

# You Can Be a Reformer

**For too long Christians have slept while the devil invaded our culture. God is looking for bold voices to challenge the system.**

I hardly felt like a reformer while standing with my friends in the afternoon's misty weather in Wittenberg, Germany. Yet, something stirred deep inside my heart as I looked at the sign on the wall announcing that this museum was once the home of one of the greatest reformers who ever lived—Martin Luther.

Later, as I walked the corridor of the Lutherhalle—the former monastery turned home to Luther and his beloved wife, Katie—my emotions stirred again. The longer we walked and the more we read about the history of the amazing cultural changes produced by this man's life, the more impassioned I became.

I realized that the truths on those musty walls were as relevant today as they had been during Luther's time. At last I thought, I could put the things Luther did in his day into a modern-day transformation DVD. In addition to his teachings, he wrote new songs for a new day, including one we still sing—"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"—which remains relevant, even though it was written in 1529.

By the time we reached the last rooms of the museum I was overwhelmed by thoughts of how far-reaching the reformation Luther initiated in the 16th century had been. Entire cities, countries and indeed the world were influenced by it, and the rallying cry "The just shall live by faith" is still heard around the world today.

Suddenly I felt as if a volcano was going to erupt inside me.

Rushing out of the museum into the damp and chilly afternoon, I could no longer contain myself. With my face to the wall, I began to cry from the depths of my being as I moaned, “Oh, God, I’m so sorry! My generation has failed you! What is wrong with us?”

You see, at that moment I had the heart-wrenching revelation that the elements needed to change the face of the earth have been before our eyes for centuries and yet, somehow, we have been impotent in our attempts to fulfill the Great Commission.

Massive tears flowed down my face and mingled with the drops of rain as I groaned, “Eighty-two million people in Germany and only 1.6 million believers. Oh, God, what is wrong with us? I’m so sorry, God. How could we have let this happen on our watch?”

### **Modern-Day Reformers**

I know I’m not the only one who has this heart cry. As I’ve traveled around the world, I’ve had the opportunity to talk with people from all generations, who, although different in age, share the same passion. They want to be used by God to save souls and change their nations.

It’s clear that the Lord is raising up John Knox-type reformers who, with deep intensity, are imploring God, “Give me my nation, or I will die!” Because of this global outcry, I firmly believe we are on the verge of a reformation that will impact the nations to an extent we cannot even begin to fathom.

The word “reform” means “to amend what is corrupt; to change

to a better state.” There are many things about the nations around the world that have become corrupt. In fact, the United States is in a shocking condition itself.

Recently, I had the privilege of being part of a summer-long season of concerted prayer in San Francisco. The pastors and believers in the city wanted to reverse the damage done to their city during the 1967 Summer of Love. Some say that in those three months, 100,000 or more young people from around the world poured into the city, and a wave of sexual promiscuity and drug use was unleashed that quickly became a part of the mainstream culture.

Forty years later, San Francisco is still reeling from this influence, as the following description from Diane Brodeur of Promiseland Fellowship shows. Diane and her husband, Michael, related atrocious stories to me about what takes place on the streets of this city.

“One day as I was driving up to the church with my three children, ages 10,13 and 15, I saw 60 naked men riding down Market Street on bicycles,” Diane said. “I called the police to complain and was told that there was nothing illegal about the action if they had a parade permit. They checked and found out that they did not have a permit and were illegal.”

However, the police told Diane she would have to follow the lewd “parade” until the law arrived if she wanted to file a complaint. She reminded them that pedophilia is illegal in the U.S. and that it is illegal for an adult to expose himself to a child, but her reminder made no difference. Because she didn’t want to continue exposing her children to the nudity, she elected not to follow the men.

Michael and Diane claim that this kind of behavior is not uncommon and that much worse goes on during the annual Gay Pride parade. Men parade around in costumes with full frontal nudity.

“At other times,” Diane shares, “women march with babies in strollers, completely naked to the waist shouting, ‘We’re queer, we’re here, get used to it!’” She says that during the Halloween festival there is open sex going on in the streets of the city and nearly a quarter of a million people come out for the event.

There isn’t much difference between San Francisco (and many other cities in the U.S.) and the biblical, Middle Eastern cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, which God destroyed because of the people’s perversion. Thank God the pastors are praying and standing for their city.

One has only to flip through the Yellow Pages in the phone book of Las Vegas to see listings for prostitutes who boldly advertise their wares with phone numbers such as 702-734-TITI. Yet, believers there also are praying and crying out for a revival in their city.

As I write these words I have the same deep embarrassment before God that I felt at the museum in Wittenberg, Germany. Where are the reformers? We desperately need a new holiness movement, both in the church and in the nation.

Do you feel helpless to change the moral landslide taking place in the nation? Don’t. Remember, the same God who helped Luther fight the greed of the established church of his day is here for us as well.

At times the Lord will spotlight heroes and heroines of past reforms to urge us on in the battle, as He recently has William Wilberforce, the reformation warrior who was instrumental in the abolition of the slave trade in England 200 years ago.

