

Ten Steps To Change America

by David Barton

What can be done to halt the havoc loosed on the United States since the early 60s? There must be two reversals, the first and most obvious one must occur in **our national public stance toward God**: the Supreme Court's current ban on the acknowledgment of God and the use of His principles in public is a direct challenge to Him and has thus triggered the law of national accountability, subjecting the nation to severe consequences. Therefore, our current national public stand against God must be set aside.

The second reversal must center on **the restoration of the personal benefits derived from living by Godly principles**. For example, when the Courts ruled that students might not use the Ten Commandments, nor study the Scriptures, nor learn about sexual abstinence, etc., the separation of these teachings caused personal, individual harm to those students, as forewarned in Deuteronomy 6:24 and 10:13:

The Lord commanded us to obey all these decrees so that we might always prosper.

Observe the Lord's decrees for your own good.

Observing His principles serves to our benefit. When His commands are rejected, it is to our own harm. Millions have been harmed by the mandated separation of His principles from specific arenas of their lives. The efforts at restoration and

reversal must occur on both the national and on the individual levels.

In the decades immediately preceding the Court rulings (the 1920s, 30s, 40s, etc.), Christians en masse had voluntarily removed themselves from the political, social, and legal arenas. Whenever the Godly depart from any arena, their own Godly values depart with them. A person in office always legislates according to his own personal beliefs and convictions, and herein is the wisdom of Proverbs 29:2 made evident: "*When the righteous rule, the people rejoice; when the wicked rule, the people groan.*"

It was the plan and intent of the Founders that the Godly, and thereby Godly principles, remain intimately involved in the political, judicial, and educational realms. The Founders believed that only the Godly would understand the unalienable freedoms provided by God and thus protect them in our form of government; and they never intended that Christian principles be divorced from public affairs.

Christians, through bad doctrine, political inactivity, and apathy had handed the reins of the nation over to leaders who awarded potential lifelong appointments to **Justices not only willing but also eager to uproot the Christian practices that had been the heart of this nation for centuries**. Quite frankly, the Court's 1962 (and subsequent) religion-hostile decisions were merely an outgrowth of what the Christian community-at-large

had permitted and encouraged in the decades preceding those rulings.

A Biblical description of this process is given by Jesus in Matthew 13:24-26. In that parable, good people had a good field growing good seed. However, an enemy came in and planted bad among the good, thus contaminating the entire field. What afforded the enemy such an opportunity? The stark answer is found in verse 24: “While the good men slept, the enemy came in.” Jesus never faulted the enemy for doing what he did, for it was his task and purpose to destroy; Jesus placed the fault on the good men who went to sleep, thus allowing the enemy to do what he did. Very bluntly **what has occurred in America happened first because the church went to sleep,** and then because the enemy came in and caused the damage.

The problems we have created for ourselves, although colossal, can be solved. Reversing the current trends involves making changes in the two areas mentioned earlier: (1) the official unfriendly stand taken against God must be corrected, and (2) religious principles and moral teachings must be restored and made available to individuals in public arenas. There are at least ten specific activities suggested in this chapter which can help realize these goals.

Step One

The first thing is to do first things first:

I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men, for [leaders] and for all that are in authority.
(1 Timothy 2:1)

This is not an arbitrary, haphazard plan given by God; God wants every individual to pray for civic leaders first, because civic leaders and their policies affect every individual. Simply for our own benefit **we should be praying regularly for our leaders at local, state, and federal levels in each branch of government.** Prayer will be the first key to effecting significant and lasting change, for situations do not change on earth until they have been changed in the heavenlies. Additionally, we need to pray faithfully that God will root the wicked from office and will raise up righteous individuals to replace them. “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,” and having the right individuals in office will prevent the enactment of many damaging policies. As explained by William Penn:

[G]overnments rather depend upon men than men upon governments. . . . Let men be good and the government cannot be bad. . . . [T]hough good laws do well, good men do better; for good laws may want [lack] good men . . . but good men will never want [lack] good laws nor suffer [allow bad] ill ones.

