

# Is There Hope for America?

The first president of the United States, George Washington, gave a sobering warning in his farewell address on Sept. 19, 1796. He emphasized the two “great pillars of human happiness,” which he identified as “Religion and morality.” He then reminded his listeners, “Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and morality are indispensable supports.” He capitalized the word “Religion,” referring to Christianity.

Washington sounded like Paul, speaking to his beloved flock before leaving them (Acts 20:28–31).

## Crossing God's Boundaries

In recent years, the United States has crossed every boundary that brought demise to other nations. Who ever thought in America we'd see the day when public schools would not allow students to pray or mention the name of Jesus? Or the day a Christian baker would be sued and lose his business for not baking a cake for a gay wedding? Or the day when the demon goddess Kali would be projected on the Empire State Building?

We will never be able to say the prophets did not warn us. I recently heard Messianic Jewish Rabbi Jonathan Cahn, author of *The Harbinger* and *The Mystery of the Shemitah*, say on a radio program, “America is now overripe for God's judgment.” Rabbi Cahn continued, “If you're not born again, you must be born again, and this is the time ... If you are a believer ... if there's anything in our life that is not right, we need to get it out now.”

A person or nation who does not turn away from wickedness can go too far for too long, and then it becomes too late. Jeremiah warned Israel over and over again, but they mocked and ridiculed him. He tried interceding for them, but God said it was too late (Jer. 7:16-17). Israel would go into captivity

in Babylon for 70 years as a result of their repeated disobedience.

We find this exact theme in the New Testament in Paul's letter to the Romans. There is a point of no return when God turns people over to a reprobate mind, lost without hope (Rom. 1:28-32).

The Roman Empire experienced a decline and fall, and America has been following an eerily parallel path. Witnessing firsthand the deterioration of an empire is chilling. Rome went from a state of wealth and influence into nonexistence, with many of the mile markers we, in the United States, have already passed. America's decline may take generations as Rome's did. The United States may one day become a satellite nation of the new Europe. Depending on our decisions and actions toward God in the days ahead, America's demise may come suddenly due to nuclear attack, EMP attack, financial collapse or foreign invasion.

### **A Better Future for America—Revival and Outpouring**

Prophecy isn't meant to frighten us; it is meant to enlighten us and give us hope. No matter how dark it gets, Jesus promises never to leave us or forsake us but to walk with us and work with us (Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5). As the darkness deepens, the light of Christ in us will grow brighter (Titus 2:12-14).

God never intended for us to walk in hopelessness. He intended for us to be people of faith, and faith is the substance of things we hope for (Heb. 11:1). God is calling us as ambassadors to be hope distributors in these last days (2 Cor. 5:20).

Yes, America may collapse. But there is another possibility, a real hope—revival!

And we have biblical precedent for this. If people listen and

turn around, judgment can be softened or even averted, as it was for Nineveh: "When God saw their actions, that they turned from their evil ways, He changed His mind about the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it" (Jon. 3:10).

### **On the Threshold of a New Dimension**

I believe strongly that we, as the church, are on the threshold of a whole new dimension of God's grace and glory. I believe we will be a 21st-century church with 1st-century power; we were handpicked by God to live in these times, an unleashing of God's glory, an anointing that past generations have prayed and fasted for is coming; and God is preparing us for a greater level of testimony than the majority of people of all generations have ever heard about.

Now is the perfect time to intensify our fasting and prayer for America and its leaders. Every time people humbled themselves in fasting and prayer, without exception, God did something extraordinary. Even wicked King Ahab, a man sold out to the devil at a deep level, averted judgment when he humbled himself with fasting (1 Kin. 21:27-29).

