

God's Plan for America

✘ *ALTHOUGH*

ANTI-CHRISTIAN SENTIMENT IS INCREASING, GOD HAS NOT FORGOTTEN US. BUT OUR NATION MUST ALTER ITS COURSE IF WE ARE TO FULFILL OUR DIVINE PURPOSE.

Anyone

who reads the paper, listens to the news, watches television or goes to

the movies with regularity can't help but be aware of the rising tide

of anti-Christian sentiment in America. It is apparent in almost every

aspect of our culture, including our educational system.

Negative

views of Christians and Christianity are particularly blatant in the

media. Believers are generally seen as religious fanatics who use their

faith as an excuse for being hate-mongers. But the truth is, most

believers do not fit this description at all. Perhaps worse than our

poor reputation is the ground we have lost in public arenas—schools,

for example. Though Christians cannot pray in public schools because of

rulings regarding the separation of church and state, religious

practices associated with Wicca and yoga are accepted in this setting.

Something is terribly wrong! How do we stem this anti-

Christian tide?

We

must begin by acknowledging that we are partly to blame. Because we as believers have been silent and separated from society we have, perhaps unwittingly, allowed some of the anti-Christian sentiment to develop.

The

church, for the most part, has kept silent, while those with other agendas have spoken out in a loud voice. We have insulated ourselves within our four walls and fortified ourselves against the ills of society. Some branches of the church have even come to believe that the separation of church and state in America is a godly state of affairs.

SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

The problem is that most Christians don't understand what our Founding Fathers actually meant by the separation of church and state. The first amendment to the Constitution states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibit the free exercise thereof."

Broad, sweeping

suppositions have been made from this statement that have ultimately resulted in the complete separation of church and state. That

was not
the result our forefathers intended! They were trying to
prevent the
establishment of a state church such as the one from which
they had
fled. They wanted freedom of religion, not freedom from
religion.

The
whole separation of church and state concept, as David Barton
points
out in his book *Original Intent*, stems from a letter written
by Thomas
Jefferson to the Danbury Baptist Association of Danbury,
Connecticut, on
January 1, 1802. Jefferson wrote:

“Religion
is a matter which lies solely between man and his God; that he
owes
account to none other for his faith or his worship; that the
legislative
powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions, I
contemplate with sovereign reverence that that act of the
whole American
people which declared that their legislature should ‘make no
law
respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the
free
exercise thereof,’ thus building a wall of separation between
church and
State.”

Jefferson had no
intention, Barton claims, of allowing the government to limit,
restrict,
regulate or interfere with public religious practice. He
believed that

God, not government, was the Author and Source of our rights and that the government was to be prevented from interfering with those rights.

But because of the current wave of anti-Christian sentiment in our country, Jefferson's nine-word phrase referring to a wall between church and state has been twisted out of context and used to limit, restrict, regulate and even interfere with religious practice in the public schools and universities of our nation. In fact, recent rulings have caused even the mention of God in prayer at graduation services to be prohibited (Lee v. Weisman).

Prayer cannot be offered at football games in public schools unless it is student initiated (Jane Doe v. Sante Fe Independent School District).

Prayer in general has been removed from our schools. How the founders of this nation would be astounded and grieved to see what has happened to the nation they birthed in prayer and gave their lives to set free!

We, the church, are suffering greatly from the absence of Christian influence in our society. Our nation and children are

suffering because
of our years of apathy.

WHO'S TO BLAME?

We need to take a look at ourselves. The Bible says that judgment must begin "at the house of God" (see 1 Pet. 4:17).

Has the church become a lifeless, religious institution? Have we given society a reason to hate us?

We
need to ask ourselves what type of example we've been of the
model
Christian. Have we been there for those who are dying of AIDS?
Do we
care for the hurting in the homosexual community?

It
is a sad indictment on believers that many of the social
justice
concerns in the nation are being addressed by those in the gay
community. Have we really been salt and light in our
communities so that
people can see the face of Jesus in our actions?

Not
long ago I was celebrating a birthday party with friends at a
restaurant in Colorado Springs, Colo. At one point I stopped
to ask the
waitress if I could pray for her. I told her she looked tired
and asked
if she had had a hard day.

