

Lift Up a Standard

Pray for Those in Authority

By **Bunni Pounds**

Let's be real. We watch Fox News, NBC News, BlazeTV, and more—and yell at the television as our frustrations reach a boiling point. We see the injustices, the lawlessness, and the bankrupting of future generations. We know instinctively that both parties are to blame in some way. We shake our heads in anger and feel overwhelmed with the depth of our national problems.

Yet, we forget one powerful thing: as believers, we serve a Living God who sees what is going on and knows what we are feeling.

Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened,
That it cannot save;
Nor His ear heavy,
That it cannot hear (Isa. 59:1, nkjv).

In the prophet Isaiah's day, the people of Israel were living with iniquities that separated them from God (Isa. 59:2). Their hands were defiled with blood, lies were spoken everywhere, and perversity was rampant (v. 3). Truth was failing (v. 15). Sound familiar?

So truth fails,
And he who departs from evil makes himself a prey.

Then the Lord saw it, and it displeased Him
That there was no justice.
He saw that there was no man,
And wondered that there was no intercessor;
Therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him;

And His own righteousness, it sustained Him (Isa. 59:15–16, nkjv).

Isaiah also declares, “When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him” (vs. 19). When God couldn’t find anyone to stand in the gap and lift up this “standard” against the enemy (a wall of righteousness found in the foundations of Scripture), He sent His own Son to be the Redeemer (v. 20).

Jesus Became Intercession

Jesus Christ Himself became the intercessor who would lift up a standard for the purpose of redemption. When there was no justice, Jesus was justice. When there was no one righteous, Jesus was righteousness. When there was no salvation, Jesus was salvation. When there was no intercessor, Jesus became intercession for the people whom He loved.

In the same way, we are called to be intercessors for our nation in our generation. We are the ones to carry the love of God and the presence of God to a hurting world.

This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus (1 John 4:17).

So, the question is, how do we stand in the gap and intercede, specifically in the context of our nation—the United States of America?

Go Find the Awakening Church

In 2018, after 14 years as an activist, campaign manager, and political consultant for members of Congress and state clients, I ran for Congress. It was a race I never saw coming. I spent a million dollars, had more than a million dollars spent against me—and then lost. I was devastated.

I sat on my couch, exhausted, and opened my Bible as the Holy Spirit spoke to me out of Romans 13:11: “And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep . . .” (nkjv).

Then I heard Him say to me clearly, “I am waking up My Church. Go find the awakening Church and give them the tools they need to engage for America.”

Though still in recovery from a brutal six-month political race, in the following months I wrote 20 pages worth of notes centered around these three words: *pray*, *vote*, and *engage*. I had written down plans on how to plug the body of Christ into habits of prayer, voting, and engagement for the well-being of America. A year later a new national ministry was born.

The roadmap to national impact goes like this:

- We pray for our nation and elected officials.
- We vote in every local, state, and national election.
- We engage our hearts in civic education or involvement for the well-being of our local communities and our nation.

Simple. But if we, as believers in Jesus Christ, can be consistent week after week, year after year with these three points, we can impact our nation for generations to come.

Pray for All Who Are in Authority

When the apostle Paul instructed Timothy to pray for all men, but specifically for “kings and all those in authority” (1 Tim. 2:2), it was not a peaceful time. They were dealing with a Roman empire that was hostile to the new Christians. The Roman leaders were much worse than American politicians through the years. And yet, the Church was still instructed to pray for them.

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—for kings and all those in authority . . . (1 Tim. 2:1–2).

First, God exhorted His people to talk to Him about the leaders of the day—to not just complain and revolt in anger, but to go to Him, understand His heart for the situation, and then partner with Him in the place of intercession. It was a massive shift, I am sure, for those young believers.

. . . that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness (v. 2).

It was in their own interest that they pray for their authorities. Don't we all want to lead "a quiet and peaceable life" and be left alone to worship God, to raise our children according to our beliefs, and to provide for our families without chaos all around us?

This is good, and pleases God our Savior . . . (v. 3).

Praying for our leaders actually makes God happy. As believers, don't we want to please God?

. . . who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth (v. 4).

Ultimately, the reason we pray for our leaders and the reason we pray, vote, and engage is so that people can be saved and "come to a knowledge of the truth." In the American context, if we don't retain our freedoms or our economic stability in this nation, how will we be free to be share the gospel? Or how will we create the resources to send the gospel to the unreached people groups of the world?

God is not dependent on the United States to carry His good news across the earth, but this nation invests billions of dollars into non-profit groups each year, many of which are for the cause of world evangelization.

Let's be honest, it is not easy to pray for our leaders, especially ones who stand antithetically against our biblical values. Do we really believe that God can reach them—either through saving them or accomplishing His will through them?

How to Impact America

Several months ago, I was on a national broadcast show that had a call-in segment at the end.

We received our first caller, and he was frustrated. "I'm not praying for the Schumers, Bidens, and Pelosis of the world."

I started out my comments by referring to 1 Timothy 2:1–4. The host and I laid out the fact that Paul exhorts us in that passage to pray for all men and "kings" in authority, regardless of whether we think they are promoting good or evil. We paused and went to more callers, and then got another one who had a similar sentiment to the first.

At that point, I shared a story from my new book, *Jesus and Politics: One Woman's Walk with God in a Mudslinging Profession*—where I had to work through the pain of what I felt was "injustice" in my race for Congress. After I didn't win, I found out that my opponent's consultants had floated all his invoices during our Republican runoff and didn't bill him until after he won. Even though I had outraised him by more than \$200,000, I still couldn't win because of this unfortunate legal tactic. It felt to me like an unjust loophole.

To overcome my anger and bitterness, I had to confront it head-on more than a year later. I spent many hours that year in prayer for my former opponent and his family. Then I asked my now-member of Congress if I could host a fundraiser party for him to help pay off the rest of the debt he was still carrying from our race. That exercise of obedience—raising more than \$35,000 for his campaign as a volunteer and seeing

him pay off the rest of that liability—set my heart free from bitterness.

This is what prayer does. When we release our burdens upon the strong arms of Jesus, this connection changes us. It truly makes a difference! As we pray, vote, and engage in obedience, God will impact America.

John 16:24 says, “Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.” And Proverbs 21:1 reminds us: “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, Like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes” (nkjv).

Are we willing to become intercessors like Jesus, stepping up on behalf of our nation and laying down our lives in obedience to God? Every prayer that we speak is heard by God and every prayer, when we partner with Him for His will, impacts the hearts of men.

This is how we lift up a standard in our generation.

BUNNI POUNDS is the president and founder of Christians Engaged, a ministry activating the body of Christ to pray, vote, and engage regularly. She is also a motivational/gospel speaker and author.

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