

JAY SEKULOW: Taking Spirit-Inspired Action for America Through Bold Prayer

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The opposition was formidable: the governor, the Senate president, the speaker of the House, the labor unions and the Oklahoma Educational Association. All endorsed the proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Oklahoma state senator John Young had a different perspective.

Young and some other senators shared concerns of many evangelicals who have opposed the ERA on various grounds. These include the well-grounded fear that it could be used to further homosexual rights in every arena, or that it could be used to advance the cause of abortion.

Young's group began praying against the ERA's passage in Oklahoma. In spite of its strong base of support and the perception in that state that it eventually would pass nationally, it was defeated.

Young credits the power of prayer. I couldn't agree with him more. Before discussing other avenues of answering the call to action, we must consider the main boulevard.

Secret Agent

While secular humanists see schools as change agents, there is another change agent, an invisible one that packs a lot more horsepower. That is prayer. I would never want the message of calling Christians to action to be viewed as separate from prayer. Christians could file lawsuits until the courts were backed up for years; they could hand out tracts on every

street corner in America; but if these works were not accompanied by faith and prayer, they would be dead. God is not under contract to bless every single thing done in His name.

The *real* spiritual warfare is not taking place in the courtroom or in front of abortion clinics. It does not show up on videotape for the evening news. Rather, we are fighting “against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12, NASB). You may be able to point to the convenience store manager who refuses to remove pornographic magazines, or the school board member who stops at nothing to aggravate Christians, but the real sparks are flying in the spiritual realm. We can affect those battles with prayer. “The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much” (James 5:16).

Prayer—or the lack of it—is in fact a major reason why I wrote the book *From Intimidation to Victory*. Ben Kinchlow, formerly of the Christian Broadcasting Network, pointed out recently that the very fact that ministries such as CASE are having to go to court to, fight for the right of students to pray on school property says something very shameful: *America was not utilizing prayer enough to truly miss it when the Supreme Court removed it from schools*. Had prayer been an integral part of our private and public lives, its removal would have led to such a deafening roar that Congress would have taken some recourse—a constitutional amendment, perhaps—to remedy the heavy-handed court ruling. If you don’t use it, you lose it.

We lost prayer and subsequently a lot more in the realm of religious freedom. That leaves us fighting to regain lost ground. It may be two steps forward and one step back, but at least we’re winning. Christians across the nation, through prayer and involvement, are chipping away at the glacier that has advanced almost imperceptibly and crushed our freedoms.

As we survey our losses, it's easy to heap mounds of blame upon a liberal Supreme Court, closed-minded school boards or a city council eager to restrict free speech. Yet we have to face the truth that governmental bodies basically represent the will of the people, whether it be the will of a true majority or a vocal minority. Therefore, we cannot expect that by reforming government we automatically will achieve a final solution to the problems of pornography, crime and abortion.

It's proper to work for civil laws that agree with God's law. It's foolish, though, to think that right laws will change wrong hearts.

Second Chronicles 7:14 has long been a rallying cry for American Christians: "(If) My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." Revival will originate with repentance and humility, not with the reversal of *Roe v. Wade*. Petitioning for revival should be an ongoing prayer burden.

At the same time, we need to be praying for those in a position of decision making. This means the good guys and the bad guys. We are commanded in 1 Timothy 2:2 to pray for rulers and others in authority.

Furthermore, *prayer gives us insight to God's perspective on how to wage His battles*. Second Chronicles 20 tells how Jehoshaphat practiced the recipe to humble oneself, pray and seek God. Faced with attack by the Moabites, the Ammonites and the Meunites, Jehoshaphat sought the Lord and proclaimed a fast throughout Judah.

In the assembly he declared truths about God's omnipotence. As he continued in prayer, he reminded God of how He had cared for His people and had given them a land for a possession. He concluded: "O our God, wilt Thou not judge them? For we are

powerless before this great multitude who are coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are on Thee" (20:12).

God answered through Jahaziel, who told the people not to fear, "for the battle is not yours but God's" (20:15). God meant this literally. The people would not even have to dodge arrows on this one. The marauders turned on each other, littering the field with corpses (20:22-24). The Hebrews took three days to gather the spoil because it was so abundant.

Winning without physical combat was not the norm for the Hebrews, though it most certainly was God's way in this instance, Jehoshaphat and his officers would never have ascertained God's strategy without prayer. We, too, have that same obligation. God may have us do nothing but continue in prayer in a given situation. He may have us tangle with a city council for years over an issue of religious freedom. He may have us march around the walls seven times and shout. But unless His people humble themselves and pray, they will never find the Master's agenda for victory.

