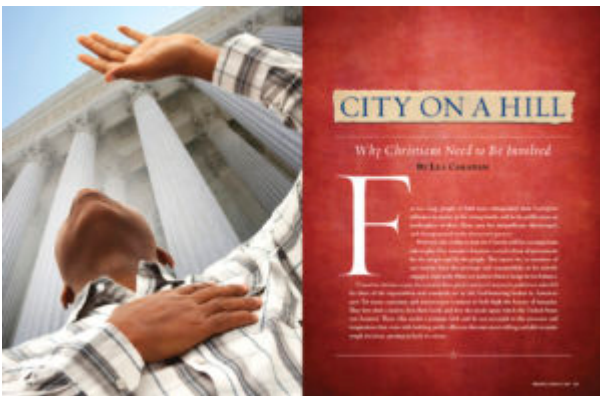


City on a Hill

Why Christians Need to Be Involved

By Lea Carawan



For too long, people of faith have relinquished their God-given influence in prayer, at the voting booth, and in the public arena or marketplace of ideas. Many may feel insignificant, discouraged, and disempowered in the democratic process.

However, the reality is that the Church still has an important role to play. Our country's founders created a form of government for the people and by the people. This means we, as members of our society, have the privilege and responsibility to be actively engaged, especially when our nation's future hangs in the balance.

Countless citizens across the country have grown weary of wayward politicians who fall far short of the expectations and standards set by the God-honoring leaders in America's past. Yet many statesmen and stateswomen continue to hold high the banner of integrity. They love their country, love their Lord, and love the ideals upon which the United States was founded.

Those who model a genuine faith and do not succumb to the pressures and temptations that come with holding public office are the ones most willing and able to make tough decisions, putting us back on course.

These individuals are deeply committed to American exceptionalism and the awareness that God's favor and blessing have long graced our history. They follow the same credo as President John Adams, who said, "Always stand on principle, even if you stand alone."

History of Trusting God

For nearly 240 years, America has asserted its trust in God—even on our currency. This prevailing faith has given our nation strength in wartime, dignity and compassion toward those less fortunate, and hope in the face of unprecedented challenges. This spirit is derived from deeply held Judeo-Christian values. We see these principles woven into the fabric of our founding documents. These documents give substance to the freedoms we all cherish. They echo the words and prayers of patriots who rose up together with one voice.

President Ronald Reagan understood that "freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction" and that "without God there is no virtue because there is no prompting of the conscience . . . without God there is a coarsening of the society; without God democracy will not and cannot long endure. . . . If we ever forget that we are One Nation Under God, then we will be a nation gone under."

The battle for faith and religious freedom has come to the forefront of our national discourse. For decades, targeted efforts have been growing to remove God from every vestige of American life and culture. The things we hold sacred are slowly eroding all around us.

An aggressive and misguided minority have attempted to remove God from the public domain. Rogue court challenges by anti-God

factions and widespread misrepresentation of the phrase “separation of church and state” create a climate for censorship and promote religious discrimination.

The intolerant have commanded center stage long enough. Some advocate that public acknowledgement of God must be eliminated. Then, by default, the government assumes sole authority as the final arbiter of moral order. But our founding documents place necessary and appropriate limits on how much power government should exert over life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

So What Is a Christian Nation?

A Christian nation is not necessarily one in which all leaders or citizens are professing believers, or where its laws require everyone to adhere to an overtly Christian theology. A Christian nation denotes that biblical principles are incorporated into the ongoing development of essential freedoms.

Such a nation recognizes certain inalienable rights given to us by our Creator. For America, they help form our identity—evidenced in the executive, legislative, and judicial functions of our government—all embedded in the Constitution. They help ensure that the “public square” will remain neutral ground, where every voice is heard and every citizen is free to advocate for his or her position. Our founders recognized the potential for unguarded attempts to censor the truth and exclude certain voices. However, our founders also were confident that in the marketplace of ideas, truth would win out in a free society.

Though many scholars agree on the tremendous impact Christianity has had in shaping America and important building blocks of our society, the past two centuries have seen Christianity’s waning influence on the family, civil government, and even the church. Postmodernism, with its moral

relativism, has exacted its toll and pushed these institutions to the breaking point.

Either a complete collapse may be forthcoming or those who operate within God's boundaries will summon the courage to restore a necessary balance of truth and moral responsibility. With the alarming trend to erase God from America's memory, we need the courage to make religious liberty a priority. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort, but where he stands in times of challenge and controversy."

