

Perspective

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God, Country, Mom and Apple Pie

Psalm 33:12 declares, *"Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD."* The phrase "For God and Country" has been used as a rallying cry for unity as a nation. It reflects the idea of patriotism and the importance of God and pride in one's homeland. If there was ever a time when we need unity in the world, it would be now. Isaiah 59:8 says the world leaders do not know the way to peace and whoever follows them will not know peace. The expression, "Motherhood and apple pie," became popular after World War II. The original expression, "Mom and apple pie," was a phrase popular among American troops fighting in the war. When an American soldier was asked what he was fighting for, his answer was often, "Mom and apple pie." It became so all-pervasive that it became the expression, "As American as mom and apple pie," an idiom used to represent things that are accepted as wholesome, good, and traditionally American. Love of God, country, and family are a part of that patriotic feeling many have. What happens when one or more of those three elements disappear? Without love of God and family, there cannot be patriotism towards any country nor can there be peace.

Without God can there be unity and patriotism?

The 4th of July is the kind of celebration observed in one form or another on different days in about every country on earth. Down Under, Australia Day is observed on January 26 and celebrates the arrival of the first Europeans to settle on Australian shores. Britain celebrates their country's independence on St. George's Day, which falls on April 23rd. This day is similar to America's Independence Day in that it is an opportunity to celebrate national identity and pride. It is also a time to reflect on the sacrifices made by those who fought for English independence, such as the soldiers who died in the two world wars. Canada Day is celebrated on July 1 and marks the historic moment when Canada became an independent nation. Bastille Day is the common name given in English-speaking countries to the National Day of France, which is celebrated on July 14 each year.

These national celebrations hold a common thread of patriotism and shared values. Each year we see the identity of the nations, at least of the western world, being compromised by emerging ideologies which threaten the biblical definition of marriage, family, sexual identity, the Bible, and the belief in God. The colleges and universities of this world have a tendency to cause students to doubt and question traditional beliefs as students encounter new perspectives. Some studies suggest that 70% of Christian students may leave their church during college due to various reasons. Not only do younger adults face this negative influence from college professors, but it pervades society.

At christiantoday.com, in a published article, "Is a 'quiet revival' really taking place? Shock new study findings suggest Christianity may be in retreat," states, "While churches in some regions speak of growing youth movements and renewed fervor, data from a respected US research institute suggests that Christianity is experiencing one of the steepest rates of decline among the world's major religions. According to research published last week by the Pew Research Center, Christians are now among the most likely to disaffiliate from the faith they were raised in."

The article goes on to say, "The study highlights the growing phenomenon of religious 'switching' – individuals changing their religious identity from that of their childhood – but notes that most who leave Christianity are not joining another faith. Instead, they are choosing to abandon religion altogether. Around 17 per cent of those raised Christian now identify as atheist, agnostic, or simply 'nothing in particular'..."

People in general are blind to truth and they have lost their way: *"We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes; we stumble at noonday as at twilight; we are as dead men in desolate places."* (Isaiah 59:10)

Psalm 14:1 says, *"The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good"*. This verse stresses the idea that denying the existence of God is considered foolishness and leads to life of unrighteousness.

The Bible warns, a nation which rejects God will face severe consequences: *"Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people."* (Proverbs 14:34) This verse emphasizes the importance of godliness for the prosperity of a nation. Nations that turn away from God often experience moral decay, social injustice, and brokenness.

Sadly, this is the direction most of the nations of the west are headed—away from God. This is the path which led to the downfall of ancient Israel and Judah, and eventually their captivity by the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires. The disobedience of the Israelites is a recurring theme throughout the Old Testament, and serves as a warning today to their modern descendants. God has no desire to see Israel suffer (Ezekiel 33:11).

What makes a country great?

It is not the goods they produce or the wars they win. God can bless any nation to make that happen. What values evoke patriotism and have traditionally been the core of a nation's success?

The Bible actually teaches the values that promote unity and patriotism in a nation. No group or nation can succeed unless there is a respect for the authorities which exist. The Bible teaches a believer: *"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. Therefore, whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves."* (Romans 13:1-2)

God has permitted the governing leadership system so that society can function. The apostle Paul highlights the importance of submitting to governing authorities, recognizing their role as being ordained or sanctioned by God. If we were a nation of believers in God and His word—then we would have unity. God's laws are called holy, just, and good, and they promote the righteousness of a people. Proverbs 29:2 admonishes us: *"When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when a wicked man rules, the people groan."*

J. Edgar Hoover, who was instrumental in founding the FBI, is quoted as saying: "A child who has been taught to respect the laws of God will have little difficulty respecting the laws of men." He also said, "All persons who bear the blessed title of parent have the personal responsibility to see that their children are growing up fully appreciative of the rights of God and their fellowmen."

The effect of practicing the two great commandments

God's instruction gives us two great commandments, love God and love your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:3). This extends to our fellow citizens, promoting a sense of community and responsibility for the well-being of others, which is a core aspect of unity and patriotism. Galatians 3:28 highlights unity and oneness within the body of Christ. Appreciation for all people and races enhances national unity and love for country.

Believers are even instructed to pray for the nation and its leaders: *"Therefore I exhort first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence."* (I Timothy 2:1-2)

Praying for leaders and the nation is part of a believer's duty, and it should be taught in childhood. 1 Peter 2:17 encourages honoring all people and respecting authority, which includes national leaders. This would promote a spirit of cooperation that supports both faith in God and patriotism. When a people show reverence for Almighty God and are obedient to His laws and ways, then God will bless them. Psalm 33:12 expresses that a nation blessed by God finds happiness. God blesses righteousness and it is foundational to a nation's strength. II Chronicles 7:14 is a call for national humility, prayer, and seeking God's face, promising healing for the land. Seeking God's face means recognizing His character and desiring to know Him more deeply, as it involves a personal relationship that requires effort and commitment.

Psalm 22:28 states, *"For dominion belongs to the Lord and He rules over the nations."* (NIV). When we believe and know that Almighty God is in control of the entire vast universe, it can foster a sense of peace within us; we can trust that He oversees the complexities of political systems and national events. We do not have to fear or be worried about tomorrow. We know God will be there as our Deliverer and Protector.

Imagine a time when all of these elements will come together to produce a unified and loyal people, a time when Jesus Christ will be ruling the earth along with His saints in peace and righteousness! (Revelation 20:6).