

18
**The ISIS Threat
to Christians**
Johnnie Moore

20
**On Religious
Persecution:** Maryam
Rostampour and
Marziyeh Amirizadeh

23
**Where Religious
Freedom Isn't**
Don Argue

24
**Religious
Freedom for All!**

26
Tolerant Christians
Leith Anderson

Evangelicals

Magazine | Fall 2015 | Vol.1 No.1

14

Is Tolerance
the Enemy of
**Religious
Freedom?**

RICHARD J. MOUW



LEARN *by* LIVING

COMING FALL 2016



LIFE631 is a residential* initiative that will equip you for a lifetime of ministry and spiritual formation. This program has been designed with a curricular and co-curricular format to give you applied ministerial experience. LIFE631 leads to an ATS accredited Masters of Divinity or Practical Theology degree. Ask for more details.

*If admitted into this select program, you will receive FREE housing at our campus in Ashland, Ohio

Visit
SEMINARY.ASHLAND.EDU

Call
1-866-287-6446



ASHLAND CLEVELAND COLUMBUS DETROIT



**THE NEW VOICE
SPEAKING FOR FAITH, SPEAKING TO FAITH**

CONSULTING . PUBLIC RELATIONS . MARKETING

www.THEKCOMPANY.co

Evangelicals

The Magazine of the National Association of Evangelicals

Also in This Issue

6

Comment

The number of evangelicals is on the rise.

9

Calendar

Here's your guide to compelling evangelical events.

10

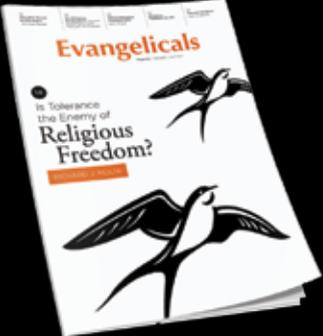
Worth Noting

The Salvation Army turns 150, and the Supreme Court redefines marriage.

12

Are Evangelicals Anti-Science?

The relationship between faith and science is one of collaboration.



Subscribe

Evangelicals magazine comes to you as one of many NAE resources to inspire and inform your evangelical voice with trusted insight on critical issues facing our churches, our nation and the world.

To receive a subscription, simply join us as a member. Learn more at NAE.net/membership.

Your NAE

For more resources and opportunities, visit NAE.net anytime, anywhere — on your phone, tablet or computer.

PODCAST

Today's Conversation provides opportunities for you to hear from leading thinkers, theologians, activists, culture-makers and more.

EVENTS

Our breadth and diversity of partners allow us to organize unique gatherings that encourage and enrich leaders in the evangelical community.

MEMBERSHIP

We are a body of believers made up of nearly 40 denominations and thousands of churches, schools, nonprofits, businesses and individuals who understand that together we can do more.

EMAIL UPDATES

Subscribe to receive our monthly email news and timely updates on issues at NAE.net.

SOCIAL MEDIA

[/NAEvangelicals](https://www.facebook.com/NAEvangelicals)

[@NAEvangelicals](https://twitter.com/NAEvangelicals)

NAE.net/feed

The mission of the National Association of Evangelicals is to honor God by connecting and representing evangelical Christians.

Leith Anderson President

Galen Carey Vice President of Government Relations

Heather Gonzales Vice President and Chief Operating Officer

Dave Cyr Chaplains Commission Executive Director

Jennifer Haglof Special Projects and Events Director

Sarah Kropp Brown Communications Director

Chris Paulene Accounting and Member Services Director

Sarah Kropp Brown Editor

Evangelicals

Fall 2015, Vol. 1, No. 1

Published three times a year by the National Association of Evangelicals for the benefit of its members, donors and friends.

For address changes, please send an email to Magazine@NAE.net or call 202.479.0815.

The National Association of Evangelicals

PO Box 23269

Washington, DC 20026

Articles and excerpts are published by the NAE with permission by authors and contributors. © National Association of Evangelicals. All rights reserved worldwide.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

The National Association of Evangelicals is registered as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in the United States of America.

Evangelical Christians are a growing movement in the United States and around the world. When recent research reported an overall decline in religious affiliation in the United States, it also noted that the number of evangelicals has increased by millions. And, there is greater growth of evangelicals in China, across Africa and around the globe.

This magazine has been launched to catch up with the growth of evangelicals and the growth of the National Association of Evangelicals. It follows NAE publications of the past including United Evangelical Action, Washington Insight and the 2014 award-winning NAE Insight.

Unlike many publications that are primarily accountable to their editorial staff, this magazine is accountable to NAE's nearly 40 member denominations and a long list of member organizations, churches and individuals. Our denominations' CEOs sit on the NAE board along with the leaders of many of America's best-known colleges, seminaries, churches, missions and other evangelical organizations.

Religious freedom ranks as a top concern among evangelical Christians today. We have been shocked and heartbroken over the slaughter of our brothers and sisters in Christ who have died as modern martyrs in Libya, Kenya and Iraq. Where Christians have lived out their faith for 2,000 years in lands seized by ISIS, their numbers have nearly disappeared.

Many fellow believers are worried about coming restrictions on religious liberty in our own nation — and not just religious freedom for evangelicals but for all Americans. While we know that a few articles in one publication cannot address every question, we raise the issue to increase awareness, gather consensus and encourage prayers.

We asked notable leaders whom we should recruit to write the cover article on our first topic. The number one choice was Richard Mouw, president emeritus of Fuller Theological Seminary. As a veteran theologian and popular communicator, he opens this first issue with his take and advice to evangelicals on religious freedom.



Number of Evangelicals on the Rise

“ The new survey indicates that churches in the evangelical Protestant tradition — including the Southern Baptist Convention, the Assemblies of God, Churches of Christ, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, the Presbyterian Church in America, other evangelical denominations and many nondenominational congregations — now have a total of about 62 million adult adherents. That is an increase of roughly 2 million since 2007, though once the margins of error are taken into account, it is possible that the number of evangelicals may have risen by as many as 5 million or remained essentially unchanged.”