Hometown Goliaths

Most Christians underestimate the impact they can have on politics. It begins on the local level with actions as simple as signing petitions and registering to vote.

The San Francisco Board of Supervisors approved a "domestic partners" law in spring 1989 that would have bestowed legal status on homosexual couples. The mayor signed it in June. But opposing petitions with 27,000 signatures were presented one day before the law was to take effect, which put the measure before the voters in November.

Under this law, for a \$35 fee homosexual couples and unmarried heterosexual couples could register their relationship with the city. This would guarantee the same hospital visitation rights that regular couples have. Homosexual city employees

could have received bereavement leave, which would be no rare occurrence considering the incidence of AIDS in a city known as the nation's homosexual capital. A task force was looking into whether registered partners of city employees should receive health benefits. In other words, the city was moving toward having all its taxpayers fund various benefits for live-in boyfriends and girlfriends, homosexual and otherwise.

Most of San Francisco's elected leadership, as well as three dozen religious leaders from various faiths, backed the measure, according to an article in *World* magazine.

"We were David versus Goliath," said Jack Bellingham, speaking for the opposition. David's stone carried 'just enough velocity to fell this giant. The measure was defeated, 50.5 percent to 49.5 percent. With nearly 167,000 ballots cast, the deciding margin was only 2,000 votes. The power structure and the prevailing local intelligentsia had pointed toward a victory for the gay movement, but God enjoys upsetting the wisdom of man. God can do it in your hometown or your state capital just as easily.

Voting is one freedom Christians enjoy without some hot and bothered libertarian screaming "separation of church and state!" Yet so many of us do not bother to exercise this right. Whether we fail to vote for president of the United States or for a local school board member, we do so at our own peril.

The voting process is but the simplest of many ways Christians can answer in a physical way the call to action, illustrating their faith by their works. I stress the need to test evangelization in every public arena—schools, streets, sidewalks, beaches, parks and stadiums. Defending the right to proclaim the gospel in public places continues to be the mission to which CASE is pledged. However, as further supports to religious freedom, there are other ways you can impact the political process and the affairs of the private sector.

Senators and Sausage

The old joke says that laws and sausage have this in common: If you saw firsthand how either one was made, you would have nothing to do with them.

That may be so. It can be frightening to see a state legislature in action, with the grandstanding and the inattention. (And this doesn't get beneath the sausage's skin—campaign contributions, bribes, vote trading and the like.) An observer might well wonder how any product could emerge from this bizarre assembly line and bear any semblance to justice and wisdom.

Nevertheless, laws will be made. If the Christian consensus is not heard, another one will be. Do not be deceived: If anyone tells you that you cannot legislate morality, remember that legislation *is* morality. It's just a matter of whose entrails get packed into the sausage.

More Christians need to reject their fear of inexperience, of making a mistake, and get involved in the process. Monitor county commission meetings, city council meetings, school board meetings, public hearings. Monitor anything that affects anything you care about.

You may not live in your state capital, but you can communicate with state representatives and senators by phone or mail. Let them know your concerns. Let them know when you think they're acting against principles you know to be godly. And don't forget to let them know when they're supporting the right causes.

The same goes for your Washington delegation. Even if your representative and senators do not have home offices in your town, they are eager to hear from you by phone or letter. You can bet they will respond if they plan on staying in office, though you may have to press them to get an unambiguous stance on controversial issues.

Regular contact can also lead to developing relationships with their staffs, particularly with Washington-level politicians. If you are well prepared in approaching them, able to supply helpful, objective materials, it will help them in doing their jobs and will further your goals.

When you focus on a particular issue be willing to form limited coalitions with strange bedfellows. If you are trying to outlaw X-rated movie houses or topless bars in your hometown, feminists may be willing to line up with your position.

Whether in your state capital or in Washington, D.C., you need patience to ride with a bill all the way. A measure does not simply get introduced and voted in or out in one swoop. A typical path is to go to a subcommittee following its introduction, then to a full committee and finally to the floor of the House or Senate. Alternate versions of the same measure that pass in both houses need to be resolved in a compromise committee and then back for passage in each house. Legislation may get proposed for several years before it ever reaches a full vote of both houses of the legislature or Congress. Citizens can communicate with lawmakers at any step in the process.

The communication, as well as attendance at legislative sessions, makes a difference. A Supreme Court decision in 1975 indicated it might be possible for states to regulate abortions of immature minors and require parental consent. In California, a parental consent proposal was repeatedly defeated in a Senate subcommittee, though Christians were lobbying hard for the measure. The bill finally made it to the Senate Judiciary Committee, only to be defeated.

