

# Why the Church Needs a Change in Strategy

It doesn't take a prophetic voice to point out that our nation and our world are in trouble and the trouble we're facing won't go away any time soon. The body of Christ must prepare to stand in the midst of it to exert influence for the kingdom of God—and the clock is ticking. It remains to be seen whether we have adequately prepared spiritually, in attitude or materially for what must come.

At virtually every other crisis point in United States history God has provided one or more great leaders who have helped the nation come out the other side victorious and ready to build on what has been won. George Washington led the colonies through the Revolutionary War to defeat the world's most powerful army and establish our nation's independence. By the grace of God Abraham Lincoln turned out to be the right man to carry us through the trauma of the Civil War and preserve the union. Beginning in the Great Depression we had Franklin D. Roosevelt to shepherd us through World War II and lead us to a victory that set the stage for the unprecedented level of prosperity and influence the United States has enjoyed since 1945. Clearly, the Lord has favored us. To fail to acknowledge the Lord's hand in these things would be inexcusable blindness.

Granted, historically we have not always understood or lived out the full implications of the godly values and concepts our founders articulated and we claimed to believe in. For example, as a member of the Osage Nation (Native American) I am well aware of the injustices perpetrated on nonwhite peoples over the years since Europeans first came to these shores. Neither have we always been a moral people by such a basic standard as the Ten Commandments. We did, however, always acknowledge God and His place in our nation at both

cultural and governmental levels.

But no longer.

I hardly need to bore you with the litany of court decisions, laws and policies that now repudiate our historic acknowledgement of the Creator and His sovereignty. Nor do I need to explain what now constitutes a growing prejudice against the very Christianity espoused by virtually every one of the founding fathers.

Psalm 34:7 says, "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, and rescues them." The hard truth is that because we no longer truly fear the Lord, the angel of the Lord no longer encamps around this nation to rescue it. This does not mean the Lord's judgment is falling upon us. That may come, but it is not yet. It simply means that we now stand on the same footing as every other nation on earth—neither more nor less favored; and therein lies the problem.

We now face a growing set of world crises that demand wise and strong leadership. Having forfeited the favor of God, no such leadership has emerged or will emerge. I am therefore deeply troubled concerning the coming election.

Pardon the harsh tone of the following statements, but we have a man of profound wisdom-deficit in the White House who will soon launch a re-election campaign. Obama could have been a great president. Even though I voted against him, I saw the potential when he was elected, and I said so. But humility, as well as the wisdom that would have come from humility, have not been in evidence.

A similar wisdom deficit can be seen in those who now vie for the Republican nomination to run against him. Unfortunately, as this election cycle unfolds, it has become painfully apparent that not one among the Republican field has the grace or wisdom to do any better than our president.

Rigid ideologies have mired both Congress and the White House in a legislative gridlock that will not soon be broken. No one really listens—not to one another and certainly not to the American people. Proverbs 12:15 admonishes, “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel.” This root of foolishness has taken deep root at the highest levels and has resulted in a government broken at every level, powerless to lead us out of the quicksand we find ourselves currently sinking into.

This is not the time for Christians to attempt to exert influence through shrill, judgmental and angry statements. This perpetuates the foolishness that wins no one’s heart and now destroys us. The time is long past for us to be thinking we can pull the country back to something we thought it once was. Too many shifts have occurred culturally, racially and ethnically for that to be possible.

We therefore need a change of strategy based in blessing, the servant heart and prophetic wisdom. Daniel and his three friends changed the hearts of the kings of Babylon and Persia by serving, not by pronouncing railing judgments. They did this for the government of the very empire that had brutally conquered their own nation and carried their population into exile. Why can’t we do this for officials we ourselves have elected? Why not pray for opportunities to bless those in authority in any sphere of life with gentle and godly wisdom for the situations and problems they face?

Joseph in Egypt blessed the Pharaoh even while confined in a prison to which he had been unjustly condemned. And he not only interpreted the Pharaoh’s dream but also proposed a solution to the looming famine the dream prophesied. He ended up ruling the country.

Why not pray for godly men and women to be strategically placed to earn influence by means of humble service, even in the face of persecution and prejudice, just as Daniel and

Joseph were?

I know: This can seem a difficult thing for many who feel their most cherished values are being trashed due to a set of ideologies and resulting decisions that seem diametrically opposed to so much of what we stand for. But put yourself in Daniel's or Joseph's place. In a contest of dire situations—theirs versus ours—they win; and yet they served and changed the hearts of kings.