Pray individually not only for our leaders on every level, but enlarge your sphere of influence and organize small groups to pray for our leaders.

Step Two

Voluntary prayer currently is greatly restricted in many schools, but that does not mean children should not be trained daily to pray. **If you have children of school age, pray with them each day**

before they leave for school. Show them from the Scriptures the importance of prayer and petition, and help them begin each day by seeking God. Encourage them to pray specifically for students, families, schools, and the nation. God wants us to train our children in the importance of prayer.

The prayer of the upright is His delight. (Proverbs 15:8)

Pray without ceasing. (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

Continue in prayer. (Colossians 4:2)

Step Three

Children currently receive little accurate information from their schools or public institutions either about the historical role of Christians in the nation or about the importance of involving Godly principles in our public affairs. Nevertheless, you can help them obtain correct information.

If you have children, teach them the Christian history, heritage, and traditions of our nation. If you do not have children, then educate those around you (i.e., Sunday School class, civic club, etc.) to an accurate history of our nation.

Step Four

The political realm, formerly dominated by Christians, is still available to them. It was the use of politics that resulted in the elimination of religious activities and the public acknowledgment of God from public affairs; it can therefore restore those principles.

While it might seem easier to empty the ocean with a thimble than to change politics, it is actually not as difficult as many people think. We've probably heard, or perhaps even made, statements

such as: "I'm only an individual-one vote. What can I do?" "My vote won't make a difference anyway." "It does us no good to vote. As Christians, we're already in the minority." Sound familiar? The fact is, such statements are not true.

A recent Gallup Poll shows that 84 percent of this nation firmly believe in Jesus Christ, and a separate poll indicates that 94 percent believe in God. Polls have shown that:

Over 80 percent approve of voluntary prayer in school.

81 percent of the nation opposes homosexual behavior.

89 percent opposes the use of abortion as a means of convenience birth control.

Additional findings could be cited, but the conclusion is inescapable: although we have been led to believe that we, the 94 percent who believe in God, are the minority, we most definitely are not!

As Edmund Burke explained:

All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.

There is much that "good men" can do to stop the triumph of evil. **One of the most important is to vote, and to vote Biblically.** John Jay, America's first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, once received a letter inquiring from him whether it was permissible for a Christian to vote for an unGodly candidate. Jay responded:

Whether our religion permits Christians to vote for infidel rulers is a question which merits more consideration than it seems yet to have generally received either from the clergy or the laity. It appears to me that what the prophet

said to Jehoshaphat about his attachment to Ahab [“Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord?” 2 Chronicles 19:2] affords a salutary lesson.

Founding Father Noah Webster delivered a similar admonition:

Let it be impressed on your mind that God commands you to choose for rulers just men who will rule in the fear of God [Exodus 18:21]....[I]f the citizens neglect their duty and place unprincipled men in office, the government will soon be corrupted.... If [our] government fails to secure public prosperity and happiness, it must be because the citizens neglect the Divine commands, and elect bad men to make and administer the laws.

These admonitions to vote, and to vote Biblically, came not only from our political leaders, but from our spiritual leaders as well.

Charles Finney, a prominent minister in the early 1800s, succinctly declared:

The time has come that Christians must vote for honest men and take consistent ground in politics or the Lord will curse them....God cannot sustain this free and blessed country which we love and pray for unless the Church will take right ground.

It is time to believe and to behave differently. **We are not a minority; we are the majority! It is time to declare at the ballot box** that we will no longer allow officials who embrace the values of the 6 percent who do not believe in God to abrogate the rights of the 94 percent who

do. We must remove officials who do not comply with traditional, historical, and Biblical principles and replace them with those who do. We can make a difference! Our vote does count!