If we, Spirit-filled believers, will take our positions as God's anointed ambassadors on earth with the help of the Holy Spirit, God will heal this land, and we will win millions more to Jesus Christ before His coming. Even so, come quickly, Jesus! {eoa}

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# Why Christians Should Be Great Patriots

Many in our country today, Christian and non-Christian, have lost their way on the issue of respect for our authorities and our country. Every other Monday night, I have the deep privilege to associate with a marvelous patriot. Frank is a past international director of Toastmasters and is in the club of which I am a member. He delivers stirring speeches on patriotism from memory at 90 years plus. Frank flew numerous missions over Belgium and France after the Battle of the Bulge broke out. As he would say, "Lt. Frank, ready to go to war as a glider pilot in Operation 'Varsity' [Invasion of the German Rhineland] with a flak vest, a steel helmet, a pistol, a carbine, four hand grenades and the copilot's seat in a CG4A glider." He would miraculously survive machine-gun fire while pinned down by a German gunner after landing his glider. Listening to Frank, a brother in Christ, has made me take a deep look at my own journey of understanding patriotism. I've landed on the truth that Christians should be great patriots.

Sadly, some of the sharpest, most mean-spirited criticism, complaining, judgments, sarcasm and gossip comes out of the mouths of those who name Christ as Savior. Often these words are pointed at those in authority and our country. It is as though our president and others in leadership can't be human today. The simplest error in pronouncing a name or remembering a detail results in their being the butt of hyper-sarcastic jokes, and far too large a number of Christians fall right in line with the world. The truth is, our words expose our heart (see Matt. 12:34). If you find yourself in this crowd, the question you have to ask yourself is, "What does this do to my testimony?"

Jesus prayed to the Father that the disciples would not be taken out of the world, but rather that they would be in the world and kept from the evil one who rules it. One of the greatest paradoxes of the Christian life is fully exposed in John 17:15: Christians are to be in the world, but not of the world. We are to raise children, respect authorities and be involved in our educational systems, business enterprises and public affairs. In particular, the Scriptures give us pointed direction about our attitude toward authorities: "Make supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings for everyone, for kings and for all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty, for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior" (1 Tim. 2:1-3).

At a distance, patriotism might make it appear that we are just like many nonbelievers in the world, but up close, when our values are challenged and our character is tested, people must see that our standards for living and our citizenship are not of this realm (Phil. 3:20). However, Jesus's prayer was we would be kept from the evil one while in the world. No matter how different we are as Christians, our charge will be to infiltrate the world's culture by being light and salt, and yes, that means government also. However different the body of Christ is from other groups in the world, the church will never be sequestered physically or practically from the world. It will be intertwined in the very fabric of society.

We are brought into the kingdom of God to bring His kingdom to this earth, right where we live in the United States: "The kingdom of God does not come with observation. Nor will they say, 'Here it is!' or 'There it is!' For remember, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:20-21). We are God's agents of redemption in the lives of men. Jesus came to set the captives free (see Luke 4:18), and when He ascended to heaven, He gave that calling to His disciples. We now have this calling, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, we will carry on His work

(John 14:12) in the U.S.

I graduated from Oral Roberts University and later worked in administration there. President Roberts' vision for the school was that his students would go into every person's world. Practically, he envisioned students going into business, medicine, law, the arts and, of course, government.

We are charged by Jesus Christ to bring the kingdom of heaven to the U.S. and the world. My friend Frank has helped me demythologize patriotism and just be Christian about it. We must pray for our leaders and country. We must be all in supporting our country and seeing the kingdom of heaven come here. Yes, we must be great patriots. {eoa}

***Tim Cameron** is the author of The Forty-Day Word Fast and, most recently, 40 Days Through the Prayers of Jesus.*

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## **Eyes of the Nation Fixed on Maine's FGM Bill Vote**

Maine State Representative Heather W. Sirocki will make an impassioned plea to her fellow Maine lawmakers about a bill to make the horrific act of female genital mutilation a crime in the state.

Sirocki, who represents District 28, is the sponsor of L.D. 745, which, if passed, would add Maine to a list of 24 other states that already have similar statutes on their books. The Maine Senate overwhelmingly voted previously to approve a ban on female genital mutilation, but the Maine House of Representatives narrowly rejected a similar bill. The revised bill is back with the Senate for a potential vote this week.

