does it pose a threat to the U.S., Israel, and the Middle East? What can we learn about the Iran and Israel conflict?

Many Americans might wonder why the president has focused so much attention on Iran. After all, it is a country 6,000 miles away in the Middle East. Some may also conclude that military action against Iranian leadership might not be warranted since the previous administration did not deploy troops or significant military hardware to the region.

Two years ago, however, the Biden administration considered action after more than 160 attacks on U.S. troops took place in Iraq, Syria, and Jordan. There were also about 40 clashes with the Houthis in the Red Sea. Iran funded many of these attacks, either directly or indirectly. They were part of a mounting proxy battle between the U.S. and Iran.

At the time, reporters asked what President Biden would do. Some argued that the U.S. and Iran have essentially been at war for decades. Even the Pentagon press secretary acknowledged that this was true if one considers the larger conflict. To understand why reporters were asking this

question, we need to review some history.

Modern History of Iran

The conflict between Iran and the United States can be traced back to 1953, when the U.S. cooperated in overthrowing Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh. Afterward, the Shah of Iran (Mohammad Reza Pahlavi) was placed in power.

The U.S. viewed the Shah as a key ally and a pillar of security in the Middle East. His pro-Western government advanced Western interests and served as a Cold War counterbalance to Soviet influence. The United States supported Iran through significant arms sales and strong economic ties, despite concerns about the Shah's authoritarian rule.

The turning point came in 1979 when the Shah was overthrown by radical Islamic clerics led by Ayatollah Khomeini. The Iranian Revolution transformed the U.S. from an ally into "The Great Satan" in the eyes of the new regime.

This hostility became clear when the Iranian Revolutionary Guard seized the U.S. Embassy and took 52 American diplomats hostage. They were not released until President Reagan was sworn in on January 20, 1981. This crisis marked the beginning of what many view as a half-century-long undeclared conflict between Iran and the United States.

The U.S. strategy had been to promote stability in the Middle East. That effort became increasingly difficult because of Iran's growing influence. Complicating matters further, Saudi Arabia supported anti-Western Islamic movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood, while Turkey—though a NATO member—began positioning itself as a leader of a renewed Islamic political vision in the region.

Iran has engaged in a proxy war against the U.S. for decades.

In April 1983, Iranian-backed Hezbollah forces bombed the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, killing 63 people. Later that year, Hezbollah bombed the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut, killing 241 service members.

Despite these attacks, decisive retaliation never fully materialized. Iranian influence continued to expand through proxy groups across the region.

During the Iraq War following 9/11, evidence showed that Iran was supplying weapons and support that contributed to American casualties. While the U.S. was focused on Iraq as the primary enemy, Iranian operatives and Iranian-manufactured munitions were also responsible for attacks on U.S. troops.

Iran is often described as the chief sponsor of terrorism in the Middle East. It funds groups such as Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis, which regularly target Israel and U.S. interests. Israeli and American responses to these groups are now reshaping the balance of power in the region.

Missiles and Nuclear Weapons

Iran possesses the largest stockpile of ballistic missiles in the Middle East. Many of these missiles have a range of up to 2,000 kilometers, allowing them to strike Israel and other countries throughout the region.

Iran has also demonstrated its long-term intentions toward Western nations. Earlier this century, it launched ballistic missiles from ships in the Caspian Sea. Although the test missile did not carry a nuclear warhead, it demonstrated how such a weapon could be deployed.

A missile detonated high in the atmosphere could create an electromagnetic pulse (EMP), potentially destroying the U.S. electrical grid and causing catastrophic damage.

If Iran were to acquire nuclear weapons, it would destabilize the Middle East and surrounding regions. However, the latest assessment from Tulsi Gabbard suggests that Iran is not currently building a nuclear weapon and that its supreme leader has not authorized such a program since it was suspended in 2003. Some officials, however, dispute this assessment.

The Donald Trump administration resumed talks with Iran after withdrawing from the nuclear accord several years earlier. Initial negotiations produced few concrete results. Meanwhile, a United Nations nuclear watchdog reported that Iran violated nuclear nonproliferation agreements.

