

### In the News

A recent presidential poll puts Donald Trump at the head of the Republican pack, partly because more of those polled say he's the man they trust to deal with the Islamic State, also known as ISIS or ISIL or Daesh. As of December 4, Trump had a 20-point lead over other Republicans and Republican-leaning independents in a CNN/ORC International poll, with Republicans saying overwhelmingly that he's the best man for the job to be commander-in-chief and defeat ISIS (*The Wired Word* does not endorse any presidential candidate).

Then, on December 7, Trump called for a "total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States," a dramatic response to the recent terrorist attacks in Paris and San Bernardino that have raised the anxiety level of the American people. Trump released a statement saying that "according to Pew Research, among others, there is great hatred towards Americans by large segments of the Muslim population."

It should be noted, however, that a 2013 Pew Research poll found that concern about Islamic extremism is widespread among Muslims from South Asia to the Middle East to sub-Saharan Africa. Across 11 Muslim populations surveyed by the Pew Research Center, a median of 67 percent say they are somewhat or very concerned about Islamic extremism. In five of these countries -- Pakistan, Jordan, Tunisia, Turkey and Indonesia -- Muslim worries about extremism have increased. So it is not clear which Pew Research findings Trump was citing in his statement. However, the Pew figures do leave room for *some* Muslims to be supportive of extremism.

On Sunday, President Barack Obama made a national address in which he called on Americans "to reject religious tests on who we admit into this country" -- a response to a call from Republican presidential candidates, including Trump, to stop accepting Syrian refugees into the United States after last month's terrorist attacks in Paris.

Obama described the mass shooting in San Bernardino as a terrorist attack by a couple who had gone down the "dark path of radicalization" and embraced a "perverted" form of Islam. "This was an act of terrorism designed to kill innocent people," Obama said. "Here's what I want you to know. The threat from terrorism is real, but we will overcome it. We will destroy ISIL and any other organization that tries to harm us." But Obama's speech did not describe the overhaul of a policy that critics say is unable to overcome the terrorist threat.

Anxiety is running high among the American people, with fear of terrorism a top concern. Some of this is justified, since ISIS has a long list of enemies that it wants to destroy, from the United States to the Arab oil sheiks. ISIS even wants to conquer Muslim countries such as Iran, Iraq and Syria. Fear is an emotion with aspects that are both positive (when it motivates to protection) and negative (when it paralyzes or is used to motivate irrational or counterproductive behavior). We are told to "fear the Lord" above all things, which should place other fears in perspective. But fear is an emotion that Christians have faced in the past, and faithful people have found ways to overcome fear that is irrational or counterproductive.

Novelist Marilynne Robinson makes two important observations about the challenges we face today: "First, contemporary America is full of fear. And second, fear is not a Christian habit of