

## **Is It The Mandate Of The Church To Turn America Back Into A Christian Nation?**

Is this really the biblical mandate of the church? I want to make the case that it is not. In fact, I want to go so far as to say that I believe that this focus, while well intentioned, is hurting the church and the nation more than it is helping it because it undercuts our witness. **In a nutshell, I am advocating that the church is not called to make America a Christian nation but to make America a nation of Christians. I believe these are mutually exclusive positions because the first is based on moralism, and the second is based on the gospel. I am saying that the church is the missionary with the mandate of making disciples and advancing the Kingdom of God through the gospel of Jesus Christ.** I am going to proceed by clarifying some things I am not advocating, telling you why I believe this is true biblically, and giving some suggestions as to how we can make the right kind of difference in our nation.

**Main Idea: The church is not called to make America a Christian nation but to make America a nation of Christians.**

**Here are some things I am not advocating:**

- 1. I am not advocating that America does not have a Judeo-Christian heritage.**
- 2. I am not advocating that government is unimportant or unbiblical.** In fact, Romans 13:1 says, “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.”
- 3. I am not advocating being anti-patriotic.**
- 4. I am not advocating that Christians should not speak in the public square or not be involved in politics.**
- 5. I am not advocating that Christians should not vote and not vote their Christian conscience.**
- 6. I am not advocating for either political party.**
- 7. I am not saying that we do not have rights or that we should not appeal to those rights.** We see Paul doing this as a Roman citizen in the book of Acts.
- 8. I am not advocating compromising Scripture.**
- 9. I am not saying that there is not a need for great change in the United States.**

So, the preceding seven statements are some things I am not advocating. Let me repeat what I am advocating and then make a case for why. **In a nutshell, I am advocating that the church is not called to make America a Christian nation but to make America a nation of Christians. I believe these are mutually exclusive positions because the first is based on moralism, and the second is based on the gospel. I am saying that the church is the missionary with the mandate of making disciples and advancing the Kingdom of God through the gospel of Jesus Christ.** Here are several biblical (and there are other reasons, but I have decided to restrict my case to biblical reasons) reasons why:

**1. The whole idea of the nation being a Christian nation is just simply contradicted by Scripture because Scripture refers to the Church and not a country in this way.**

**2. Israel is the nation that is God's people.** While the last point referred to the church spiritually being the people of God, I want to build on it by showing you in Scripture that Israel is the only nation that has ever truly belonged to God. I am not disputing that the United States has certainly been blessed by God, but look at what King David said in response to God making a covenant with him. As recorded in 2 Samuel 7:23-24, he said, "And who is like Your people, like Israel, the one nation on the earth whom God went to redeem for Himself as a people, to make for Himself a name-and to do for Yourself great and awesome deeds for Your land-before Your people whom You redeemed for Yourself from Egypt, the nations, and their gods? For You have made Your people Israel Your very own people forever; and you, Lord, have become their God."

**3. The idea of a Christian nation is based on Old Covenant thinking instead of New Covenant thinking.** I think this is true in two ways. Let me say in the way of background information so there is no confusion on this point that I believe the church and Israel are distinct in the plan of God. The first way this represents Old Covenant thinking is because it *applies* things said to God's people, Israel, to our nation instead of to God's people, the church. Second and primarily, it is Old Covenant thinking because it emphasizes the conditional promises of the Old Covenant based on our obedience instead of the unconditional promises of the New Covenant based on the grace of Jesus (Hebrews 8:7-13) because those who talk about turning America back to God consistently talk about God blessing us if we do certain things and don't do other things.

**4. God raises up and brings down leaders.** This includes Him raising up ungodly leaders for purposes that we sometimes do not understand. Here are three biblical examples of this fact: Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2:37), Pharaoh (Romans 9:17), and Pilate (John 19:11).

**5. Every Christian is a missionary so the church's mission is telling as many people as possible about Jesus and making disciples of all the nations (Acts 1:8, Matthew 28:18-20).**

**We are commissioned to be missionaries as individual believers.** Jesus said, "As You [the Father] sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world" (John 17:18). "Sent" is the Greek word, "apostello," and it means, "to send forth on a certain mission." Therefore, Jesus was sent into the world by the Father as a missionary, and in the same way, He sends His followers into the world as missionaries. Jesus was known as the friend of sinners. Does the world see the church in America that way? Or does it see us as judgmental and condemning? Are we going to focus on lifting up Jesus or tearing down politicians? Missionaries have to meet people where they are instead of living with an us vs. them mentality.