Step Five

Too often, an allegedly “good” candidate is elected and we later end up regretting his public stands and votes. Much of this could be eliminated if the right questions were asked before election. We need to know more about a candidate than just the professional qualifications; we also need to know the personal traits that qualify him to represent us. As pointed out in a famous textbook first published in 1800:

A public character is often an artificial one. It is not, then, in the glare of public, but in the shade of private life that we are to look for the man. Private life is always real life. Behind the curtain, where the eyes of the million are not upon him....there he will always be sure to act himself: consequently, if he act greatly, he must be great indeed. Hence it has been justly said, that, “our private deeds, if noble, are noblest of our lives.”...[I]t is the private virtues that lay the foundation of all human excellence.

It is not only proper, it is vital to investigate a candidate’s private life and beliefs before placing him into office. The reason is made clear in Matthew 7:16-20 and in Luke 6:43-44; in these passages, Jesus reminds us that bad roots will produce bad fruit.

Consequently, a candidate’s moral and religious “roots” must be investigated

before placing him into office. A candidate who produced bad fruit in private life will produce bad fruit in public life. Understanding this truth, Founding Father Elias Boudinot, President of the Continental Congress, reminded us to...

...be religiously careful in our choice of all public officers... and judge of the tree by its fruits.

John Adams similarly charged us: We electors have an important constitutional power placed in our hands; we have a check upon two branches of the legislature. . . . It becomes necessary to every [citizen] then, to be in some degree a statesman: and to examine and judge for himself.

This nation will not be put back on track by Baptists alone, or by Catholics alone, or by Methodists alone, or by Pentecostals alone, or by any other single group; **there is not enough strength in any one denomination to return America to its Biblical roots. However, it will be put back on track by Christians of all denominations committed to the same moral law of God.** Be prepared to accommodate an appropriate degree of tolerance for those of other religious communities without compromising basic Biblical principles of morality.

Once you have determined each candidate's stand on moral and religious issues, do all you can to publicize those positions to your friends, acquaintances, and associates. (Note: It does not violate any tax-exempt provision of the IRS for a church to distribute voter's guides or candidate positions; a voter's guide is an educational publication and does not jeopardize a church's tax-exempt status.

A church may educate its members on the beliefs of candidates concerning issues of concern to Christians. It is only as an official corporate body that the church may not endorse a specific candidate or party. However, a pastor may endorse a candidate or a party—even from the pulpit—as long as he makes it clear that he is simply delivering his own opinion and that he is not speaking on behalf of the church board or church corporation. A pastor does not forfeit his right to freedom of speech just because he is a pastor.)

Step Six

After you have identified a Godly candidate, there is much you can do to help him or her. Frequently such a candidate may not receive good media coverage; however, this is neither an unusual nor an insurmountable problem. Candidates with strong grass-roots efforts regularly overcome the media influence and win.

Once you identify a candidate who can make a positive difference, get involved with him. Offer as much financial support as you can (whether little or much), and then call the office and volunteer some time to the campaign, even if it is only an hour or two. **By volunteering to help a Godly candidate, you will, in fact, be helping yourself and your posterity;** it is important to remember posterity and to leave them something better than we have.

We need to help the good candidates, for our own sake and for the sake of our children. However, when helping a candidate, learn to look beyond party. You might have been born a Democrat; you might have been born a Republican; you

might have been born an Independent; that doesn't matter. The fact is, you were reborn a Christian; reflect that in your political involvement. As Founding Father Benjamin Rush once declared:

I have been alternately called an aristocrat and a democrat. I am neither. I am a Christocrat. I believe all power . . . will always fail of producing order and happiness in the hands of man. He alone who created and redeemed man is qualified to govern him.

Be a Christocrat; get involved with solid Godly candidates no matter what their party.

Step Seven

Another mechanism for effective change is direct contact with your Congressman.