Yet Christians did not give up. They continued to support the measure visibly, and eventually it made it through the Senate and into the General Assembly, where Willie Brown Jr., speaker of the assembly, killed it. The next time through, so great

was the outcry of Christians that even Brown, with all his power, couldn't stop it. The bill became law in 1988.

Unfortunately, the bill was ruled unconstitutional under the California Right to Privacy for Minors Act and has been tied up in the courts. But for it to go as far as it has, shows the impact on legislation when there is visible, patient support.

Further Involvement

Not only can you impact the legislative process from the outside, but with a little determination, you can make things happen on the inside. You can become involved at the precinct level, being a precinct officer. You can join committees at the local level of your political party of choice.

There are also platform committees at the national, state and local levels. No candidate is totally committed to support a party platform, but the platform is meaningful nonetheless. The values expressed—as well as those avoided—present a current image for that party. The platform's "planks," or policy statements, represent a consensus reflecting all levels of the party. The omission of an issue—for example, the absence of a school prayer statement in the Democratic Party platform of 1988—indicates substantial difference of opinion within the ranks.

The two major parties sometimes adopt clearly opposing policies on the same issue. For example, in 1988 the Democrats supported "the fundamental right of reproductive choice," a kinder, gentler way of saying abortion, while the Republicans endorsed the fundamental right to life for the unborn child.

This is not to imply that Christians cannot be found in the Democratic Party, for they are there, just as they sometimes run as independents. Nor is it to say that the Republican Party has a hotline to heaven. In both parties, Christians should participate in the platform process in the hopes of integrating godly values into their party's identity.

For a real taste of the democratic process, volunteer to work in a campaign. All things being equal, a dedicated group of volunteers willing to give generously of their time for a few months can easily be the deciding factor in getting a candidate in office.

Taking this one step further, run for office yourself. A political novice will not likely want to seek office in Washington, but why not a seat on the school board? Or your town or city council?

Write letters to the editors of your local newspaper or magazines you read regularly. Comment on current issues. Take issue with editorials or biased news coverage. Such letters are well read and help determine the moral/political climate of a community.

Contribute financially to pro-moral organizations. There are dozens of such ministries and secular organizations working in state capitals and Washington to monitor certain areas. They need your support. In return, most of them, such as CASE, have newsletters that can keep you informed of developments that usually do not get covered by the major media.

Affecting History

As the 1980s came to a close, people would ask me, "Aren't you excited about the Berlin Wall coming down?" I told them no; it looked as if the wall was simply being moved across the ocean. That's how severe the barriers are that have been erected around religious freedom in our own nation.

Some Christians expect a handful of lawyers and their persecuted clients to resolve those infringements on our freedom. It won't work. We need more manpower and prayer power.

Laws and the traditions of men that unfairly limit us from the most basic of New Testament commands—to spread the gospel—call *all* of us to action. We cannot get involved on every front,

but each of us can enlist to fight in the spiritual warfare that currently rages.

Randall Terry of Operation Rescue sensed a deep call for involvement. While he was in prison during late 1989 for abortion-clinic trespassing, Terry spoke by telephone to James Dobson for his "Focus on the Family" radio show. Terry explained his motivation to Dobson:

"Thirty years ago, when you were a young man, if someone stood in your church, from a pulpit, and said, 'Thirty years from now we'll have murdered 26 million children. Infanticide and euthanasia will be practiced. We'll have a cocaine crisis that's out of control. We'll have women and children being exploited in pornography. We'll have snuff flicks where they kill people on film and people actually buy it. And a revival of Satan worship and human sacrifice and child abduction.' If someone had stood in a pulpit and said that, nobody would have believed so I ask, if we have plummeted this far in 30 years, where are we going to be 30 years from now?"

Terry said that when his daughters grow up, he does not want them to be able to ask him why he didn't do something to change the course of this country when he had a chance.

We still have that chance. So does our opposition, and they're doing more than chanting New Age mantras and picking colors for their Maharishi Electric Cars. They've attacked, and they're threatening to attack more. That's why CASE takes as its motto the attitude of Peter and John in Acts 4:29 (NIV): "Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness."

That's about all I can do. It seems to be working, but there are countless opportunities for others to jump in, to speak and act with confidence. People who answer God's call to action can become those who determine the course of history. Let's work together to leave a legacy of restored religious

freedom. We have the opportunity to create a more fertile climate for our children and grandchildren to carry out the Great Commission to spread the gospel throughout the earth.