Once the bill returns to the House, Sirocki will talk to her peers about her commitment to the issue.

“This bill has been close to my heart for months,” Sirocki said. “Maine has already been identified as one of eight high-risk locations in the country, and an education and outreach program has already been established through the federal government. My bill does not abandon that outreach program. My bill is an addition to it. The bill’s intent was simply a prohibition of child abuse, and it could serve as a deterrent.

“We could be and we should be sending a strong message to the affected communities that female genital mutilation is not legal in Maine. Period,” she continued. “State prosecutors need state laws. I urge your support of this amended bill that combines both a state prohibition and also an additional state-run education/preventative outreach program.

“I hope we never have one arrest, and I hope we never have one prosecution. But we know that the effects of FGM are here in Maine as evidenced by the payments made to providers in our MaineCare billing system, and I also know from our state being selected as one of eight high-risk areas in the country to receive the federal outreach grant, and I also know from the horrific anecdotes from medical providers and others who are interacting with the affected community.

“For those who remain unconvinced that this is happening here, I ask, ‘What harm is there in passing a law that is never used?’ I also ask, ‘What if it saves one little girl from experiencing the pain and suffering from this horrific crime?’”

Sirocki concluded, “I hate the thought of little girls living in our midst who may be subjected to this painful form of child abuse and assault. These little girls need our help. Please set your differences with me aside and help them. It is my understanding that many organizations such as Equality Now,

UNICEF and the United Way fully support criminalizing female genital mutilation at the state level. Our esteemed colleagues in the Senate—both Democrats and Republicans—came together last week to unanimously support this bill. I can only deduce that there is one main reason to vote against protecting young girls—and that is personal animus towards me. That is never a valid reason.”

Many Americans are unaware that the barbaric practice known as female genital mutilation (FGM) occurs not just in other countries, but right here in the United States as well. In fact, according to the Centers for Disease Control, over half a million girls and women in America have already been subjected to such mutilation—or are at risk of having it inflicted upon them. Reportedly, some of them live in the state of Maine.

“We must define and identify for the prosecution and for the public that this crime is a specific form of child abuse,” said Elizabeth Yore, head of the new initiative End FGM Today, “so that doctors, teachers and hospital personnel know specifically what to report when they see it. Female genital mutilation is a new hideous phenomenon in the U.S. legislators and prosecutors must specifically identify the most heinous crimes so that a jury can identify them in a trial. Clearly, FGM must have specific prohibitive laws attached to it and be clearly defined, just as child pornography and child exploitation are. In addition to Maine, we implore all states to call out this heinous crime.” {eoa}

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# It's Too Soon to Write the Obit on the GOP Health Care Bill

Senate GOP leadership announced there will be no vote on their version of the health care bill before the July 4th recess. The news comes after they failed to garner enough support in their party to bring the bill to the floor for debate.

But this is not the end of the road for the repeal and replace Obamacare legislation.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., pointed out that major actions like these are difficult.

Republican lawmakers have campaigned for years on repealing Obamacare, but now that they have the opportunity, they have to work hard to agree on what to replace it with.

"We're continuing to talk about it. It's a very complicated subject," continued McConnell. "I remember how challenging it was for the Democrats when they are enacting this back in 2009, 2010. It's a big complicated subject. We've got a lot of discussions going on and we're still optimistic we're going to get there."

McConnell is running into the same issue the House faced in the spring: crafting a health care plan that both conservative and moderates support.

Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., is one of the GOP senators on the conservative side who oppose the bill as it stands now. He told CBN News he met with President Donald Trump this week, who Paul says is open to negotiating the bill, but he hasn't heard from Senate leadership.

"If we could make the bill more of a repeal bill, I think I

could get to the point where I could support it," Paul told CBN News. "Right now I think we keep too many of the Obamacare regulations, we keep too many of the Obamacare subsidies, and we have a brand new big federal bailout of insurance companies.

"Those are going to have to get less bad and we're going to have to introduce maybe more choices for consumers so they can get cheaper insurance," he said.