The difficulties of the coming days present us with unprecedented opportunities to demonstrate the love and power of the kingdom of God flowing from the heart of our Father through Jesus His Son. We can be Daniels and Josephs wherever and at whatever level God has deployed us. Please, let's not miss the moment. Darkness cannot overcome light. The world may crash around us, but we get to win in the midst of it. The most powerful outpouring of the Spirit of God since Pentecost is upon us if we will choose to receive it and use it in the loving heart of our Father.

**R. Loren Sandford** *is the founder and senior pastor of New Song Church and Ministries in Denver. He is a songwriter, recording artist and worship leader, as well as the author of several books, including Understanding Prophetic People, The Prophetic Church and his latest, Renewal for the Wounded Warrior, which are available with other resources at the church's website.*

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## Regain Your Spiritual Edge

Watch the video below by Jentezen Franklin to learn how fasting helps you regain your spiritual edge.

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# Be Prepared to Affirm God

And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ. **–Ephesians 1:9**

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## Servanthood

If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour. **–John 12:26**

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## Thanksgiving Reflections: Inspired by Martin Rinkart

Are you struggling to be thankful as you come to the end of a tough year? Then the story of Martin Rinkart will lift your heart.

Rinkart was a Lutheran pastor who ministered in Eilenburg, Saxony during the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). This devastating conflict ravaged entire regions, caused unrelenting famine and bankrupted most of the combatant powers. Malnutrition and pandemic threatened almost all of Europe.

Eilenburg saw a steady stream of refugees pour into the city for three decades, overwhelming the city's meager resources. Eight hundred homes in Eilenburg were destroyed in the fighting. The pastors of the city were under enormous strain, conducting multiple funerals daily while trying to minister to survivors.

The Year of the Great Pestilence (1637) saw every pastor in the city except Rinkart succumb to the horrific conditions. As the sole surviving clergyman in Eilenburg, it fell upon Rinkart to conduct funeral services for up to 50 people per day. In May of that terrible year, Rinkart's own wife died.

Rinkart lived in a world palled by death and despair. Yet his faith in Christ held firm. He did not give in to bitterness. Even after living through three hellish decades he never lost his confidence in the goodness and faithfulness of God.

Pastor Rinkart could identify with Job. After losing his family, his health, his money and his position in society, Job still declared His trust in God: "Even if He kills me, I will hope in Him" (Job 13:15, HCSB). Martin Rinkart profoundly understood Jeremiah's unflinching faith. Looking on a scene of collapsed hopes and a privileged nation that now lay pillaged, Jeremiah still declared, "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness" (Lam. 3:22-24, ESV).

How did Pastor Rinkart keep his faith and his sanity? He refused to be defined by his circumstances. He determined to focus, not on his circumstances, but on the unchanging character of a merciful God. If we drop anchor on any "rock" that can potentially be removed, we will be insecure and prone to self-debilitating bitterness. But if we anchor on the Rock of Christ Jesus, our moorings will hold fast (see Matt. 7:24-27).

Set against the bleak backdrop of a protracted war, economic

collapse, and his own city's devastation, Martin Rinkart penned these words for his children as a prayer of thanksgiving:

*Now thank we all our God with heart and hands and voices  
Who wondrous things has done, in Whom His world rejoices;  
Who from our mothers' arms has blessed us on our way  
With countless gifts of love, and still are ours today.*

*O may this bounteous God through all our life be near us,  
With ever joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us;  
And keep us in His grace, and guide us when perplexed  
And free us from all ills in this world and the next.*

*All praise and thanks to God the Father now be given,  
The Son and Him Who reigns with Them in highest heaven\* –  
The one eternal God Whom earth and heaven adore;  
For thus it was, is now, and shall be evermore.*

No matter how difficult things may be for you right now, look up and remember: "His mercy endures forever." Now thank we all our God.

\*"Him Who reigns with Them in highest heaven" is a reference to the Holy Spirit.

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## **Cain Signs Pro-Life Pledge, Romney Lone Hold Out**

While Republicans battle it out for the party's nomination for president of the United States, pro-life groups are keeping track of the candidates' stance on abortion.

The Susan B. Anthony List just announced that Herman Cain has

signed its Pro-Life Presidential Leadership Pledge. Mitt Romney, meanwhile, has yet to sign on the pro-life dotted line.

“This decision is consistent with the Herman Cain we have come to know,” says Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of SBA List. “He understands the wound abortion is to America and especially to the most vulnerable among us—people that Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger labeled ‘human weeds.’”

Cain explained his pro-life convictions. He noted that he is an associate Baptist minister and is 100 percent pro-life.

