

How the Church in America Can Wake Up

*Editors Note: This is a next in a series of speech texts from a conference at the United Nations titled, "Not Peace but a Sword: The Persecution of Christians in the Middle East as a Threat to International Peace and Security." Here's **Todd Mullins**, the current pastor of Christ Fellowship Church.*

The foundation of the United States' Constitution begins with: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

These truths are self-evident–indisputable, obvious–that all men/women/children are created equal and endowed by their Creator with the unalienable rights.

Unalienable = impossible to take away–these rights are given to us by God–and no man or government can take them away.

Of course we cannot force our declaration or viewpoints on another nation. Just because these work for The United States of America–does not mean we have the right to force other nations to live by our values. But these are our values. They are how we as a people not only direct ourselves but how we must direct our actions. These values dictate how we must live–and what we must give ourselves to.

In fact it has been these values that caused us in generations past to intercede on the behalf of the victims of injustice and aggression. Someone must stand up against the atrocities against our fellow humans and say enough.

As it has been referenced here, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in

1948—in response to the persecution and atrocities of WWII. This document that this great institution created stated that every person is entitled to basic human rights ... regardless of race, religion or political opinion (to name a few). And in 1966 the United Nations developed the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights—to further underscore the rights of humans globally. Article 18 of this document focused on religious freedom. In summary:

1. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

2. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair this freedom.

This is not a political issue—it is a moral one. And we have a moral responsibility to intervene to fight the injustice and persecution of people around the world.

I come to you today—not as a political expert or as someone with policy-setting privileges—but as a pastor in America. The American Church, for the most part, is unaware of the persecution of our brothers and sisters around the world. Yes, there are some churches and para-church organizations that have stepped up to denounce this persecution or support the refugees, and thank God for them. But as a whole, the Western church is unaware—uninformed—of the plight of our Christian brothers.

Until recent months, I would put myself and our church in that same category. Yes, I subscribed to periodicals like *Voice of the Martyrs*. I read the stories of oppression and persecution of church leaders in countries like Pakistan, China, or Nigeria, but those places felt so far away from our air conditioned sanctuaries and church gatherings ... Don't get me wrong, my heart would break for those being persecuted, even murdered for their faith. I would pray for their families, for the pastors, but beyond praying I didn't know what to do. And

soon the pressing needs of my own church would push aside any thought of the persecuted church.

As a pastor in America I believe I must do two things:

First, I must lend my voice to awaken the American church. I do not believe the America church is apathetic to the needs of the persecuted church; I believe we are unaware. Unless something reaches the attention of the American News Media, most Americans have no idea of the persecution of people globally. We live sheltered lives, our vision blocked with the busyness of family, work and soccer practice. It falls to the leaders of the American Church, the pastors and shepherds of God's people to awaken the church to the needs to their fellow brothers and sisters, to the millions of children being left orphaned and homeless as a result of this tyranny.

The news of 21 Christian brothers being beheaded or 157 Christian students in Nigeria being shot down should wake us up.

Wake us up to see that these are not isolated incidents.

Statistics show us:

- 322 Christians are killed every month for their faith
- 214 churches and Christian properties destroyed each month.
- 772 violent acts are committed against Christians each month, including rape, imprisonment, beatings and abductions.

Psalm 82:3: "Stand up for those who are weak and for those whose fathers have (died). See to it that those who are poor and those who are beaten down are treated fairly."

The first action for the American Church is to awaken it's people to what's happening in the world.

The second is to activate.

Awareness without Action is worthless.

Awareness doesn't care for the victims or feed the children. Awareness won't stop the persecution. The church must act.

And herein lies the problem. What can "I" do? Separated by thousands of miles and unintelligible languages, the problem and the solution seem worlds away. And without government position or public voice or significant financial resource, what can one person do to right this wrong?

That being said, there has never been another time in history better suited to understand the plight of the persecuted church. The Internet has opened up greater visibility and understanding. And for those of us living in a democracy we can—and we must—demand that our governments respond to this growing crisis.

The greatest activation is a call to prayer. As people of faith, we understand that God can do more in seconds than men can do in centuries. Prayer moves the hand that holds the world. And prayer will also awaken the spiritual burden for our spiritual brothers.

As we pray, we must act. In our church we say we will pray like it's all up to God and we will act like it's all up to us.

Recently the men/women and children of our church stayed after our weekend worship service to package a meal like this. Families loved the opportunity to serve together, knowing they were helping children in need around the world. Then with the help of the organization Make A Meal, our church sent 500,000 meals to starving children in Africa and Haiti over one weekend. I began to realize how (simple) it would be for us as a church to direct our efforts to the refugee camps. Then how partnering with other churches in our city, we could prepare millions of meals. This combined effort would not only meet a practical need, it would raise awareness within our city and

state of this problem.

We are currently working to build a coalition of churches in the 184 major metropolitan areas in the United States. These strategic partnerships could be leveraged for a church on church adoption strategy currently being piloted by Global Kingdom Pastors Network, where churches in America adopt a region of the world and directly partner with the churches/Christians in that region, sending supplies and food and mission teams where appropriate. This is already taking place between American churches and regions in Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan.

Statistics tell us there are at least 100 million Christians being persecuted for their faith in the world today—100 million. And while that number feels insurmountable; there are more than 2 billion people around the world that claim to be Christians. In fact, there are more churches around the globe than McDonalds, Walmarts and Starbucks combined.

Here in America there are 125 million Christians who claim to attend church on a weekly basis. A hundred million Christians being persecuted, and 125 million Christians in church every week in America. We will awaken the church, and together we can activate a movement of people who will give our LIVES to bring hope to those who live in fear of losing their own.

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