Iran maintains that its nuclear development is intended for civilian energy. However, the discovery of secret nuclear sites has raised concerns that the program may have military ambitions.

Tensions escalated when Iran launched a massive ballistic missile attack on Israel following Israeli strikes on Iranian targets.

In June 2025, Israel launched **Operation Rising Lion**, targeting key nuclear and military facilities, including an enrichment site. The strike lacked the bunker-busting capability needed to fully destroy the facility.

Soon afterward, the United States launched **Operation Midnight Hammer**, striking several Iranian nuclear locations. The administration announced that the sites had been "obliterated." Yet satellite imagery later suggested Iran had begun rebuilding portions of its nuclear infrastructure.

Diplomatic talks between the United States and Iran have produced few breakthroughs. Negotiations aim to limit uranium enrichment, restrict missile development, and address human rights concerns within Iran.

Since diplomacy failed, the Trump administration began military endeavors. However, many Americans remain wary of another prolonged conflict in the Middle East. Limited strikes might damage nuclear facilities, but meaningful regime change would likely require a large-scale ground invasion.

Religious Component

Another reason Iran's nuclear ambitions raise concern is the religious worldview of its leadership.

Most Iranians are Shia Muslims, and a significant branch follows the tradition known as the **"Twelvers."** This sect recognizes twelve divinely appointed leaders known as Imams.

According to their belief system, the twelfth Imam—often called the Mahdi or messianic figure—is currently in hiding and will return during a time of global conflict.

Just as Christianity has an eschatology, or doctrine of the end times, Shia Islam also holds an apocalyptic worldview. However, its narrative is essentially the reverse of what Christians read in the book of Revelation.

Twelver theology teaches that global conflict may precede the arrival of the Mahdi. Some analysts fear that extremist interpretations of this belief could view large-scale conflict—including potential attacks on Israel or the United States—as a way to usher in that messianic era.

During the Cold War, the United States relied on the doctrine of **Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD)** to deter nuclear war. The Soviet Union would not launch nuclear weapons because retaliation would guarantee its destruction.

Critics argue that radical religious interpretations might weaken this deterrence model. Some Twelver believers might assume divine intervention would protect them from

destruction.

Author Joel C. Rosenberg explored this scenario in his political thriller *The Twelfth Imam*.

Yet there is another side to this story. Reports indicate that Christianity is growing rapidly in Iran, with some describing the Iranian church as the fastest-growing Christian movement in the world.

Christians should continue praying for Iranian believers who often face persecution. We should also pray for U.S. leaders and their allies as they navigate these complex challenges.

The Persian people are an ancient civilization that deserves peace and freedom. Unfortunately, many Iranians suffer under economic sanctions and harsh authoritarian leadership.

They deserve both our prayers and our compassion.

[For more articles by Kerby Anderson follow here: https://probe.org/author/kerbyanderson/](https://probe.org/author/kerbyanderson/)

Loneliness and the Lockdown

Kerby Anderson looks at the isolation and longing for human contact that has become endemic even before the pandemic.

America was already facing a crisis of loneliness, and then the coronavirus pandemic hit. People sheltering at home had even less human contact. That made the crisis of loneliness even worse. The best thing people could do to protect themselves from the virus was to isolate themselves. But that is not the best thing they could do for their physical or mental health.



A study by Julianne Holt-Lunstad found that loneliness can be as bad for your health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. Another study by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine found that social isolation in older adults increased their risk of heart disease, stroke, dementia, high cholesterol, diabetes, and poor health in general.{1}

More than a quarter century ago (1994), I wrote a book (*Signs of Warning, Signs of Hope*) making a number of predictions for the future. Chapter eight set forth the case for a coming crisis of loneliness.{2} Years earlier Philip Slater wrote about *The Pursuit of Loneliness.* The US Census Bureau documented the increasing number of adults living alone. Dan Kiley talked about living together loneliness in one of his books. Roberta Hestenes coined the term "crowded loneliness." The trend was there for anyone to see if they began reading some of the sociological literature.