“I will not appoint judges who legislate from the bench. I will appoint judges who will strictly interpret the U.S. Constitution and understand the limitations on government and separations of power set forth in the U.S. Constitution,” Cain says. “Where my powers in the Executive Branch are concerned, I will work at all times to oppose government funding of abortion. I will veto any legislation that contains funds for abortions. I will do everything that a president can do constitutionally to advance the culture of life.”

In addition to Cain, Michele Bachman, Newt Gingrich, Ron Paul, Rick Perry, and Rick Santorum have also signed the SBA List Pro-Life Presidential Leadership Pledge. Thad McCotter and Tim Pawlenty also signed, but have since withdrawn from the race.

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## **10 Basic Blessings You Should Be Thankful For**

We Americans are a blessed people, but we are also spoiled. I know I am. I can get flustered over the stupidest things—like

when my cellphone doesn't get a good signal, when a flight is delayed or when my computer takes too long to load a website. Most people in the world don't have iPhones, can't afford air travel and don't have computers. My impatience reveals my ungrateful spirit.

So how can we avoid this virus of selfish immaturity? Thankfulness is the antidote. It melts our pride and crushes our sense of entitlement. It reminds us that everything we have comes from God, and that His mercy is the only reason we are blessed.

As you celebrate Thanksgiving Day, I pray you will invite the Holy Spirit to convict you of any whining. Here's a list of 10 blessings that many people in the world don't have. Go over this list and then see if you still have anything to gripe about.

**1. Got clean water?** The next time you uncap a bottle of water or grab a drink from the tap, remember that one in eight people in the world (that's 884 million people) lack access to clean water supplies. Millions of women around the world spend several hours a day collecting water. When you take a five-minute shower, you use more water than a typical person in a developing country uses in a whole day.

**2. Do you have a bathroom?** About 40 percent of the world's population (2.6 billion people) do not have toilets. Lack of sanitation facilities spreads disease and is a major reason why more than 2 million people die annually of diarrhea.

**3. How's your electricity?** The power in my house might be interrupted briefly three times a year because of Florida storms. But 1.6 billion people—a quarter of humanity—live without any electricity. And, because of unreliable infrastructure, at least 2 billion people on earth don't have any light at night.

**4. Got a roof over your head?** One billion people live in

slums. That's almost one-sixth of the world's population. Of this total, 640 million children live without adequate shelter; they live in cardboard boxes, tin-roofed shacks, one-room mud huts or filthy, crowded tenements. It's been estimated that 1.4 billion people will live in slums by 2020. Meanwhile here in the United States, between 2.3 to 2.5 million people are classified as homeless.

**5. Is there food on your table?** In the United States we are battling an obesity epidemic. Yet according to UNICEF, 22,000 children die each day due to poverty. Approximately 790 million people in the developing world are chronically undernourished, and almost 28 percent of all children in developing countries are estimated to be underweight or stunted.

**6. Got a stove?** In developing countries, some 2.5 billion people use fuelwood, charcoal or animal dung to meet their energy needs for cooking. In sub-Saharan Africa, more than 80 percent of the population depends on these crude, traditional means for cooking, as do over half of the populations of India and China. The really sad part: Indoor air pollution resulting from the use of solid fuels claims the lives of 1.5 million people each year, more than half of them below the age of 5.

**7. Got regular income?** You may have had to take a pay cut during the recession. But keep in mind that at least 80 percent of humanity lives on less than \$10 a day. The world's average income is about \$7,000 a year. Still, only about 19 percent of the world's population lives in countries with per capita incomes at least this high.

**8. Did you go to school?** Nearly a billion people entered the 21st century unable to read a book or sign their names. Enrollment data shows that about 72 million children of primary school age in the developing world were not in school in 2005 (and 57 percent of them were girls).

**9. Are you generally healthy?** Americans face illness like people in other nations—and more than 12 million Americans are battling cancer in any given year. But many of us have access to health care. In the developing world, more than 2.2 million children die each year because they are not immunized. An estimated 40 million people in developing countries are living with HIV/AIDS. Every year there are 350–500 million cases of malaria, with 1 million fatalities, mostly in Africa.

**10. Are you free to worship God?** More than 400 Christians die for their faith *every day* around the world, and most of these believers suffer in Islamic countries—although the top hot spot for Christian persecution, according to Open Doors International, is the atheist regime of North Korea.

What will you be grateful for this Thanksgiving? In these tough economic times you may feel the urge to complain. Be thankful instead! God calls us to live above this negativity. When we give thanks in all things, God gives us a supernatural attitude adjustment. When we thank God for all He has given us, acknowledging that we don't deserve His goodness, our grumbling melts into gratitude and our impatience turns to praise.