On the other side are moderates like Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, who are concerned with Medicaid cuts and defunding Planned Parenthood.

"It makes absolutely no sense to eliminate federal funding for Planned Parenthood," Collins said on ABC's *This Week*.

Collins says she's optimistic she'll prevail on that issue, but Paul disagrees.

"I don't think we should have any federal money going to pay for abortions. Now they say they're not using it for abortions, but if they're using it to pay their electricity to perform abortions I think it's the same thing as far as I'm concerned," Paul reasoned.

"Planned Parenthood doesn't do anything that community health centers also do other than abortions. The bill actually gives more money for community health centers," he said.

And Paul says if senators want to include expanding Medicaid to cover more people for health insurance, they need to be honest with people about how they're going to pay for it.

"Everybody wants something. They think it should be free and they don't want to pay any taxes to get it, so that's what we have to decide. I think if you want Medicaid expansion there has to be an honest accounting of how we pay for it," Paul said.

While Republicans say Obamacare is in a death spiral, Democrats like Rep. John Garamendi of California argue it's failing because the future of the program is unclear under the Trump administration.

"The insurance companies look to the future, they say, 'What's the future going to be?,' and within that, they then structure their policies and set their price," Garamendi told CBN News.

"They have absolutely no idea what will happen," he said. "They can't set prices, they don't know if there's going to be a requirement for certain benefits or not, and so they're pulling out of the markets because they cannot price their product, they cannot write a contract and they say we can't be here without some certainty."

Republicans say Obamacare was collapsing before President Trump was elected and that they have no choice but to replace it before things get even worse.

The president is meeting with Republican senators this week to help gain support for the legislation and tweets that they really want to get it right.

Senate GOP leadership hopes that after negotiating and amending the bill, they'll have the votes needed to pass it soon. {eoa}

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## **7 Spiritual Warfare Prayers**

# for Loved Ones Making Destructive Decisions

It's hard to watch those you love make self-destructive decisions. It's at least as difficult to keep yourself from intervening while trusting God to do what only He can do. While our hasty actions are well-meaning, they tend to only make things worse. On the other hand, history records countless testimonies of the power of prayerful patience.

To aid your prayer time, I've handcrafted seven strategic prayers based upon related Scriptures. These are each designed to be personalized with the name of your loved one. I encourage you to bookmark or print this page to help you contend for your loved one every day.

## 7 Personalized Prayers

"Father, \_\_\_\_\_ is walking in darkness with no interest in what's right. I ask You to bring them to trust in Your name and to rely only on You" (see Is. 50:10).

"Lord, Your Word assures that you created \_\_\_\_\_ with a plan for good works. But right now, they are running from that plan. Please remind \_\_\_\_\_ of their assignment and bring them back on the path of Your purpose" (see Eph. 2:10).

"God, \_\_\_\_\_ is in bondage to their flesh and cannot find the way out. I ask You to reveal their sin as exceedingly sinful, lead them to repentance and give them freedom from these struggles" (see Rom. 7:13).

"Father, your Word says You desire that all are saved and come to knowledge of the truth. I ask for this to become a reality for \_\_\_\_\_. Please reveal Yourself to them in a powerful way that brings their salvation, deliverance and a desire for what's right" (see 1 Tim. 2:4).

“Lord, I am confident in Your promise that You finish the good work that you begin. And so I pray for \_\_\_\_\_ and the work you started in them. Remind \_\_\_\_\_ of Your call on their life; lead them to return to You to see it through” (See Phil.1:6).

“God, \_\_\_\_\_ is bombarded with wrong thoughts and unrighteous behaviors. I ask Your Holy Spirit to interrupt evil actions and cleanse their mind of wickedness with reminders of whatever is pure, true and right” (See Phil. 4:8).

“Father, \_\_\_\_\_ is surrounded with wrong relationships that are leading them astray. I ask You to bring these bad influences to an end. Please surround \_\_\_\_\_ with godly people who speak life into them and influence them to follow You” (See Prov. 13:20).