In the last few years, many authors have written about the crisis of loneliness. Robert Putnam wrote about it in his famous book, *Bowling Alone*.{3} He argues that people need to be connected in order for our society to function effectively. Putnam concludes, "Social capital makes us smarter, healthier, safer, richer, and better able to govern a just and stable democracy." Senator Ben Sasse, in his book, *Them: Why We Hate Each Other—and How to Heal*, laments that our traditional tribes and social connectedness are in collapse.{4}

Living Alone

The reasons are simple: demographics and social isolation. More people are living alone than in previous generations, and those living with another person will still feel the nagging pangs of loneliness.

In previous centuries where extended families dominated the

social landscape, a sizable proportion of adults living alone was unthinkable. And even in this century, adults living alone have usually been found near the beginning (singles) and end (widows) of adult life. But these periods of living alone are now longer due to lifestyle choices on the front end and advances in modern medicine on the back end.

People have been postponing marriage and thus extending the number of years of being single. Moreover, their parents are (and presumably they will be) living longer, thereby increasing the number of years one adult will be living alone. Yet the increase in the number of adults living alone originates from more than just changes at the beginning and end of adult life. Increasing numbers are living most of their adult lives alone.

In the 1950s, about one in every ten households had only one person in them. These were primarily widows. But today, due to the three D’s of social statistics (death, divorce, and deferred marriage), more than a third of all households is a single person household.

In the past, gender differences have been significant in determining the number of adults living alone. For example, young single households are more likely to be men, since women marry younger. On the other hand, old single households are more likely to be women, because women live longer than men. While these trends still hold true, the gender distinctions are blurring as both sexes are likely to reject traditional attitudes toward marriage.

Marriage Patterns

The post-war baby boom created a generation that did not made the trip to the altar in the same percentage as their parents. In 1946, the parents of the baby boom set an all-time record of 2,291,000 marriages. This record was not broken during the

late 1960s and early 1970s, when millions of boomers entered the marriage-prone years. Finally, in 1979, the record that had lasted 33 years was finally broken when the children of the baby boom made 2,317,000 marriages.

The post-war generations are not only marrying less; they are also marrying later. The median age for first marriage for women in 1960 was 20 and for men it was 22. Today the median age for women is 27 and for men it is 29.

Another reason for a crisis in loneliness is marital stability. Not only are these generations marrying less and marrying later; they also stay married less than their parents. When the divorce rate shot up in the sixties and seventies, the increase did not come from empty nesters finally filing for divorce after sending their children into the world. Instead, it came from young couples divorcing before they even had children. That trend has continued into the 21st century.

The crisis of loneliness will affect more than just the increasing number of people living alone. While the increase in adults living alone is staggering and unprecedented, these numbers are fractional compared with the number in relationships that leave them feeling very much alone.

Commitment is a foreign concept to many of the millions of cohabiting couples. These fluid and highly mobile situations form more often out of convenience and demonstrate little of the commitment necessary to make a relationship work. These relationships are transitory and form and dissolve with alarming frequency. Anyone looking for intimacy and commitment will not find them in these relationships.

Commitment is also a problem in marriages. Spawned in the streams of sexual freedom and multiple lifestyle options, the current generations appear less committed to making marriage work than previous generations. Marriages, which are supposed

to be the source of stability and intimacy, often produce uncertainty and isolation.

Living-Together Loneliness

Psychologist Dan Kiley coined the term "living-together loneliness," or LTL, to describe this phenomenon. He has estimated that 10 to 20 million people (primarily women) suffer from "living together loneliness."{5}

LTL is an affliction of the individual, not the relationship, though that may be troubled too. Instead, Dan Kiley believes LTL has more to do with two issues: the changing roles of men and women and the crisis of expectations. In the last few decades, especially following the rise of the modern feminist movement, expectations that men have of women and that women have of men have been significantly altered. When these expectations do not match reality, disappointment (and eventually loneliness) sets in. Dan Kiley first noted this phenomenon among his female patients. He began to realize that loneliness comes in two varieties. The first is the loneliness felt by single, shy people who have no friends. The second is more elusive because it involves the person in a relationship who nevertheless feels isolated and very much alone.