The
waitress replied that it was Sunday and that the Christians
who came
into the restaurant were often difficult. She admitted that
the waiters
and waitresses had a saying that the Christians went to church

and
repented so they could come into the restaurant and act their
worst with
them!

I was embarrassed and
told her how sorry I was. Sadly, that was not the first time I
had
heard a similar story in my own city, which houses around 135
Christian
ministries. As Christians we should be solution providers, not
problem
makers!

WHAT WE CAN DO

Part of the solution, of course, is prayer. The Lord recently
convicted
me for not praying for the salvation of the homosexual
community and
loving homosexuals as I should.

However, praying is not the end of our responsibility. We need
to stand up for righteousness in our nation.

Finding
the balance between being loving while still speaking out
against
unrighteousness can sometimes be difficult. But this must not
stop us
from holding the belief system revealed through our nation's
laws up to
the plumb line of God's Word.

In
order to stem the anti-Christian tide we are going to have to
become
reformers. One of the reasons the tide has been able to sweep

the nation

in the first place is that believers have been silent. We were silent

when prayer was taken out of our schools in 1962 and when Bible reading

was eliminated in 1967. Now subsequent generations are suffering from our silence.

“To reform”

means “to amend that which is defective, vicious, corrupt or depraved.”

There is much that is defective and depraved in our society today. In

order to change it we must act as standard bearers who are not afraid of

being criticized for supporting measures that are completely counter to

today’s culture.

Consider

Mel Gibson and *The Passion of the Christ*. I read an entertainment

magazine that “predicted” Gibson would lose his fortune and his

reputation if he proceeded with his plans to release the film to the

public.

However, the April

5, 2004, edition of *People* magazine reported that the movie was a

monumental success and that nearly 45 percent of Americans have either

seen the film or intend to, according to a March 2004 Gallup poll. Box office

earnings defied all expectations, having reached an astonishing \$300

million by the time the magazine was published.

I
don't know whether Gibson looks upon himself as a reformer,
but the
type of courageous stance he took is what is necessary to stem
the tide
of anti-Christian sentiment in the media. The success of his
movie has
stunned those in Hollywood who assumed that the nation has an
appetite
for more perverse fare.

What
can we as individuals do to reform the nation? First of all,
don't be
afraid to speak up for righteousness. When I see an
objectionable
magazine at the counter of a store I ask to speak to the
manager and in a
nice way tell him it is objectionable to me. The managers have
been
kind and courteous each time I have done this and have removed
the
magazines from the stands.

Where
would the civil rights movement be without Martin Luther King,
who
wasn't afraid to be heard, or Rosa Parks, who refused to go to
the back
of the bus? While we esteem these reformers, we need to do
more than
simply honor their acts; we need to go and do likewise!

Second,
teach your children to be bold and unafraid to speak out
against

unrighteousness in their schools. My son, Daniel, debated the school librarian on the subject of evolution when he was 12 years old. He told her he objected to the books in the library that presented evolution as a fact but did not even mention creation science. As a result of his action, books on creation science were added to his public school library.

Second, don't insulate yourself by spending time only with Christians. Get involved in community affairs. Volunteer at schools, run for local school boards and write letters to the editors of your newspaper when there are objectionable articles. Just make sure you do what you do in a kind manner.

Finally, with elections coming up soon in the United States, it is critical that we realize one major way to stem the anti-Christian sentiment in our society is through the officials we elect. We need to understand that we are voting not for a party but for ideals.

Here are some questions to consider before you vote:

Where do the candidates stand on the issue of same-sex marriage?

- Are they advocates for the rights of the unborn?
- Will they appoint judges who rely on a clear biblical basis

for their decisions, or who have an agenda that would grieve God?

- Where do they stand on the issue of prayer in school?

God

let me know recently that He considers voting a spiritual exercise.

Why? Because the Bible says that “righteousness exalts a nation” (Prov.

14:34). If we choose unrighteous leaders to govern the nation then we

will be accountable to God.

Remember,

there is not a perfect political party, but we will be held responsible

for which party we put in power. Our choice may cause our family or

others we love to turn against us. However, when Jesus went to the cross

and died for us, He had to lay down all earthly affections.

I

have often heard it said that the only way evil will prevail is for

good people to do nothing. Perhaps it is time to take up our cross and

follow the example of Christ for the sake of righteousness.

Read a companion devotional.

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