

Does God Have a Plan for America?

Anyone who reads the paper, listens to the news, watches  television or goes to the movies regularly 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.

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