America’s Changing Religious Landscape, Pew Research Center, May 2015

New Evangelicals in 1940s

“ Part of [Harold J. Ockenga’s] strategy, which ultimately proved successful, was to reclaim the word evangelical. In 1942 he founded the National Association of Evangelicals as a major step in the rebuilding process. At the time, that movement was made up of evangelistically oriented anti-modernists who typically called themselves ‘fundamentalists.’ During the 1940s Ockenga promoted the term ‘new evangelicals’ for the movement associated with Fuller [Theological Seminary], and by the end of the 1950s, thanks in part to the successes of Billy Graham, evangelical became the standard term for the nonseparatist wing of the movement.”

George Marsden, Professor Emeritus at University of Notre Dame, “How Evangelicals and Fuller are Shaped by Their Traditions” in Fuller Magazine, 2015

“As I’ve said before, Christianity is not dying; nominal Christianity is.”
Ed Stetzer, President of LifeWay Research, in response to the Pew Research Center’s America’s Changing Religious Landscape survey

Huge kudos to @NAEvangelicals for a great convo w. @arthurbrooks @EJDionne @RobertDPutnam & POTUS at #povertysummit. Very thought provoking!
Kristen Sabella @sabellakristen

Why does God insist we treat poor & vulnerable with mercy & dignity?
 Because the poor belong to God. #povertysummit @naevangelicals
Carl Nelson @theCARLnelson

“Evangelicals care about immigrants and want immigration reform. We pray for Congress to stop waiting and start legislating.”
Leith Anderson, NAE President, in response to a LifeWay Research poll showing consensus among evangelicals on immigration reform



Shooting at Charleston Church

“ It would be disproportionate to the magnitude of this tragedy to reach pat conclusions and then move along. We need to mourn first. We need to sit with the rage and pain, and mourn. But then we have to come back to this ... sickness. That’s what it feels like to me: a sickness. Not just the one-off malady of an insane individual. But a pervasive, gnawing illness that affects him and others in our country in varying, curious ways.”

Joshua DuBois, in response to the Charleston, South Carolina, shooting in “We Need To Talk About White Culture” at The Daily Beast

“ The world does not need more hate, it needs hope. The only unfailing hope for our world is found in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Hope is found in Christ. Our hope is not in better government, although we should strive for that. Our hope is in our God of justice and mercy who challenges us to live out both (Micah 6:8: “What does the Lord require of you? To do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God”). Our hope is not in better education on the issue of racism, although the church should lead the way on that. Education will never soothe our pain or settle our hearts. People need more than an informed perspective, they need salvation and the transformation that comes from the power of God working in our lives.”

Scott Ridout, President of Converge, in response to the Charleston, South Carolina, shooting



Into the Senate Record

“ In a letter this month, the National Association of Evangelicals wrote the following in support of this amendment, quote: ‘While the use of torture is currently prohibited across all government agencies by executive order, this fundamental principle must be enshrined in law, to ensure that no future president may authorize the use of torture.’”

Senator John McCain, during a session of the U.S. Senate on an amendment to apply the Army Field Manual standards on torture to all U.S. government personnel

Remembering Elisabeth Elliot

“ More than anything else, it was Elisabeth’s settled assurance that God was in control of the circumstances of her life that made her a woman I would like to emulate. She knew extreme sorrow and loss — the martyrdom of her first husband in the wilds of the Amazon; the slow, agonizing death from cancer of her second husband Addison Leitch, her own diagnosis of Alzheimer’s in 2004 and a thousand other daily losses all threatened to topple her little boat.



But she never wavered. Not in her belief that we are never at the mercy of chance, that our identity is found in whom we belong to, and that with God, nothing is fully lost, and that God’s story never ends with ‘ashes.’ She never wavered in her submission to this God to whom she owed her soul’s very existence, and she never wavered in her steadfast conviction that the Christian’s sole response to God is always trust and obey.”

Kay Warren, wife of Saddleback Church Pastor Rick Warren, on the death of Elisabeth Elliot at Her.meneutics

LIFT YOUR VOICE



CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE
WASHINGTON, DC

As someone who cares deeply about today's pressing issues, your voice is important. It's your vote — and much more.

At the Christian Leadership Conference, you'll be inspired and empowered to lift your voice as you:

- Engage in today's top public policy issues
- Hear from senators, representatives, public policy leaders and thinkers
- Express your values in a civil and biblical way
- Speak on behalf of those who have no voice

Consider your calling as you experience power-packed briefings, interaction and reflection — all while taking in our nation's bustling capital city.

JANUARY 20-21, 2016 ADULT

(Additional sessions just for college students are available in a parallel conference January 18-22.)

Register Today at NAE.net/clc

NAE | National Association of
Evangelicals

EVANGELICAL CALENDAR

Please join the evangelical community at these events hosted by the NAE and its members. **Your prayers are welcome too.**

Many of these events include downloadable resources for promotion and participation.

NOVEMBER 11-14, 2015

Illuminate Conference

Memphis, TN

Christian Community Development Association
CCDA.org

This national conference inspires and challenges believers to shine the light of Christ into broken communities, together bringing about transformation, justice and immediate and eternal hope.



DECEMBER 2-3, 2015

Denominational Executives Retreat

Chicago, IL

National Association of Evangelicals
NAE.net/denominational-executives-retreat

NAE denominational executives spend time together — learning from and encouraging one another in their unique position of ministry.

JANUARY 12, 2016

Centurion Banquet

Alexandria, VA

NAE Chaplains Commission
NAE.net/centurionbanquet

Join us for a grand night of music and fellowship as we recognize the Centurion of the Year, a leader who has exemplified commitment to the ministry of evangelical military chaplains.

NOVEMBER 12, 2015

NAE Talk: Black and White Race in Our Churches and Communities

Glenarden, MD

National Association of Evangelicals
NAE.net/naetalk

The NAE Talk offers a safe space for high-level evangelical leaders to dialogue and resource on the issue of race in our churches and nation.

DECEMBER 27-31, 2015

Urbana

St. Louis, MO

InterVarsity Christian Fellowship
Urbana.org

By connecting passion, dreams and education with God's global mission, this student missions conference challenges thousands to consider: "What life will you live?"



JANUARY 18-22, 2016 **STUDENT**
JANUARY 20-21, 2016 **ADULT**

Christian Leadership Conference

Washington, DC

National Association of Evangelicals
NAE.net/clc

The Christian Leadership Conference is a place where college students and other adults who care deeply about today's pressing issues come to learn and consider how to engage in public policy.