In June 1989, I had opportunity to participate directly in the introduction of a significant federal legislative bill. The bill received support from a wide variety of Congressmen (in fact, in the preceding month, the House of Representatives had voted two-to-one in favor of the material in the proposed bill). The bill was referred to the appropriate committee and subcommittee; however, those two chairmen refused to allow any hearings or discussion on the bill; they were both determined to let it die in committee.

Because of the widespread support already evident, and because it seemed inappropriate for only two individuals to block the progress of that bill, we asked several Congressmen how to get that bill released from the committee. The Congressmen instructed us to locate individuals in those two men's home districts who would be willing to write letters to the

two requesting that the bill be released and that hearings be scheduled on it.

To determine how many letters would be needed, we queried several:

"Congressman, how do you know when you have a 'hot' issue?" Their answer was startling: "If we get as many as fifty letters on a bill, it's a very hot issue." They further indicated that, in their opinion, twenty letters would be sufficient pressure to cause the two Congressmen to reverse their position on the bottled-up bill.

Amazed, we asked: "How many letters do you usually receive on a bill?" They responded, "Five to ten is normal." The fact that five to ten letters is the norm on a bill is a compelling commentary on the inactivity of most of us. Each Congressman represents at least 500,000 individuals, and as few as 20 letters can cause him to reverse his stand! This explains why philosophical minorities and anti-Christian groups are often more successful in reaching their goals in Congress: they are simply more active in generating individual contacts with a Congressman.

In communicating with your Congressman, it is important that your contacts be personal. Congressmen openly acknowledge that mass-produced mailings, form letters, or petitions get no response and usually go into the trash. In their view, if a person does not feel strongly enough about a bill or an issue to express himself in a personal, original letter, then he receives little serious consideration.

A personal letter is effective, even a short one; and letter writing is not only easy, but often takes less time than imagined. Usually, the difficulty is simply in getting started; once you begin

your letter, the thoughts and feelings flow easily. Here are a few suggestions to assist you in effective letter writing:

- Be personal in your letter. Use the name of your Congressman—don't address it to "Dear Congressman".
- Get to the point —don't be long-winded or wordy; three or four paragraphs is plenty.
- Be specific in your requests. If possible, try to give the name, number, or description of the bill or measure with which you are concerned.
- Don't get preachy.
- Don't threaten.
- Be complimentary and appreciative, not antagonistic, provoking, obnoxious, rude, or abrasive.

Close with a statement of appreciation, and sincerely and genuinely thank him.

The address for your federal Representative or Senator is:

Name of your Representative
U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC, 20515

Name of your Senator
U. S. Senate
Washington, DC, 20510

Although letters are more effective than calls, calls are still very effective. If you decide to call instead of write, dial the Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121. When the operator answers, ask for your Senator or Representative by name. When that office answers, ask to speak to your Congressman. If he is available, often he will speak with you. If he is unavailable, simply express to his staff your concern or how you expect him to vote on a particular issue. The staff will record

your feelings and will communicate them to the Congressman. (This process is just as effective with your state and local leaders as it is with your federal officials.)

Step Eight

Often, we seem to be overwhelmed with bad news and regular reports concerning the loss or compromise of yet another moral or Biblical principle. Why is this the case? According to a recent study, **the majority of those working in certain areas of the public media consider themselves "liberal" and support immoral stands which most Godly individuals oppose.** We therefore receive a steady presentation of what the "liberal" media believes to be important and a suppression of what we believe to be important. Consequently, we often feel that we are a minority and have no power to alter the stand of our government.

Song of Solomon 8:13 tells us otherwise; it declares a simple principle: "Your companions hearken to your voice, so speak!" You can be effective in communicating a different viewpoint to your friends and to others, and one way is through the "Letters to the Editor" section of your local newspaper. Your views can offer an alternative to those frequently presented by the media and can show other silent or discouraged ones that there are many who actually feel as they do. Commit yourself to writing one or two public letters a month.