### **A Prayer for You**

“Father, I admit that it’s difficult to watch \_\_\_\_\_ make destructive decisions, and I so badly want to intervene. But Lord, I surrender my will to You and place my trust in You to open their eyes and bring them to truth in just the right timing. Help me to remain patient and encouraged while I wait for You to do what only You can do.” {eoa}

**Kyle Winkler** equips people to live in victory. His mobile app, Shut Up, Devil!, is the #1 spiritual warfare app; and his book, Activating the Power of God’s Word, uncovers 16 strategic declarations to transform your life. Kyle holds a Master of Divinity in biblical studies from Regent University. Get daily encouragement from Kyle on Facebook and Twitter.

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# President Trump Strikes a Chord With Tribal Leaders

As promised Tuesday, President Donald Trump met with governors and tribal and local leaders with Secretary of Energy Rick Perry and EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt at the White House for a roundtable listening session about ways to improve America's energy independence.

And while the president was happy to hear from all of the leaders in the room, he had a special message to the Native American leaders who came to visit.

"I'm proud to have such a large gathering of tribal leaders here at the White House," he said. "I look forward to more government-to-government consultations with tribal leaders about the issues important to Indian Country ...

"Many of your lands have rich, natural resources that stand to benefit your people immensely. These untapped resources of wealth can help you build new schools, fix roads, improve your communities, and create jobs—jobs like you've never seen before. All you want is the freedom to use them, and that's been the problem. It's been very difficult, hasn't it? It will be a lot easier now under the Trump administration.

"For too long the federal government has put up restrictions and regulations that put this energy wealth out of reach. It's just totally out of reach. It's been really restricted, the development itself has been restricted, and vast amounts of deposits of coal and other resources have, in a way, been taken out of your hands. And we're going to have that changed. We're going to put it back in your hands.

"These infringements on tribal sovereignty are deeply unfair to Native Americans and Native American communities who are being denied access to the energy and wealth that they have on

their own lands. Many of our states have also been denied access to the abundant energy resources on their lands that could bring greater wealth to the people and benefit to our whole nation. We're becoming more and more energy-dominant. I don't want to be energy-free, we want to be energy-dominant in terms of the world."

You can watch the entire speech in the video clip above. {eoa}

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## **7 Ways to Teach Your Kids About the Meaning of Fourth of July**

Children love celebrating birthdays. Each year American families are invited to join in commemorating the important event leading to the official birth of our nation.

On July 4, 1776, our Founding Fathers chose to take a stand against the control of an English king who desired to add the colonists' hard-earned pennies to his pocket through taxation, though he cared little about their families' needs. Our brave pioneers of liberty, determined to live and worship as they knew God was leading and knowing that their tax dollars were needed on their own side of the ocean, officially declared good riddance to oppressive foreign rule in resolving to be "free and independent States ... absolved from all allegiance to the British crown."

In penning these words, the Continental Congress essentially shouted to the world, "Happy Birthday, America!" At 241 years later, it's still party time.

Attending a picnic or fireworks display is great fun, but to make this year's Independence Day festivities particularly memorable for your little patriot, consider these seven ways to expand your child's knowledge about the freedoms we, as United States citizens, enjoy:

1. Ask your child to place a hand over his or her heart and then recite the Pledge of Allegiance aloud together. Afterwards, explain the significance of America, your homeland, being "one nation, under God ... [offering] liberty and justice for all." Point out that feeling one's heart beating while reciting our nation's pledge is meant to remind us of those soldiers whose hearts no longer beat because they gave their lives in fighting tyranny and division so that we may enjoy the freedom to live in peace and to attend the churches and schools of our choosing.
2. Search your family tree to find those men and women who served in the United States' armed forces. Work alongside your child to write thank-you letters expressing appreciation for the service and sacrifices made by each. Encourage your child to decorate the letters. And remember, there are likely many veterans among your church family who would also love to hear from you.
3. Download the national anthem, "The Star Spangled Banner," and print out American flag coloring pages. Then gather art supplies and play the anthem while you and your child color the flags together. Discuss the significance of the 13 red-and-white stripes and the 50 white stars on a blue background.
4. Contact a local assisted living facility. Ask the director when you and your child can visit a veteran and enlist help in connecting with one. Before the meeting, help your child formulate a question about the veteran's

wartime experiences to ask during your visit. Take a small gift—a homemade treat, balloons or a soft blanket in red, white or blue—to express your gratitude to this hero. Invite him to share his story.