MARCH 9, 2016

Washington Briefing

Washington, DC

National Association of Evangelicals
NAE.net/washingtonbriefing

Top-level evangelical leaders gather in the capital to directly interact with leaders in government, think tanks and advocacy organizations. Members of our Advocates program receive an invitation to participate.



FEBRUARY 7-14, 2015

National Marriage Week

NationalMarriageWeekUSA.org

Join with others across the country and organize a local marriage event during the week leading up to Valentine's Day. Focus on practical ways to strengthen marriages in your church and community.

✓ Adding Poverty to the National Agenda

Obama Speaks at Evangelical-Catholic Summit

The National Association of Evangelicals would like to see overcoming poverty become a meaningful and major point of discussion on the national level. The current dialogue centers on the middle class to the exclusion of those at the bottom rung of the economic ladder.

With this in mind, the NAE, along with the Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life at Georgetown University, hosted a May summit in which President Barack Obama publicly addressed poverty and opportunity. Harvard Public Policy Professor Robert Putnam and Arthur Brooks, president of the American Enterprise Institute, joined the president in a panel discussion.

As a next step, the NAE is working with the Circle of Protection, a coalition of denominations, relief and development agencies and other Christian organizations, to collect videos from presidential candidates explaining how the candidates propose to provide help and opportunity to poor people in the United States and abroad. As of press time, nine candidates, including Jeb Bush, Ben Carson, Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders, have submitted videos.



For More Information on Poverty in the United States

Watch President Obama's address at the summit at NAE.net/povertysummit.

Listen to summit speaker Robert Putnam discuss the growing class gap among American young people at NAE.net/putnampodcast.

Hear how presidential candidates propose to help the hungry at CircleofProtection.us.



Rafael Suanes/Georgetown Univ.

✓ The New International Version Story

Fifty years ago, a cross-denominational group of evangelical scholars met near Chicago and agreed to start work on the New International Version. The group was formed based on the recommendation of an NAE-backed exploratory committee that met eight years earlier.

Having diverse evangelical backgrounds, committee members sought to safeguard the translation from sectarian bias and to provide a text that is easily readable and understandable to the modern reader.

Instead of updating an existing translation like the King James Version, they chose to start from scratch, using the best manuscripts available in the original Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic of the Bible.

Today the New International Version is known to be the most popular and the best selling Bible in the United States and around the world, and the only one to displace the KJV in about half a millennium. The NAE's own poll showed that 39 percent of our members choose this version over any other. This summer, Zondervan released a new NIV Zondervan Study Bible, edited by D.A. Carson, in honor of the NIV's 50th anniversary.





✔ Faith for Just Lending

In May, the National Association of Evangelicals joined with seven other religious organizations in launching a new coalition, Faith for Just Lending, to combat payday lending and predatory financial practices.

Over the past two decades, high-cost, short-term lending to the working poor has increased significantly. More than 20,000 payday and car-title loan stores operate nationwide. Taking advantage of loopholes and a weakening of traditional usury laws, many of these lenders now offer loans at 300 percent APR or more with unworkable repayment schedules, resulting in families being trapped in a cycle of debt.

The NAE pointed out the dangers of predatory lending in its Predatory Lending 2014 resolution, which states, “Scripture upholds principles of just and honest commerce, while prohibiting usury, exploitation and oppression of those in need. This includes predatory lending in which vulnerable people with immediate financial needs are lured into short-term, high-interest loan agreements that are rolled over from paycheck to paycheck.”

The newly formed coalition urges churches, lenders, individuals and government to each do their part to teach stewardship, offer responsible products, use credit wisely, encourage just lending and put an end to predatory loans.

✔ 150 Years of The Salvation Army

This year marks the 150th anniversary of The Salvation Army. The movement, which was started by William and Catherine Booth in the East End of London in 1865, is well known around the world — now active in 126 countries.

The Booths took an innovative approach to ministry by demonstrating their faith through offering practical support to people in need on the streets of London and beyond. As social justice reformers, a large part of their focus was on caring for people in practical ways and reaching out to the poor and destitute. This focus has remained the same throughout 150 years.

The Salvation Army USA is a key denominational member of the National Association of Evangelicals. According to its most recent service statistics, it assists over 30 million people each year through basic social services, disaster assistance, correctional services, day care and more. The Salvation Army USA operates more than 7,500 centers including camps, thrift stores and group homes.

✔ Supreme Court Redefines Marriage

In the 5-4 decision of *Obergefell v. Hodges*, the U.S. Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage nationwide. The NAE released a statement about marriage in light of the court’s redefinition, which says in part:

Nothing in the Supreme Court’s *Obergefell v. Hodges* opinion changes the truth about marriage. What has changed is the legal definition of marriage, which is now at variance with orthodox biblical faith as it has been affirmed across the centuries and as it is embraced today by nearly two billion Christians in every nation on earth.

In its role as a moral teacher, the law now misleads Americans about the true nature of marriage. Evangelicals and other followers of the Bible have a heightened opportunity to demonstrate the attractiveness of loving Christian marriages and families. Evangelicals should renew their commitment to the sacrificial love and covenantal faithfulness to which Jesus calls all husbands and wives.



Read the NAE’s statement, God Defined Marriage, at NAE.net/goddefinedmarriage.





Sarah Kropp Brown is communications director of the National Association of Evangelicals.

Are Evangelicals Anti-Science?

Evangelicals are more than twice as likely as the general public (29 percent vs. 14 percent) to say that science and religion are in conflict and that they are on the side of religion. Distrust of scientists — their motives, expertise and influence — and the role of science in society underlie much of the tension.

And it goes both ways. One in five people in the general public perceive there is hostility by scientists toward religion. Among evangelical scientists, a strong majority (57 percent) perceives hostility from scientists toward religion. There is a sense that scientists have no room for faith, and that evangelicals look to the Bible as their only scientific text.

A Partnership of Evangelicals and Scientists

Evangelicals come from a tradition that believes science and theology cannot contradict one another once rightly figured out. According to St. Augustine (A.D. 354-430), “All truth is God’s truth.” Nearly half of evangelicals — a higher percentage than other religious groups — say that the relationship between faith and science is one of collaboration.