**6. Christianity is about heart change from the inside out through the gospel while religious moralism focuses on the outside in.** Jesus said to the religious leaders of his day, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness" (Matthew 23:27).

**7. We cannot expect non-Christians to think and live as Christians (1 Corinthians 5:9-13).** This is moralism instead of the gospel. This is telling us to confront sins in the church instead of in the world. Our message is not live a new lifestyle but God makes us alive and new in Jesus so we can then live a new life.

**8. We must get our own house in order.** Judgment begins at the house of God (1 Peter 4:17). Of course, this is not judgment in a punitive sense because Jesus absorbed all the wrath of God on the cross but discipline for beloved children. Jesus told us to get the plank out of our eyes before we try to get a splinter out of somebody else's eye or we are a hypocrite (Matthew 7:5). Don't you see that the world sees us as hypocrites when we condemn people who don't yet believe in Jesus for not acting, believing, or maybe even voting like Christians and then excuse or sweep under the rug sin within the church? Don't you see that the world sees us as hypocrites when we condemn character flaws in the candidate of the party we don't like and excuse them in the candidate we are for by saying things like it's about the platform instead of the person? The world needs to see a holy church (1 Peter 1:15).

**9. We must remember that the message of Christianity is the message of the cross, and that message is never going to make us popular and influential in the world.** 1 Corinthians 1:18 says, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." Paul said that the false

teachers in Galatia were trying to avoid “persecution for the cross of Christ” (Galatians 6:12), and then he said, “But God forbid that I boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (v. 14).

**10. We are ultimately citizens of the heavenly kingdom (Philippians 3:20) so that is where our ultimate allegiance lies.** We are here to see God’s kingdom come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10). People from every nation, tribe, people, and tongue are part of the kingdom of God (Revelation 7:9-10). It is not localized in the United States. As Charles Colson said, “The Kingdom of God will not come riding in on Air Force One.”

A Christian world view teaches that God ordained the spheres of the family, government, and the church. Each have vital roles to play within their sphere. We need Christians within the sphere of government living out their faith and making a difference, but the church needs to primarily focus on its calling to be gospel-centered missionaries making disciples. This is how we can make the greatest impact. How can we accomplish this? Here are ten suggestions:

**1. Be a city within the city that is here for the good of our communities (Jeremiah 29:4-7).**

**2. Equip Christians, especially young people, to get as far upstream as possible to make a difference for the Kingdom of God in every sphere of life, including politics and government, for the good of all people.** Biblical examples of this principle include Joseph, Nehemiah, and Daniel.

**3. Stay focused on lifting up Jesus, proclaiming the gospel, and living as missionaries.** The early church turned the world upside down by doing this (Acts 17:6), and the gospel is still “the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16).

**4. Abandon our lives to the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:24) and live with radical boldness (Acts 4).**

**5. Pray fervently and in faith for God to transform lives, families, communities, and ultimately our nation (Acts 4:31).**

**6. Christians must individually and corporately repent of sin and consistently live lives that are marked by repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10).**

**7. Churches must lovingly and consistently practice biblical church discipline with the purposes of restoring wayward believers and protecting the church (Galatians 6:1, Matthew 18:15-18, 1 Corinthians 5, Romans 16:17-18, Titus 3:9-11) instead of condemning sinners for acting like sinners if we are going to have any credibility.**

**8. Follow the example of Jesus by serving each other and serving the world (Matthew 20:25-26, 28).**

**9. We have to do everything we can to reach, disciple, and equip men to fulfill their God-given roles.** In my opinion, this is how we can make the greatest impact on our nation because large amounts of research show that fatherlessness is the primary root of the social pathologies in America.

**10. The universal church must unite around the essentials of the gospel and stop fighting and dividing over secondary matters, including politics.** The more hostile the world is to Jesus, the more we have to be united and love each other.