5. Stop by your local library and check out a book about one of our founding parents. Read the book with your child and then work with him or her to create a costume befitting that person. After that, play “living wax museum”: encourage your child to dress in character and then to tell his or her story based on information gained from the book.
6. Enlist your child’s help in planning this year’s family vacation. Research three or four historic spots in America, briefly talk about what took place in each one and then select which site sounds like the best place to visit.
7. Go for a walk at a local park and marvel aloud over God’s wonderful creation. While there, sit closely with your child and open your Bible. Then read pertinent Scriptures aloud, pointing out how Christ Jesus bought us liberty from the tyranny of sin when He took our place on Calvary’s cross. As you share the gift of opening God’s Word in a public place—unafraid of being arrested or harassed for doing so—pause to pray, thanking God for the men and women who’ve fought for your right to worship freely. {eoa}

*Children’s author **Tara McClary Reeves** is daughter of beloved evangelist Marine Corps Lieutenant Clebe McClary. In her book, “Is Your Dad a Pirate?” she shares the true story of her injured father’s return from battle, encouraging children and spouses facing similar trials to cherish the gift of family.*

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# 11 Unsettling Signs You're a Functional Atheist

Although the definition of an atheist is one who denies the existence of God, in this article, I use the word to depict those identifying as Christians who live as though there is no God to which they are accountable. Unfortunately, in my estimation, there is a very large percentage of Christians who live as functional atheists.

The following are 11 signs that you are a functional atheist:

1. You makes important decisions about your career without consulting Scripture or praying.

I can't tell you how many Christians I know who choose a career or job solely on the basis of how much money they will make. They do not take into consideration how God internally wired them, how it will impact their ability to mature as a believer in the context of a local church or how it will affect their key relationships. When a person does this, they are behaving like a functional atheist.

2. You choose a church solely on emotional connections.

As a pastor since 1984, I have seen more people leave a church because their friends left than because they truly heard from God. Consequently, people are led by their emotions more than by the Holy Spirit when it comes to this all-important matter regarding their church family. That being said, it is totally normal for a person to come to Christ and attend a church because a friend invited them; however, once they mature in the faith, God expects them to go from carnal reasoning to a spiritually informed process regarding the choice of a church.

Among other things, a mature believer will choose a church based on the will of God, where they are growing spiritually and whom God has placed in their life to be their spiritual parent (1 Cor.4:15).

3. You choose a mate based solely on mutual attraction.

Based on my pastoral observation, I have seen countless Christians marry a person merely because of an emotional or physical attraction. Although God can work through any marital situation (Rom. 8:28), making a decision like this is no different than an atheist who will also choose a mate merely on emotional and physical attraction. I believe God uses the way He has wired us emotionally, physically and spiritually, for example, I would never counsel a person to marry a person to which they were not physically attracted. However, at the end of the day, God has a specific spouse who matches your calling and destiny, which comes from being led by the Spirit and hearing from God. To be fair, I have seen many married couples come to Christ whom God brought together even though they were not believers, but after you are saved, much more is required of you regarding decision-making.

4. You have no consistent communion with God.

Any believer who does not seek the Lord regularly, aiming to be in continual communion with Him, is living like a functional atheist. Moses said to the Lord, "If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here" (Ex. 33:15). Being in communion with the Spirit and being led by Him continually is a staple of normal Christianity (Rom. 8:14; Eph. 5:15-18). Believers who continually fill their lives with activities bereft of seeking Him behave like functional atheists.