With these tensions in mind, the National Association of Evangelicals teamed up with the largest general science association in the world, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), to study, dialogue and resource together.

The NAE consulted on a 10,000-person survey conducted by AAAS partner Rice University on the perceptions of science and people of faith, from which the statistics above come. Findings from the survey were captured on major media outlets from Christianity Today to The Economist.

Conversations for Understanding

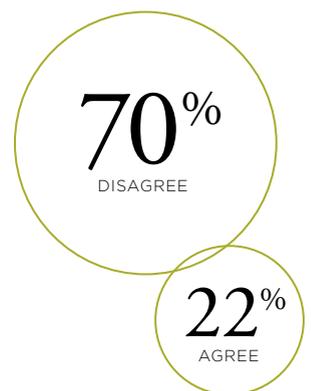
One of the survey findings showed that evangelicals are twice as likely as other groups to look to church leaders for answers to their questions about science. This drove the next section of the work together: regional dialogues between faith leaders (including evangelicals) and scientists.

The dialogues did not attempt to build consensus on particular controversial issues, but rather generated discussion on the barriers to opportunities for better dialogue, understanding, and collaboration between evangelicals and scientists.



While science and faith have often been pitted against each other, the **September 2014 Evangelical Leaders Survey** finds that most evangelical leaders are comfortable with the compatibility between their faith and science.

“Sometimes I have to choose between the teachings of my evangelical faith and scientific findings.”



*8 percent neither agree nor disagree.

Glenn Stanton, director of Family Formation Studies at Focus on the Family, attended the regional workshop hosted in Denver.

“As a representative in the faith community, these gatherings have been tremendously beneficial,” he said. Stanton noted the importance of trust as a key factor in communication with scientists and the benefit of connecting with scientists who could talk about science without alienating faith audiences.

Jennifer Wiseman, director of AAAS’s Dialogue on Science, Ethics and Religion, thought there might not be much interest among scientists for participating in dialogues with evangelical leaders.

But she was surprised by the eagerness of influential science leaders, including high-ranking research deans and academic department chairs, to attend. “We even had scientists disappointed, because we didn’t have space to fit them in,” she said.

The most gratifying dialogue moments for her were when participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to interact with members of the other group.

“This is when I realized that all the public banter about science and religion is a poor substitute for having thoughtful scientists and religious people spending time talking with each other,” Wiseman said.

Some of the scientists were evangelicals, while others expressed, either verbally or nonverbally, discomfort in being in the presence of outspoken Christians.

John Stumbo, president of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, recalled, “One scientist acknowledged to me that he didn’t dare let his associates know what kind of meeting he was attending.”

As Stumbo reflected on the event, he came to several questions about the reputation and behavior of evangelicals:

Why is it that evangelicals are so often viewed as being anti-science?

Why do we as evangelicals pose so many conversations in “us vs. them” language?

Wouldn’t gracious conversation take us further than combative blasts? A climate scientist — dedicating his life

to improve the well-being of the people of this planet — receives “nasty, abusive” emails from professing Christians whenever his work is in the news.

Can’t we reconcile good scientific method with solid evangelical thought? I was saddened to hear one scientist say that “my belief system is separate from my science.”

On the Same Page

In partnership with AAAS, the NAE produced a set of 10 essays working to bring science and faith to the same page. Written by leading evangelicals and scientists, “When God and Science Meet: Surprising Discoveries of Agreement” is designed to help church leaders address their congregants’ curiosity and concern about science.

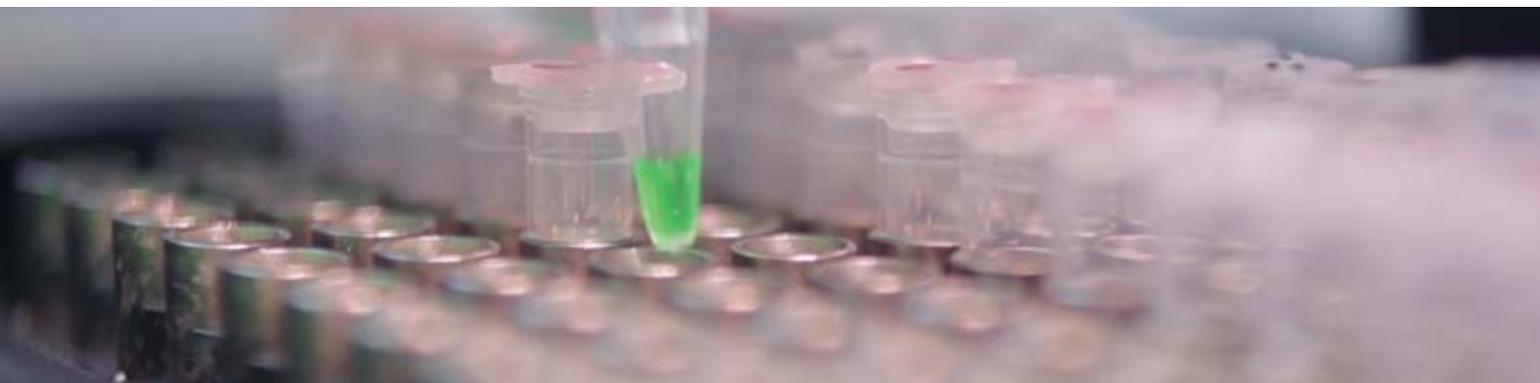
In the introduction, Leith Anderson, NAE president, describes the difficulty of engaging in meaningful conversation that respects both faith and science:

As laypersons we sometimes wonder if we know enough about science or religion to ask the right questions of either. As scientists we may welcome serious conversations but wonder if others tilt more toward controversy or more toward truth. As pastors we often keep silent on science, because we don’t know what to say or because we don’t want to engage or escalate unwanted debates.

The resource has attracted immediate interest. Within the first two weeks of the publication’s release, nearly 4,000 copies were downloaded or ordered.

The publication does not answer all the questions, but it unites the conversation in a way that values and respects both science and faith. “When God and Science Meet” is a resource for pastors, churches, schools, scientists and Christians who want to learn more about the intersection of science and faith.

People of science and people of faith have ample opportunities to work together to be an influence for good. We have seen this in medical missions, in technological advances that make the Bible more accessible, in discovery that captures our imagination and awe of the Creator and in wisely caring for creation. **E**





Richard J. Mouw is professor of faith and public life and president emeritus of Fuller Theological Seminary, and author of *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World*.