Wilberforce seemed an unlikely candidate for the job of reformer—his father had died when he was 9, and he had bad eyesight and poor health and wore a steel brace to support his back. However, God gave him a voice, and an eloquent one at that. He was elected to Parliament at 21 years of age. Influenced by John Newton, the composer of the hymn “Amazing Grace,” he began the fight to abolish the slave trade when he was only 28 years old.

In spite of his determination, Wilberforce experienced many personal struggles during the fight. But he was encouraged to press on by the famous revivalist John Wesley, who wrote the following comments to him in a letter: “Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils: but if God is with you, who can be against you? Are all of them stronger than God?”

“Oh, be not weary in well doing. Go on, in the name of God and in the power of His might, till even American slavery, the vilest that ever saw the sun, shall vanish away before it. That he who has guided you from your youth up may continue to strengthen you in this and in all things, is the prayer of ... dear Sir, your affectionate servant, John Wesley (24 February 1791).”

Wilberforce was aided in his efforts by a valiant group of leaders who banded together to form a fellowship that later became known as the “Clapham Sect”—so named because many of

the group lived in the London suburb of Clapham. Their common bond was their commitment to apply their faith in Christ not only to their personal lives but also to social and political matters.

One hundred twelve people in the alliance were members of Parliament. Others were in banking and law while others, such as Hannah More, a leading writer and educator, wrote tracts in 1795 called the Cheap Repository Tracts. Henry Thornton of the Clapham group financed them, and they sold 2 million copies during a time when there were only 8 million people in the whole nation. Clearly, this group helped to change history.

### What Can We Do?

Today we as Bible-believing Christians need to stand up and fight against injustice, poverty and the moral decay of the nations of the earth, just as the Clapham Sect did in their time. Where are the modern-day Wilberforces? I believe there is a new generation of young and old who are awakening to the need to turn our nations back to the morality and ethics of the Bible.

As I travel across America, I am conducting a survey. At each hotel I stay in (and I stay in quite a few), I make it a practice to open the drawers and see if I can find a Bible. I even asked an employee at the last hotel why they didn't have one.

The employee kind of mumbled and mentioned that another hotel in Houston had taken them out as well. Then I found out that a statue of the Bible had been removed from the courthouse lawn—whisked away in the night even though the pastors had

filed an injunction to keep it.

Part of our biblical responsibility as believers is to make disciples of all nations and teach them to observe what is written in Scripture (see Matt. 28:19-20). The plumb line, first removed in 1962 through a Supreme Court ruling when prayer was taken out of the schools, is being pushed farther and farther out in our culture.

David Barton has done an excellent job in his book *Original Intent* (WallBuilder Press) of citing outrageous examples of other court rulings that have affected America. Here are just a few:

»Freedoms of speech and press are guaranteed to students and teachers—unless the topic is religious, at which time such speech becomes unconstitutional (*Duran v. Nitsche*, 1991).

»If a student prays over his lunch, it is unconstitutional for him to pray aloud (*Reed v. Van Hoven*, 1965).

»It is unconstitutional for a classroom library to contain books that deal with Christianity, or for a teacher to be seen with a personal copy of the Bible at school (*Roberts v. Madigan*, 1990).

In another of his works, *A Spiritual Heritage*, Barton states that the pilgrims who first landed in America had a huge influence on American culture because they brought with them the Geneva Bible, which contained marginal commentaries that reflected reformation thought.

The pilgrims drafted the Mayflower Compact, a document based on these commentaries. They came to America so that they could govern themselves under fixed standards as established in

God's Word and so that they could evangelize the nation. Compare the aforementioned court rulings with the pilgrims' intent.

It is time to draw a line in the sand and commit ourselves to the reformation of the nation. The good news is that many are fighting the good fight of faith today, especially the youth. Eighteen-year-old Erica Corder is a good example.

Erica gave the graduation speech at her school in Monument, Colorado, near Colorado Springs. She used her time to share about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, even though she knew there might be repercussions—and indeed, school officials refused to give her her diploma until she wrote a letter of apology. It is encouraging to know that Erica and many other young people are not ashamed of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You may not be asked to give a graduation speech—perhaps you graduated long ago—but you can help reform America. You can do as youth groups from Bill Johnson's Bethel Church in Redding, California, are doing and take the gospel to the streets with displays of God's power. You can join others who are praying for revival in 24/7 prayer rooms such as those Jaeson Ma has founded across the nation. Or you can speak up for righteousness in your own sphere of influence by campaigning for godly political candidates, making your concerns about religious freedom in public schools known to local school boards and showing those around you the love of Christ through evangelism and good works.

It is time to draw a line in the sand and write on it "holiness." Each of us has a voice, and we need to speak up while we still have the liberty to do so. God wants us to

influence every sector of society in our nation.

Edmund Burke is attributed with saying, "All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing." We cannot afford to just do nothing.

As Rod Parsley says in his book *Silent No More* (Charisma House), "I will be silent no more. I must speak, and I must speak now. Our times demand it. Our history compels it. Our future requires it. And God is watching."

God is watching indeed. He gave His life to reach the world with the gospel, and He wants us to do the same.

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