

Evangelicals Must Reach the Next Level if America Is to Survive

American Founding Father Fisher Ames' concern with 18th-century education bears repeating: "We've become accustomed of late of putting little books into the hands of children containing fables and moral lessons. We are spending less time in the classroom on the Bible, which should be the principal text of our schools."

The vast majority of America's Founding Fathers recognized that political freedom cannot exist apart from virtue and morality among the people. Battling for a democratic republic instead of pure, unmodified democracy Founder Ames cautioned that "... democracy pollutes the morals of the people before it swallows up their freedoms." We have been granted a short reprieve. Evangelical and pro-life Catholic Christians must now bring biblical values to the public square in order to bolster the Founding Fathers' fundamental concept that an immoral culture annihilates freedom.

Fisher Ames became a member of the House of Representatives in the First United States Congress in 1789, at the time of George Washington's presidency. Two years earlier, the Second Continental Congress had passed the Northwest Ordinance (1787), providing a method for admitting new states to the Union. Article 3 of the Northwest Ordinance declared that "Religion, morality and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged." The passage of the Northwest Ordinance legislation provides a clear testament to the spiritual dynamism and godly spirit of that era's Congress.

America's founders walked by faith, "[yet] they did not retreat from involvement in society and politics. They did not turn civil government, the making, enforcement, and adjudication of laws, over to Satan and those who serve him. They did not surrender the ministry of civil government to those who are in rebellion against God."

In more recent years, pastors and the people in their pews have espoused an attitude of laissez-faire or noninvolvement. Civil government, the making, enforcement and adjudication of laws has been left to secularists who embrace abortion, same-sex intercourse and marriage, euthanasia, omnipotent government, transgender bathrooms and coercive redistribution of wealth.

Speechifying has taken the place of the hard work of marshaling like-minded parishioners to the voting booth. Do-nothing policies have consequences. Consider the possibility that if pro-abortion and LGBT militant homosexual activists recruit and elect those who align with their values, then those they elect are going to impose secular, pro-abortion and pro-homosexual values through legislation. This is Politics 101.

It would be naive to believe that a once-a-year "election sermon" will affect the culture to any further extent than an evangelistic crusade without follow-up would affect the community. Evangelical pastors and those in the pews will have to take the game to the next level if America is to survive.

A typical example of ineffectiveness is constituted by market research firms. Explaining which way the wind is blowing by polling, researching and studying the beliefs and behavior of religious conservatives hardly provides a viable model to bring about change. What America needs is Christian thermostats, not Christian thermometers.

What needs to be done?

Library of Congress' online exhibition of historian James H. Hutson's treatment *Religion and the Founding of the American Republic* furnishes an instructive suggestion. "Against a prevailing view that 18th-century Americans had not perpetuated the first settlers' passionate commitment to their faith, scholars now identify a high level of religious energy in colonies after 1700. According to one expert, religion was in the 'ascension rather than the declension'; another sees a 'rising vitality in religious life' from 1700 onward; a third finds religion in many parts of the colonies in a state of 'feverish growth'. Figures on church attendance and church formation support these opinions. Between 1700 and 1740, an estimated 75 to 80 percent of the population attended churches, which were being built at a headlong pace."

American Christianity must regain the vision and foundation of the founders, who were responsible for religion's "ascension." A "75 to 80 percent" increase in church attendance would herald a spiritual resurgence in the public square. But this will happen only if parishioners get out from behind the church building's four walls and engage the culture. In fact, it's safe out there, for "Wisdom does not recoil from the rough and tumble of the market-place with its busyness and noise. She operates where the competition is fiercest."

"Undertaken for the glory of God and advancements of the Christian faith," the grand mission of the Christian Founding Fathers needs to be reestablished. Essential to their grand mission was the establishment of fundamental, biblically-based civil institutions, which transformed the American continent. Proverbs 8:15 declares that "By me kings reign, and princes decree what is just." Elucidating on this, Dr. Bruce K. Waltke comments: "'Wisdom', 'shrewdness,' 'discretion,' 'counsel,' 'resourcefulness' and 'heroic strength' enable rulers to decree justice."

How to do it?

Dr. Bruce K. Waltke's 2008 Christian Book of the Year, *An Old Testament Theology*, contains a chapter on the book of Judges titled "The Gift of Warlords." It comes down to the simple fact that if America is to survive, spiritual candidates will be needed as well as spiritual campaign operators and mechanics (*two-pronged approach delivers both the countermeasure and the ending of secularism's dominance of the culture over the last 75 years.*

Gideons and Rahabs are beginning to stand. May God be exalted.