Is Tolerance the Enemy of Religious Freedom?

RICHARD J. MOUW

When I was growing up in the evangelical world, we thought of ourselves as a cognitive minority on the margins of North American culture.

We were “in the world but not of the world.” One of the choruses that we sang frequently began with the lines:

**This world is not my home / I’m just a-passing through
My treasures are laid up / somewhere beyond the blue.**





ll of that seems like ancient history these days. For a while, activist evangelicals even referred to themselves as comprising “the Moral Majority,” with a very different chorus to sing: “Shine, Jesus, shine / Fill this land with the Father’s glory.”

The irony right now, however, is that we may soon start singing “This world is not my home” again. Short of the actual return of Christ, there is little reason to be hopeful that Jesus will “fill this land with the Father’s glory” any time soon.

Culturally Marginalized

Actually, the shift back toward a sense of cultural marginalization has been occurring rather dramatically in the past few years. I was active in the coalition in the successful 2008 campaign in California to pass “Proposition 8,” a piece of legislation legally defining marriage as a relationship between a man and a woman. Our joy over that victory, however, was short-lived. The cultural tide has turned against us — and the change has been surprisingly speedy.

The historian George Marsden once observed that for evangelicals in the United States the move from the 19th century to the 20th was something like an immigration experience — albeit not a geographical one. For much of the 19th century the United States felt like “a Christian nation.” But as Darwinian evolutionary theory took hold, and liberal Protestantism came to dominate much of church life and theological education, it began to feel like evangelicals no longer “owned” the culture.

It is not a huge exaggeration to suggest that in the past decade or so we have experienced another spiritual migration. After a few decades of thinking that we might have a chance at having a significant impact on public life, we are now experiencing a heightened sense of vulnerability. And while a continuing “sexual revolution” is an important factor, it isn’t all about sex. Public schools seem increasingly unfriendly to many widespread convictions about the origins of the human race. Christian student groups on university campuses are being denied access to meeting spaces. Evangelical colleges are often in conflict with their accrediting agencies. Christian beliefs are frequently ridiculed in the entertainment media. And more.

While some of us may not always agree with the specific complaints from our fellow evangelicals about mistreatment in the larger culture, it is difficult to avoid sharing in the pessimistic mood in general. Biblical Christianity is increasingly under attack. The hostility toward what we stand for is real.

Convicted Civility

I have spent the past few decades engaged in considerable writing and speaking about Christian civility. I have drawn inspiration for this topic from a comment I once came across in a book by the Lutheran scholar Martin Marty. Many people these days who have strong convictions, he observed, are not very civil; and many people who are civil don’t have very strong convictions. What we need, Marty said, is convicted civility.

The evangelicalism of my youth was of the strong conviction variety — without much civility. One of the biblical mandates that was pressed upon us was from 1 Peter 3:15: “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the



hope that you have.” Seldom, however, did the folks quoting that go on to the rest of the verse: “But do this with gentleness and respect.”

We live in times, as evangelicals, when maintaining our convictions is of crucial importance. In earlier days, including the 1940s and 1950s when I was growing up, evangelicals could define certain patterns of “separating from the world.” I was 12 years old before our family purchased our first TV set. We spent much time at church events, youth rallies and Bible conferences. Besides the daily newspaper, the only magazines we regularly received were Christian ones. Theater attendance and dancing were out of the question. Our family and friends diligently avoided any eating establishments where alcohol was served.

My grandchildren live in a very different world. Their Christian family and church life competes with the pervasive influence of social media, the entertainment culture and much more. Friends of theirs at school — kids in their early teens — have “come out.” They sit next to Muslims and Hindus in their classrooms. Their sense of humor draws much from *The Simpsons* and *The Onion*.

Yet they — and all of us who hold to evangelical convictions — still endorse beliefs and practices that are seriously out of step with the larger culture these days. Nor are these beliefs and practices easily tolerated by a large portion of our fellow citizens. Increasingly we evangelicals, along with traditional Catholics, Muslims, Mormons and many in the Jewish community, are seen as a problem that has to be solved in public life. We no longer live in a culture where “live and let live” is the prevailing approach to moral and religious pluralism.

How can we respond in a manner that is faithful to the gospel while also manifesting the “gentleness and respect” of the apostolic mandate?

Tolerance, Religious Freedom and Humility

To be sure, it would be nice simply to be tolerated, to be allowed to sustain the patterns of our own communities and institutions in accordance with what we believe are the non-negotiable teachings of the Bible. But toleration is not a very solid foundation for religious freedom. The more basic requirement is justice. But precisely because it is a matter of justice, we need to speak out on behalf of other religious groups — including folks with whom we ourselves

may disagree on key points — so that they too might be beneficiaries of a just ordering of our lives as citizens.

Furthermore, this kind of advocacy is best pursued in a spirit of humility. And we evangelicals ought to admit that we have a lot to be humble about. We haven’t always been very nice people in our engagements with public life. Issuing some apologies for our frequent mean-spiritedness in the past might be a good idea. But at the very least our calls to be granted to abide by our own deepest convictions must be accompanied by demonstrations of our commitment to the common good. This is a time for creative thinking — and prayerful reflection — about how we can find new ways of showing that we care deeply about the genuine human needs and concerns of people whose beliefs and lifestyles are very different from our own.

When the ancient people of Israel were carried off into captivity in Babylon they wondered how they could maintain their identity as worshipers of the one True God. They had no temple in Babylon. The laws of the land were pagan in their origin. But when the prophet Jeremiah brings a word from the Lord to them he gives them no excuse to despair. They are to “seek the peace” — the *shalom*, a wonderful Hebrew word that points us to the common good — of the city in which they are now living in exile, because their own *shalom* was linked to the *shalom* of the larger society. A similar command was given to the New Testament church: “Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us” (1 Peter 2:12).

We have new reasons these days to be reminded that we wait for the Lord’s return as “exiles.” But that is not a basis for retreat to the margins of our culture. To be sure, these are bad times. There is a new and overt hostility toward biblical Christianity. Sexual promiscuity is running rampant. Pagan beliefs and practices are increasingly visible. Superstition. Unbelief. Heresies abound.