**J. Lee Grady** *is the former editor of Charisma. You can follow him on Twitter at leegrady. His most recent book is 10 Lies Men Believe (Charisma House).*

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## Wholeheartedly Giving Thanks to God

I have so much for which to be thankful. Do you? Do you show Him how thankful you are for what He has done? How could you

best build in a daily opportunity to thank the Lord?

You may say, "He knows I'm thankful. I don't have to tell Him every day." Please tell Him. Do you not appreciate it yourself when people thank you for something?

Even though God can see your heart whereas people cannot, you need to tell Him. God also knows what things you need before you ask Him (Matt. 6:8), but He still wants you to tell Him, and when you pray that is what you should do.

We have a curious way of asking the Lord for what we need (even though He knows the need). We should also remember to thank Him (even though He may well know we are thankful).

How can we be so sure we are thankful if we do not go through the trouble of remembering to say thank you to the One who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ (Eph. 1:3)?

We all know people who annoy us by their lack of gratitude and appreciation. It is surely true that those who remember to say "thank you" are more thankful than the ones who forget to say "thank you." God loves to hear us say "thank You" to Him and to each other. I believe that there are three principles behind thankfulness: God loves gratitude; God hates ingratitude; and gratitude must be taught.

A good parent will teach his or her child to be thankful, to show thankfulness, and to express it. God, the perfect parent, has taught this in His Word. With great care and patience He taught the children of Israel to be thankful. He was grieved when they were unthankful. Jesus taught the same thing, as did the apostle Paul.

The biblical doctrine of sanctification is to be seen as the doctrine of gratitude. Sanctification is the process by which we are made holy. It is becoming more and more like Jesus. But why be sanctified? Answer: to show we are thankful. This is


why the reformed doctrine of sanctification has been called, literally, the doctrine of gratitude.

You can read more and purchase R.T. Kendall's book, *Just Say Thanks!*, which this article is derived from, by clicking [here](#).

**R.T. Kendall** was the pastor of Westminster Chapel in London, England, for 25 years. Born in Ashland, Ky., he was educated at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Oxford University. He is well known internationally as a speaker and teacher. He is the author of more than 40 books, including *The Power of Humility*, *The Word and the Spirit*, *The Sensitivity of the Spirit*, *The Anointing*, *Just Say Thanks!* and *Total Forgiveness*.

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## **Raising Her Voice to Change Poverty and Child Abuse**

**Recording artist** and singer Beckah Shae says one of the most underutilized weapons Christians have is their voice. The Dove-award nominee isn't referring to her soulful crooning;  she's talking about speaking out against injustice. Every day, she notes, children go hungry and young girls and boys are trafficked for sex—not because there aren't enough people to change that, but because those who are aware of the problems aren't vocal enough about them.

"This is the most powerful thing for me—to be a voice. I have a powerful platform right now," Shae says. She uses her voice in numerous ways, including to create contemporary Christian albums such as *Destiny*, her most recent. She is also a spokesperson for Kids Alive, which fights poverty, and for A21, which rescues girls from sex trafficking.

The songstress says she was both heartbroken and elated when she visited Kenya to see the work Kids Alive was doing during the drought that has created a hunger crisis in east Africa. She witnessed the ministry helping to rescue orphans who had been physically abused, then meeting the spiritual, physical, educational and emotional needs of the children who had nowhere else to turn.

“It’s more of a family-type setting. They make it like a family so it’s not like an orphanage,” she says.

Shae and her husband, a music producer, sponsor a child with Kids Alive. She is committed to helping—and using her voice to tell about the injustice and the work being done in Kenya to change it.

“It’s not about everything we do,” Shae says, “it’s about [our lack of] doing anything.”


**Beckah Shae’s favorite quote:**

*“We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the vitriolic words and actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence of the good people.”*

—Martin Luther King Jr.

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## **Bikers Deliver Christmas Gifts, Santa-Style**

**On a crisp and sunny Saturday** recently, hundreds of bikers from around the Carolinas descended upon the Billy Graham Library in Charlotte, N.C., with gifts strapped to their  motorcycles for the Fourth Annual Bikers with Boxes event.

The group is an annual supporter of Operation Christmas Child, an outreach by Samaritan's Purse that last year alone gave 8.2 million underprivileged children Christmas shoe boxes.

"We've just really been thrilled that this has been an annual event and that the bikers have embraced it," said Diane Wise of the Billy Graham Library. "Bikers are the most generous group of people."