5. Scripture does not inform your worldview.

Every election season it amazes me the unbiblical policies and candidates some believers support. It is obvious to me that

they are primarily informed by secular humanism and don't understand how to integrate their private faith with public policy. Those who are not informed by Scripture regarding their world and life views are functional atheists in this area.

6. You casually speak negatively about churches and spiritual leaders.

The Bible teaches us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 1:7). When a person casually speaks evil of other people, especially Christian leaders and churches, it demonstrates that they lack the fear of the Lord who hates discord among His people (Prov. 6:19; Eph. 4:29-31). Slanderers and gossipers in the church live like functional atheists.

7. You determine how many children you will have.

One of the original commands God gave humankind was to bear fruit and multiply, which means to have children (Gen. 1:28). Biological children are a heritage from the Lord (Ps. 127:3-5). Having children is one of our primary callings because we partner with God to expand His eternal family; those who cannot have children or called to be single should focus on having spiritual children. With something as important as this, married couples should pray over Genesis 1:28 and ask God how many children He wants them to have; those who determine family planning without God act like functional atheists.

8. You choose to divorce your spouse for unbiblical reasons.

I have known of spiritual leaders who glibly divorce their spouses merely because they do not get along. Jesus did not make divorce that easy (Matt. 5:31-32; 19:1-10). Those whose primary plumb line for divorce is happiness break covenant with God and their spouses and act like functional atheists. Of course, if a believer chooses to divorce, the other person

in the marriage is not responsible or in bondage (1 Cor. 7:15).

9. Your walk with God is based on blessing and convenience.

Those who only serve God when it is convenient or only requires a minimal sacrifice live as functional atheists.

10. You live independent of His body.

Once we come to Christ, He places us in His body (1 Cor. 12:12-13). Conversely, lone rangers who continually church hop or live without being in covenant or accountability with spiritual leadership live as functional atheists. I have learned through studying the New Testament that I cannot walk out my calling apart from a local church.

11. You make a geographical move without hearing from God.

I am amazed at how many Christians I have known since my conversion in 1978 who have moved away from the church God planted them in, only to waste years of their lives floundering in a stagnant spiritual state. Before a geographical move that impacts a life-giving church connection, I would suggest you do the following: Make sure you have heard from God in conjunction with the independent witness of other mature believers, consult with your spiritual leaders, make sure you are not being driven merely by money or convenience, make sure there is another church in that new community that you have visited and to which you sense a connection and make sure you do not burn any bridges in case you make a mistake and have to return. Those who superficially make a huge geographical move act as functional atheists.  
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# Army Wife Clings to Psalm 119 After Her Soldier's Death

I have always loved the fireworks on the Fourth of July. As a child growing up in southwest Florida, we went to the beach and watched the show as it launched from the Naples Pier. That venue offered a double treat as the pyrotechnics burst in the sky and reflected upon the warm water of the Gulf. With an unwavering patriotism running steadily through my veins, every year since my youth, I have always found a place to observe the fireworks and celebrate our nation's independence. Never has it been as painful as it was in 2007.

Six weeks before Independence Day that year, I had buried my husband, the love of my life, the father of our children. Major Larry Bauguess was serving with the 82nd Airborne Division in Afghanistan and had been shot and killed following a peace meeting in Pakistan. A wicked sucker-punch took him from us and left us with the insurmountable challenge of learning how to live without him. Despite our broken hearts, our tiny daughters and I remained wildly patriotic. We lived on Fort Bragg and wanted to celebrate July Fourth alongside our neighbors, no matter how painful it would be.

That morning, we went to the community pool, which was beautifully decorated in red, white and blue. I did my best to compartmentalize my emotions as I saw the happy families playing in the water. Little ones hanging on their dads, being tossed out of the water and back down with a splash, amused me for a moment until I realized Ryann and Ellie would never again enjoy a carefree pool day with their daddy.