To determine if a woman is a victim of LTL, Kiley employed a variation of an "uncoupled loneliness" scale devised by researchers at the University of California at Los Angeles. For example, an LTL woman would agree with the following propositions: (1) I can't turn to him when I feel bad, (2) I feel left out of his life, (3) I feel isolated from him, even when he's in the same room, (4) I am unhappy being shut off from him, (5) No one really knows me well.

Women may soon find that loneliness has become a part of their lives whether they are living alone or "in a relationship," because loneliness is more a state of mind than it is a social

situation. People who find themselves trapped in a relationship may be lonelier than a person living alone. The fundamental issue is whether they reach out and develop strong relationship bonds.

Crowded Loneliness

Loneliness, it turns out, is not just a problem of the individual. Loneliness is endemic to our modern, urban society. In rural communities, although the farmhouses are far apart, community is usually very strong. Yet in our urban and suburban communities today, people are physically very close to each other but emotionally very distant from each other. Close proximity does not translate into close community.

Dr. Roberta Hestenes at Eastern College has referred to this as "crowded loneliness." She observed that "we are seeing the breakdown of natural community network groups in neighborhoods like relatives." We don't know how to reach out and touch people, and this produces the phenomenon of crowded loneliness.

Another reason for social isolation is the American desire for privacy. Though many desire to have greater community and even long for a greater intimacy with others, they will choose privacy even if it means a nagging loneliness. Ralph Keyes, in his book *We the Lonely People*, says that above all else Americans value mobility, privacy, and convenience. These three values make developing a sense of community almost impossible. In his book *A Nation of Strangers*, Vance Packard argued that the mobility of American society contributed to social isolation and loneliness. He described five forms of uprooting that were creating greater distances between people.

First is the uprooting of people who move again and again. An old Carole King song asked the question, "Doesn't anybody stay in one place anymore?" At the time when Packard wrote the

book, he estimated that the average American would move about 14 times in his lifetime. By contrast, he estimated that the average Japanese would move five times.

The second is the uprooting that occurs when communities undergo upheaval. The accelerated population growth along with urban renewal and flight to the suburbs have been disruptive to previously stable communities.

Third, there is the uprooting from housing changes within communities. The proliferation of multiple-dwelling units in urban areas crowd people together who frequently live side by side in anonymity.

Fourth is the increasing isolation due to work schedules. When continuous-operation plants and offices dominate an area's economy, neighbors remain strangers.

Fifth, there is the accelerating fragmentation of the family. The steady rise in the number of broken families and the segmentation of the older population from the younger heightens social isolation. In a very real sense, a crisis in relationships precipitates a crisis in loneliness.

Taken together, these various aspects of loneliness paint a chilling picture of loneliness in the 21st century. But they also present a strategic opportunity for the church. Loneliness will be on the increase in this century due to technology and social isolation. Christians have an opportunity to minister to people cut off from normal, healthy relationships.

The Bible addresses this crisis of loneliness. David called out to the Lord because he was "lonely and afflicted" (Psalm 25:16). Jeremiah lamented that he "sat alone because your hand was on me and you had filled me with indignation" (Jeremiah 15:17). And Jesus experienced loneliness on the cross, when He cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark

15:34).

The local church should provide opportunities for outreach and fellowship in their communities. Individual Christians must reach out to lonely people and become their friends. We must help a lost, lonely world realize that their best friend of all is Jesus Christ.

Notes

1. Joanne Silberner, “In a time of distancing due to coronavirus, the health threat of loneliness,” looms, STAT, March 28, 2020.
2. Kerby Anderson, *Signs of Warning, Signs of Hope* (Chicago: Moody, 1994), chapter eight.
3. Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (NY: Touchstone, 2001).
4. Ben Sasse, *Them: Why We Hate Each Other—and How to Heal* (NY: St. Martin’s Press, 2018).
5. Dan Kiley, *Living Together, Feeling Alone: Healing Your Hidden Loneliness* (NY: Prentice-Hall, 1989).

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