All of that is so bad that it is much like the world into which the gospel first came. And it was in that world where the Lord announced at Pentecost he was pouring out his “Spirit on all people,” so that “sons and daughters will prophesy... And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Acts 2:17, 21). The result was that the cause of the gospel flourished. And so it can also flourish, by God’s grace, in our own day. **E**



They are to “seek the peace” — the *shalom*, a wonderful Hebrew word that points us to the common good — of the city in which they are now living in exile, because their own *shalom* was linked to the *shalom* of the larger society.



Johnnie Moore is author of *Defying ISIS* and president of The KAIROS Company. He formerly served as senior vice president of Liberty University.

The ISIS Threat to Christians

It has been more than a year since the last of Mosul’s 60,000 Christians were entirely displaced, killed or trafficked at the hands of ISIS.

Now, the only Christians remaining in the entire Nineveh Plain of Iraq are those held as sex slaves, and nearly all of the region’s ancient churches and monasteries have been destroyed or converted into a mosque, madrassa or prison.

In some places the ISIS genocide has been so thorough that the militants have taken chisels to the crosses engraved on tombstones in Christian cemeteries.

A community that took 2,000 years to build has been destroyed in a matter of months. In the 21st century ...

An Attack on Christians

The Islamic State’s attack on Christianity is neither coincidental nor tertiary, nor does it represent a part of ISIS’ plan. It is at the very heart of their plan.

Take, for instance, the fact that the videos of their beheading and execution of Ethiopian and Egyptian Christians were entitled “A Message in Blood Written to the Nation of the Cross,” and the front page of the ISIS magazine in October featured a picture of St. Peter’s Square with an ISIS flag superimposed atop the obelisk that adorns the center of that iconic heart of Christianity.

In every major address or written communication given by the founder of the Islamic State, Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, he has declared their intention to march “all the way to Rome,” and along the way, he has promised to “break the crosses” of the Christians and to “trade and sell their women.”

So far, Baghdadi has done exactly what he said he would do, and every single encounter ISIS has had with Christian communities anywhere in the world has resulted in one of four outcomes: forced conversion, slavery, extortion or execution. There is not a single exception.

Our Biblical Mandate

The overall situation in Iraq and Syria has been characterized by the United Nations as the worst in our modern era. Yet, for the world’s two-billion-strong Christian community, it is even more consequential. Paul wrote to the Corinthians at another time when Christians were being beheaded, “If one member of the body suffers; all suffer together.”

We have an obligation to empathize and raise our voices on behalf of justice and do as King Solomon advised us to do, “rescue those being led away to

death.” We are to, as Hebrews 13:3 says, “remember those who are in prison as if you were together with them.”

We have a biblical mandate to be engaged in this crisis, and — at the very least — we must raise our voices in solidarity and protest.

Our Muslim Witness

Within weeks of ISIS’ lightning-fast advance in Iraq and Syria last summer some of the world’s top Islamic scholars issued an open letter to ISIS’ leader Abu Bakr al Baghdadi taking him to task on the awful Islamic theology that was dictating all the horror he was inflicting upon the world. That letter, which was signed by 126 of the world’s top Islamic voices, outlined 24 specific areas within which ISIS’ actions were in direct opposition to Islamic teaching. With regard to Christians the letter is crystal clear: “these Christians are not combatants against Islam ... indeed they are our friends, neighbors and co-citizens.”

The king of Jordan has similarly stated, “it is our duty, rather than a favor” to protect Christians in the Middle East.

The fact is that ISIS threatens not only the ancient communities of



Christians, Yazidis and other religious minorities of the region, it also threatens nearly all of its Muslims.

In fact, ISIS has killed more Muslims than anyone else. Now is the time for Christians to stand hand-in-hand with the Muslim community against a common enemy.

Our Theology of Suffering

Christians often have one of two reactions when they hear of severe Christian persecution. Sometimes they embrace a sense of fatalism decrying the inevitability of suffering and martyrdom, as demonstrated throughout Christian history, and they resolve that this is something that is just going to happen. These Christians compel us to embrace it and face it, and trust God in it. As such, they don't feel particularly inspired to stop it.

Others who don't understand the great history of sacrifice deeply rooted in the Christian Church fail to see how this suffering actually strengthens the Church and causes it to grow. They only see the darkness and never see the glimmer of light that shines every moment a Christian, young or old, is willing to die for a faith that so many Christians in the West are barely willing to live for.

In actuality, we are to embrace both interpretations, honoring the sacrifice of our brothers and our sisters even while we're praying intensely that they might be free from the evil that aims to kill them.

This isn't a season for churches to dedicate one Sunday to the persecuted church. This is a time for churches to dedicate every Sunday to the persecuted church.

We are to pray till our knees are raw, and then we are to get off of our

knees to wage our own war against ISIS by providing abundant humanitarian assistance. For every act of love on behalf of someone ISIS aimed to kill is a dagger in the heart of ISIS' genocidal plan.

Our Hope and Prayer

Finally, we are to always believe that God still has the power to change the hearts of those terrorizing the Church as he changed the heart of Saul — on a road to Syria — 2,000 years ago.

Maybe there's a member of ISIS who will meet Jesus miraculously tonight? If we know nothing else from the New Testament, we know that former terrorists make really fantastic preachers. 🙏



On Religious Persecution:

Maryam Rostampour and Marziyeh Amirizadeh

Accused of promoting Christianity, Maryam and Marziyeh spent 259 days under frequent interrogation and abuse in Iran's notorious Evin Prison. The official charges against them — apostasy, anti-government activity and blasphemy — came with a sentence of execution by hanging.

The two women had been born into Muslim families in Iran. They met and became Christians as young adults while studying theology in Turkey. When they returned to Iran in 2005, they began sharing their new faith. And, four years later, they landed in prison.

Following international pressure, Maryam and Marziyeh were freed in November 2009 and subsequently cleared of all charges. World Relief, the humanitarian arm of the National Association of Evangelicals, helped them resettle in the United States.

WHAT LED YOU TO BECOME FOLLOWERS OF JESUS?

We both converted to Christianity 16 years ago. At that time we did not know each other. We both were looking for the truth from very young age and wanted to have personal relationship with God, to hear his voice, and to have a two-way communication with him.