Pray for a "City on a Hill"

Hundreds of national and state leaders are working to protect our Judeo-Christian heritage, freedom of conscience, religious liberty, and the right for citizens to adhere to their moral convictions. The Congressional Prayer Caucus was established in 2005 to promote prayer for our nation, protect our religious freedoms, and restore Judeo-Christian values to their rightful place in the marketplace of ideas. In 2011, members of that Caucus initiated a resolution to reaffirm our national motto: "In God We Trust." Their efforts resulted in a landslide vote in the House of Representatives—396 to 9 in favor of recognizing God's enduring place in American culture.

The Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation (CPCF), a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, was also formed in 2005 to work alongside this official Caucus to build and support a growing nationwide network of lawmakers and citizens who are committed to prayer and action.

America can still be a "city on a hill" and a light to the world (Matt. 5:14), but it is imperative that we pray for our country and for our national and state leaders. Their voices are needed now more than ever. The Apostle Paul encourages us to do just that: "I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all

people—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness” (1 Tim. 2:1–2).

“We the People” must decide whether or not we are going to stand up against undue censorship, the dismantling of our heritage, and efforts that give the state the ability to force us to leave our God-given liberties at the door of the public square—our places of business, our barracks, our schools, and our government entities.

It is our choice. It is our time to make a bold declaration to the halls of power. And it is our responsibility to do so with unity and resolve.

With the next election cycle quickly approaching, this is a critical period in our nation’s journey. Our responsibility is to discern between fact and false narratives, between truth and deception, between political gamesmanship and genuine integrity. Our privilege and responsibility is to seek out and choose our leaders wisely. Actions speak much louder than words, and we must exercise due diligence. Proverbs 14:34 says, “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people” (NASB).

Don’t Give Up

Many are battle weary and discouraged. Some have given up. Others are writing off our challenges as God’s judgment on a country that is walking away from Him. However, nowhere does Scripture tell us to shrink back.

The truth is that those who oppose religious liberty are counting on you and me to be intimidated, passive, unorganized, underfunded, and lacking the resolve and determination to engage in the public arena. They know that human nature often creates a “someone else will do it” mindset. So they aggressively take more ground. We cannot allow that to happen!

With each passing week, the United States is edging precariously closer to the unthinkable—a tangible and serious loss of our long-held religious liberties. Too many citizens remain uninformed, unaware, and, in some cases, unconcerned.

During World War II, not that long ago, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran pastor, theologian, and anti-Nazi dissident, offered these sobering words: “Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act. Silence in the face of evil is evil itself.”

It is time to speak. It is time to act. And it is time to pray without ceasing.

LEA CARAWAN is president and executive director of the Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation—a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization established to unite and mobilize government leaders nationwide, leaders who are committed to protecting religious freedom, preserving America’s Judeo-Christian heritage, and promoting prayer.

Government Leaders Calling the Nation to Prayer

Throughout the nation’s history, our leaders have offered prayers in many situations: as petition and thanksgiving; to embrace our grief and sorrow; for our troops and first responders; in times of uncertainty and crisis; in war and in peace; for protection, provision, and guidance; and to acknowledge that in and of ourselves we are wholly insufficient.

Elected representatives are again calling on God’s people to unify with one heart and one voice to pray for the country and those who lead her. This unprecedented call for unceasing prayer was launched on March 7, 2015, by government leaders at the LIFFT America Religious Liberty Summit. (LIFFT America stands for Leaders Inspiring Faith and Freedom To America.) The Summit was convened by the Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation along with Congressman J. Randy Forbes and Senator James Lankford, co-chairs of the Congressional Prayer Caucus.

Sixteen members of the U.S. Congress and 36 state legislators representing 25 states, gathered to challenge today's growing anti-faith movement. In a solemn and historic ceremony, all present signed a Call to Prayer for America Proclamation, declaring that people of faith can no longer be silent as our nation's Judeo-Christian heritage and religious liberties are increasingly compromised.

It didn't stop there. The Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation also launched the PrayUSA: Government Leaders Calling the Nation to Prayer movement, in which key government leaders and pastors stand side by side—a public demonstration of unity and purpose—to call the Church to unceasing prayer for America. Government leaders are now joining pastors in their churches, encouraging congregations across the U.S. to hold PrayUSA Sundays. This initiative is now exploding all across the nation, and the numbers continue to grow—nearly 900 government leaders, 50 leading organizations, and more than 130,000 citizens who have said yes to prayer.

A three-minute video and downloadable church kits are available at prayusa.com to help churches schedule a PrayUSA spotlight or special service. You can also add your signature to the proclamation.

—LEA CARAWAN