That afternoon, a sweet neighbor came over to pamper the girls. She knew it had already been an emotional holiday for us. With incredible precision, Robin Jones painted their big toes and thumbnails blue with little white stars. She painted

every other finger and toe alternating shades of red and white. Once their nails were dry, Ryann and Ellie danced around the living room and stared at their hands and feet. It was a priceless gesture from a true friend.

That evening, we re-joined our neighbors in an open field to watch the incredibly patriotic Fort Bragg firework display. The children enjoyed lighting and waving sparklers as they waited for the show to begin. As the start time approached, we spread out a blanket for the kids to lie on and positioned our chairs to watch from behind.

The first explosion startled me, but the brightly colored fire in the sky certainly captured my attention. I was excited to watch the show. Surprisingly, the second explosion shook me. By the third and fourth boom, I was trembling. Never had the sound of fireworks rattled me the way they did that year. Sounding less like a celebration and more like a battlefield, I couldn't help but feel frightened. That moment became less and less festive, more and more horrifying with each boom.

Confused and betrayed by my own emotions, I looked at the children lying on their bellies gazing joyfully at the firework display. They were so innocent, so pure. I glanced at my neighbors. Everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves. Why was I falling apart?

Each boom sounded louder and louder. My ears and my heart hurt. My eyes began to sting as they filled with tears. I thought about Larry and his last moments on earth. Had it been this loud? Did he feel this out of control?

In that moment, I sought comfort from the only one who could provide it. My heart was broken, my nerves were exposed and my world had been shattered. Only God could help me. Only God could restore my faith and, in that moment, my sanity.

"This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your word revives me" (Ps. 119:50).

The fireworks show lasted nearly 30 minutes. In that time, I experienced a wide array of emotions, but by the finale, God provided the comfort I needed. He restored my patriotism and my love of country. He warmed my heart and gave me strength.

Over the past 10 years, I have had many moments of trouble and trial, but in every single one, I have leaned on God to see me through. As a family, we remain incredibly proud of our country, and thankful for the freedom for which Larry gave his life. We continue to participate in Fourth of July celebrations to honor him and so many others who have given that last full measure of devotion. Every day, we remember that freedom doesn't come without suffering. {eoa}

*Wesley Bauguess is an Army veteran and widow. Her book, "God, Country, Golf: Reflections of an Army Widow," released from Westbow Press on May 14, 2017, the 10th anniversary of her husband Larry's courageous sacrifice in service.*

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## **Part 2: Another Big Name at CNN Admits the Russia Narrative Is a 'Big Nothingburger'**

Another shoe dropped Wednesday afternoon for CNN with the release of yet another damaging video from Project Veritas and its founder, journalist James O'Keefe.

In this new video clip, one of the most prominent liberal commentators on the network, Van Jones, a member of President Barack Obama's inner circle, told someone working for Project

Veritas that there's "nothing there" to support the liberal media's "Russia Narrative." According to a clock recorded at the beginning of the clip, the conversation took place on Monday.

"The Russia thing is just a big nothingburger," he said. "There's nothing there you can do."

This latest video follows immediately on the heels of a previous clip that is part of Project Veritas' "American Pravda" project in which a senior producer at CNN admitted the coverage of Russia Narrative was being pushed by ratings. The same producer also noted there is no evidence to support that narrative, and if there was, he would've expected it to have been leaked by an Obama loyalist still working in the government.

That video became the subject of a heated back-and-forth during Tuesday's White House Press Briefing as the Trump administration has hammered the liberal mainstream media this week. But this latest video begs the question of how many more shoes are going to drop.

In both the Tuesday and Wednesday videos, O'Keefe strongly hinted there will be more installments, and they won't just focus on CNN. Other media outlets he has hinted at include ABC, CBS, the NBC family of networks, FOX News Channel, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe* and *Wall Street Journal*.

"The media for years has gotten away with manufacturing consent," he said. "People are fed up with the emptiness and the artifice that pervades our media."

"Well, I'll tell you something. Change is coming, whether CNN likes it or not." {eoa}