When composing such a letter, be sure to avoid being purely emotional (and thus often illogical); also, avoid using Christian cliches and phrases—they communicate only to other well-informed Christians and not to the general population. Adopt the philosophy of Paul ex-

plained in 1 Corinthians 9:19-22:

[T]o win as many as possible . . . I became like one under the law so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law . . . so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.

Utilize the opportunity to give sound, practical reasons for your opinions and to provide a basis for others to adopt your views. As 1 Peter 3:15 instructs: “Be ready to give an answer to everyone.”

Step Nine

As you become more active and involved, don’t underestimate the effect of the experience you are gaining. Be willing to step into leadership, perhaps by stepping out to inform the community of important issues and consideration, perhaps by recruiting others to run for office, or perhaps even by running for local offices yourself.

Local offices are important—they influence the entire community. Furthermore, it is easier to be elected to local government or to local school boards than to be elected to a statewide or national office. Don’t be afraid to run for a position on the local school board, city council, or other areas where you can begin helping to implement changes. While Charles Finney’s statement from the mid-1800s is appropriate for every level, it is especially true at the local level:

Politics are part of a religion in such a country as this and Christians must do their duty to the

country as a part of their duty to God. It seems sometimes as if the foundations of the nation are becoming rotten, and Christians seem to act as if they think God does not see what they do in politics. But I tell you He does see it, and He will bless or curse this nation, according to the course they [Christians] take.

Recognize that involvement in civil government is a legitimate ministry:

in **Luke 19:17-19**, Jesus shows that the reward God gave to those who proved themselves faithful was to place them in civil government, and **Romans 13:4** declares that civil leaders are “*ministers of God.*” God wants His people in all arenas, including that of government, for government won’t be redeemed from without; it must be redeemed from within by people of Godly principles and integrity.

Step Ten

Finally, it is vital that we develop an attitude of unswervable duty coupled with an attitude of resolute steadfastness. For the most part, our culture has developed a short-term, microwave mentality. Television seems to teach us that a family or a national crisis can arise and be resolved completely within a 30- or 60-minute program; consequently, we have embraced impatience as a national characteristic.

That characteristic too often infects our attitude toward involvement in public affairs. For example, we may get involved in an election or two; but when we don’t see a complete turnaround, we have a tendency to throw up our hands, declare that we tried and that it didn’t make any difference, then scurry on to our next inspiration. It took nearly half-a-century to arrive at the situation in which we find

ourselves today; that situation will not be reversed in one election, or two.

Even if the recovery turns out to be just as lengthy as was the disease, a recovery will come if we faithfully persist. Galatians 6:9 promises that we will reap the benefits if we will simply hang in there long enough. We must learn to be content with small, steady gains. The principle of retaking lost ground slowly, while neither appealing nor gratifying to our natural impatience, is a well-articulated Biblical principle:

I will not drive them out in a single year . . . Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you have increased enough to take possession of the land. (Exodus 23:29-30)

The Lord your God will drive [them] out before you . . . little by little. You will not be allowed to eliminate them all at once. (Deuteronomy 7:22)

To retake lost ground quickly is not the strategy prescribed by the Lord Himself; the rewards promised in the Scriptures go to the faithful (Matthew 25:21, 23). Commit yourself to this engagement for the long haul—for the duration; arm yourself with the mentality of a marathon runner, not a sprinter. Very simply, be willing to stay and compete until you win.

Conclusion

We must regain the conviction that Biblical principles are vital to national success, and we must be willing to pursue their reinstatement. In recent decades, we have wrongly allowed the very principles which produced morality and virtue, and thus national stability, to be restricted in

public life. We need once again to recognize the truth so well understood by George Washington that:

[T]he propitious [favorable] smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which Heaven itself has ordained.

We must become convinced of the principle expressed by Abraham Lincoln and then accept the civic responsibilities implied by his statement that:

The truth announced in the Holy Scripture, and proven by all history [is] that, **“Those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord.”**

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Statue of Liberty