We did not have many opportunities in Iran to learn about other religions. We were brainwashed and forced to follow Islam as children. We did not experience a personal relationship with God in Islam, and the God that Qu'ran introduces to people seemed out of reach. So, we started questioning Islam, the Qu'ran and its rules, and at the same time we prayed in our heart to a God that we did not know and asked him to reveal the truth to us.

We have different stories about our individual encounters with Jesus and the way that he revealed the truth to us. We have met him and tasted his love, and that is why we gave our hearts to him.

WHAT COMPELLED YOU TO RETURN TO IRAN, KNOWING THAT YOU MIGHT FACE PERSECUTION FOR BEING FOLLOWERS OF JESUS?

We both had the same passion in our hearts to send the message of salvation to our people in Iran, because we knew how much Iranians were looking for the truth. That was the reason we decided to go back and share the love of Jesus with more Iranians.

DESCRIBE YOUR EXPERIENCE IN PRISON. WHAT SUSTAINED YOUR FAITH AS YOU FACED THE POSSIBILITY OF BEING EXECUTED?

We were held in one of the most notorious prisons in the world for nine months, where people have been tortured, interrogated and executed for crimes they did not commit. We saw many injustices. We were tortured mentally, we did not have access to lawyer, we could not contact our family members, and physically we were under so much pressure. Every day we were threatened to execution by hanging.

The only thing that helped us stand on our faith was our personal relationship with Jesus. The Holy Spirit gave us strength and power to stand that difficult condition. Without his presence we could not stand even one day in prison.

HOW HAVE WORLD RELIEF AND LOCAL CHRISTIANS ASSISTED IN YOUR RESETTLEMENT AND ADJUSTMENT TO LIFE IN AMERICA?

World Relief was a huge help and blessing to us. Most of the staff are very good friends of ours. They are very supportive, kind and caring. Like other refugees who come to this country, we received the government's help through World Relief. They have also supported us by their prayers.

WHAT CAN AMERICAN CHRISTIANS DO TO SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE THOSE FACING PERSECUTION OCEANS AWAY?

American Christians should appreciate the valuable freedom that they have in this country. Also, we would encourage Americans to use their freedom to support their brothers and sisters who are under persecution — by prayers, by sending letters to prisoners, by spreading the message of persecution, by giving and by asking their governments and their politicians to put pressure on governments like Iran.

As the Bible says, "We are all parts of one body. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it." 



In *Captive in Iran*, Maryam and Marziyeh recount how God used their 259 days in Evin Prison to bring about a miraculous reversal: shining light into one of the world's darkest places, giving hope to those who had lost everything, and showing love to those in despair.



Join World Relief to Stand for the Vulnerable

World Relief comes alongside refugees to provide initial resettlement and placement as well as employment, youth, education and legal services.



Join us in prayer for refugees fleeing persecution and conflict. Pray that they are resettled into compassionate communities, connected to a local church and that they have access to necessary resources and relationships.

You can also help refugees settle into their new home by providing school supplies, clothing and housewares. Visit <http://bit.ly/catalog-of-hope> to give a financial gift.



"We must stand against genocide today,
or what standing will we have
to face our brothers and sisters
in heaven who perish tomorrow?"

Carmen Fowler LaBerge

We must awaken The Church.

21wilberforce.org and click on Genocide

21ST CENTURY
WILBERFORCE
INITIATIVE  **SPEAK
FREEDOM**

The
Layman



Don Argue is former commissioner of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. He served as president of the National Association of Evangelicals from 1992-1998.

Where Religious Freedom Isn't

While serving at the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), I saw the pivotal right of religious liberty constantly endangered worldwide. Since my departure in 2012, the situation has sadly worsened.

According to a Pew Research Center study, three-fourths of the world's people live in countries that do not protect or respect this freedom. From China to Iran, Iraq to North Korea, Afghanistan to Uzbekistan, Burma to Eritrea, Syria to Vietnam, Pakistan to Russia, violations range from building restrictions to detention, jailing to beatings and torture to murder.

As Christians, we must fully engage this issue. For at least four reasons, we must care and respond.

First, these attacks deny the dignity and worth of fellow human beings.

Second, religious freedom enables people to consider the gospel without fear. God's message of salvation requires the freedom to choose Christ.

Third, as many studies show, religious freedom positively correlates with national and world security, whereas religious freedom abuses correlate with instability, violence and terror.

Finally, wherever religious freedom is attacked, our Christian brothers and sisters suffer.

Wherever religious freedom is attacked, our Christian brothers and sisters suffer.

Across much of the Middle East, radical Islamist forces seek to obliterate non-Muslim communities, especially Christians. Under the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, churches have been razed, women raped or enslaved and men and boys beheaded or crucified. In Egypt, Coptic Christians have been assaulted. In Iran, Saudi Arabia and Sudan, governments themselves persecute Christians and other minorities, including those from disfavored branches of Islam.

Beyond the Middle East, Pakistan's Christians face jail under blasphemy laws or slaughter by extremists. Christians refusing to register with China's Communist dictatorship face arrests, torture, jailing and bulldozing of churches. Nigeria's Christians endure attacks from Boko Haram. North Korea's Christians are imprisoned, brutalized and even executed if accused of missionary activity.

In the 1990s, a galvanized American church prodded Washington to enact the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA), which created USCIRF and the State Department's religious freedom office.

Today, let us pray for the persecuted and re-engage this issue. As we approach the 2016 election season, let us press candidates to stand for liberty. Let us press Washington to make religious freedom a top foreign policy priority for this nation. **E**

Religious Freedom for All!

Passing the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993

The Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) has once again been thrust into the national spotlight after the Supreme Court decision last year in the *Hobby Lobby* case. The NAE played a key role in the passage of this landmark law, and continues to defend it 22 years later.

RFRA was passed in direct response to the 1990 Supreme Court decision in *Employment Division v. Smith*. At issue was whether the First Amendment’s Free Exercise Clause allowed Native Americans to use peyote if the state law disapproved of the psychoactive compound found in the peyote cactus. Native American tribes have used peyote in religious ceremonies for centuries.

The court ruled against the right of Native Americans to use peyote, but more important, it reduced the legal protections for all religions. A backlash ensued.

Forest Montgomery, NAE legal counsel at the time, said, “I’m still upset about *Smith*.” Testifying before the Senate Judiciary Committee in 1992, he said, “No liberty is more precious in the American experience than religious liberty — our First Freedom. Yet the Supreme Court, the very guardian of our liberties, metamorphosed the Free Exercise Clause from fundamental right to hollow promise.”

After *Smith*, the Coalition for the Free Exercise of Religion, of which the NAE was a founding member, grew to include 66 organizations ranging from Americans



APRIL 1990

The U.S. Supreme Court hands down its decision in *Employment Division v. Smith* reducing legal protections for all religions

NOVEMBER 1993

President Bill Clinton signs RFRA into law



OCTOBER 1993

Religious Freedom Restoration Act passes Congress in near unanimous vote

United for Separation of Church and State to Traditional Values Coalition and included Muslim, Jewish, Sikh, humanist, mainline Christian and evangelical groups, among many others.

Oliver “Buzz” Thomas, former general counsel of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Freedom, chaired the coalition and said that Montgomery was “the guy who kept evangelicals and other conservative groups in the harness.”

“There were many who share credit for RFRA’s passage — Steve McFarland, David Saperstein, Mort Halperin, Mike Farris, Marc Stern and others — but when the wheels fell off, no one did more than Forest and the NAE,” Thomas said.

The coalition worked on research, drafting legislation and advocacy. They sent letters to members of Congress and visited offices. According to Thomas, Montgomery passed out “Religious Liberty for All!” pins all over Capitol Hill. In the end, only three senators voted against its passage.

The federal RFRA, like many of the state-level laws, prohibits substantial government burdens on sincere religious exercise unless the government can show a compelling interest in burdening religious liberty and that it is using the least restrictive means. RFRA protects the fundamental religious freedom of all Americans, including individuals of minority and majority religions.

President Bill Clinton signed the legislation during a ceremony held November 16, 1993, on the White House South Lawn. In the introductory remarks, then-Vice President Al Gore said, “When you have the National Association of

Evangelicals and the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Islamic Prison Foundation and B’nai Brith ... we’re doing something right here today.”

As Montgomery said, “We were on the side of angels.”

Despite its strong deference to religious freedom, RFRA does not allow individuals to do whatever they want in the name of religion. The law balances government interests with the fundamental freedom of individuals to practice their faith.

“No liberty is more precious in the American experience than religious liberty — our First Freedom.”

Forest Montgomery

RFRA has been cited in many religious freedom cases. It was featured prominently in oral arguments in the contraception mandate case, *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby*, last March. In a 5-4 decision, the court reaffirmed that the Religious Freedom Restoration Act protects Americans of all faiths from government mandates that violate their conscience and religious beliefs. The NAE filed an amici brief in that case. Many states also have RFRA laws protecting the religious freedom of their citizens. **E**

JULY 2000

Congress passes the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act, enhancing free exercise protections in land use issues and among prisoners

MARCH 2014

RFRA was featured prominently in the case where the Supreme Court reaffirmed that RFRA protects individuals from government mandates that violate their religious beliefs



JUNE 1997

In *City of Boerne v. Flores*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that RFRA only applies to the federal government, opening up the need for state RFRAs



MARCH/APRIL 2015

Indiana and Arkansas become the 20th and 21st states to pass RFRA legislation



Tolerant Christians

In Edward Gibbon's too-long-to-read "The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," he famously contends that Paganism was tolerant and Christianity was intolerant. Although his 18th-century logic has been countered by modern historians, he laid significant blame for the fall of the empire on Christians and the church.

In today's America tolerance is reckoned by many to be a high virtue; perhaps the highest virtue. And, some would label Christians as modern examples of intolerance. Although it seems that our critics' claims of tolerance often don't extend to those who take the Bible seriously and commit to following Jesus Christ. They forget that the definition of tolerance includes putting up with the opinions and behavior of those with whom they don't necessarily agree.

Our English Bible doesn't use the word tolerance very often. When it does the most common use is condemnation of those who tolerate evil. The only time the actual word "tolerance" is used refers to God. Romans 2:4 describes "the riches of (God's) kindness, tolerance and patience" and says that God's kindness leads to repentance. Although, earlier on the same page of the New Testament everything from certain sexual relations to gossip, slander and boastfulness are listed as behaviors disapproved by God.

We read the Bible in light of modern American controversies. Some verses appear to advise us against any judgment or condemnation of others, and some verses appear to advise us to condemn unbiblical attitudes and behavior. And, there are people who selectively quote verses that support their beliefs and behaviors.

As evangelical Christians, let us hold to biblical convictions and speak to our convictions. "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15).

At the same time, let us live out the love of God in respect toward those with whom we may completely disagree. My understanding of the Roman Empire is one of great intolerance of Christians that brought waves of horrific persecution. When the supposedly tolerant were intolerant, St. Paul said to "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse" (Romans 12:14).

One of the most amazing conversations in the Bible is between God and Satan in Job chapter one. I cannot think of greater polar opposites. I cannot think of anyone less worthy of tolerance than Satan. I cannot imagine any belief or behavior of the Devil that is good. Yet, God spoke to him and answered him with astonishing respect. If God can be that polite to Satan then we can also show respect to those whose beliefs and behavior we reject. ❶

As evangelical Christians, let us hold to biblical convictions and speak to our convictions.

While great progress has been made, the Great Commission remains an unfinished task. Until it is completed, our undying passion is to preach **Jesus.**



THEALLIANCE

Worldwide, 6 million Alliance believers in 20,000 churches exalt and proclaim Jesus in 180 languages and dialects. Each year, tens of thousands of people find true hope and joy—for this life and the next—through the loving outreach of The Alliance.

A PROUD MEMBER OF THE NAE SINCE 1966 • www.cmalliance.org/nae

2016

THRU THE BIBLE READING GUIDE

A Resource for Churches

Thru the Bible Reading Guide is a checklist of daily Scripture readings. For over a decade, churches across the nation have used this guide to help their members make God's Word part of their every day.

The NAE's unique guide offers:

Daily readings in general chronological order with Psalms on Sunday

Compact design to fit inside even the smallest Bibles

Packages of 50, 250 or 500 copies, discounted accordingly



Order Today at NAE.net/thruthe bible