

"How You Can Have Maximum Patriotic Impact"
Matt. 22:15-21

INTRODUCTION:

On July 4, 1776, in Philadelphia, our Founding Fathers signed a document declaring our independence from the tyranny of those who would enslave the minds, the souls, the lives of men. But what many Americans don't realize is that with the same document, we not only declared our *independence* from Great Britain, we just as strongly declared our *dependence* upon Almighty God. For the Declaration of Independence begins by proclaiming that we are subject only to the "laws of nature and nature's God."¹ Do you remember how it ends? It ends with these words: "With a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor." Do you know what the word *reliance* means? It means dependence. The signers of the Declaration were staking everything on God watching over them and seeing them through in their struggle for freedom: "With a firm reliance upon the protection of Divine Providence."²

Hear this statement well: Our Founding Fathers did not believe in the separation of God from government. They believed that this nation was founded by God, protected by God, preserved by God, and blessed by God. It all depends on God! And based on that belief, they were willing to pledge their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor. They put it all on the line. Of those fifty-six men who signed the Declaration of Independence, nine died of wounds or hardships during the war. Five were captured and imprisoned, and in each case subjected to torture. Several lost wives, children or entire families. One lost his thirteen children. Two wives were brutalized by the British. All were at one time or another victims of manhunts and driven from their homes. Twelve signers had their homes completely burned. Seventeen lost everything they owned. Indeed these men not only pledged but *gave* their lives, and their fortunes, and not one went back on his sacred honor.³ The nation they sacrificed so much to help found is still intact for us to enjoy its freedoms. May God bless America!

That brings us to you and me, here and now. If these patriots willingly laid it all on the line for this nation, don't you think we should do more than simply sing patriotic songs, wave the flag, barbeque burgers, and watch fireworks? I think so. Not only that, but Jesus said so. Look at our text (Matt. 22:15-21): The religious leaders were trying to trap Jesus on the issue of paying taxes, but Jesus turned the tables on them. He asked them for a coin, and then asked whose portrait and inscription was stamped on it. They replied: "Caesar's." Jesus responded: "*Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's*" (v. 21). His point: All citizens—including His followers—are obligated to support their government.

Unlike the Roman Empire, Americans are blessed to have, as Abraham Lincoln put it, a "government of the people, by the people, and for the people."⁴ Our form of government requires our active involvement. How can we "*give to Caesar what is Caesar's*" in America today? Well I want to mention 5 things that every Christian ought to give his government, 5 things that every Christian can do to have maximum patriotic impact as we think about what that meant then, what it means now, and what it means to you and me personally. First...

1. SEEK GOD FOR YOUR GOVERNMENT

> Scripture: (1Tim. 2:1-4). Notice Paul says: "First of all."

> Focus on praying for your elected officials at two points:

1. Pray for their wisdom to lead our nation according to the Judeo-Christian principles this nation was founded upon.
2. Pray that they would come to know Christ and be saved (v 4). The only way our nation will be changed is through the Gospel. It is only through a relationship with Jesus as Lord that our elected officials will lead in such a way that we will be able to live "*peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness*" (v 2).

> Point out that the biggest burden for the health of our nation does not rest on the White House, or on the State House, but on the Church House, it rests on you and on me.

> Scripture: (2 Chron. 7:14). If we do not pray for our nation and our leaders, not only will we continue to have little impact on the direction of America, but we are sinning against God. First of all, pray. Seek God for Your Government.

2. SUPPORT YOUR GOVERNMENT

There are a couple of ways we can support our government:

A. First, pay taxes to your government. Scripture: (Jesus teaching - Matt. 22:21 and example - Matt. 17:24-27; Paul's teaching Rom. 13:6).

> Point out that even though there is a lot of waste and questionable spending, we do benefit from the goods and services provided by the government, such as military defense, law enforcement, roads, schools, libraries, parks, etc.

B. Take pride in your government. Scripture: Teaching – Rom. 13:7 and Example: Ps. 137:5.

> Point out that it's good to be patriotic. You *can* take pride in your country as well as pay taxes to your country and in that way support your government.

3. SUBMIT TO YOUR GOVERNMENT

> Scripture: (1 Pet. 2:13-14, 17; cf. Rom. 13:2-5).

> Point out that the Greek word for “submit” means to fall in rank under an authority. Government exists to keep order, and we must submit to the rule of law. Christians of all citizens ought to be model citizens. If we rebel against the rule of law, we are in fact rebelling against the God who ordained it (Rom. 13:1-2).

> Point out that we are to show these authorities respect, even when they are less than perfect. Example: Nero was Caesar in that day. We may not have much respect for the *man of the office*, but we must respect the *office of the man*. Submit to your government. That said, sometimes you must -

4. STAND UP TO YOUR GOVERNMENT

> Point out that George Washington reportedly said that “Government... is a troublesome servant and a fearful Master.”⁵ Sometimes, we must stand up to our government. There’s a time and place for civil disobedience, but it should come only as a last resort. However, if the government commands what God condemns, or if the government prohibits what God promotes then you are obligated to disobey.

> Examples: Midwives > Pharaoh (Exod. 2:15-21). Daniel > King Darius (Dan. 6:1-23). Christians > Imperial edict to swear: “Caesar is Lord” instead declared: Christ is Lord!” (Rev. 2:8-10; 2:13). Peter > Religious Rulers (Acts 5:29). They were all blessed by God for their civil disobedience.

> Point out: As Citizen Christians, we need to use our freedom to defend our freedom or we may lose our freedom. Scriptures: Matt. 5:13-16; Ps. 107:2 Isa. 58:1. Examples: Examples: Moses > Pharaoh; Nathan > David; Elijah > Ahab; Daniel > Nebuchadnezzar; John the Baptist > Herod; Peter > Sanhedrin.

> Point out: We must stand up and let our voices be heard in the same way. We must persuade our government of the truths of God’s word as they apply to the policies and laws of our nation. Sometimes we must stand up to our government and say: Enough is enough. Finally –

5. SELECT YOUR GOVERNMENT

> Point out: There are many ways we can participate in our government, such as helping with a voter registration drive, commenting on legislation and public policy, speaking out on moral and social issues, holding public office, campaigning for a candidate, volunteering for the election commission, etc. Perhaps the most basic form of participation is voting—*selecting* our government. Voting is a simple act with a significant impact. When we vote, we help determine who will lead our nation, make our laws, and protect our freedoms.

> Quote: Founding Father Samuel Adams said: “Let each citizen remember at the moment he is offering his vote... that he is executing one of the most solemn trusts in human society for which he is accountable to God and his country.”⁶

On iVoteValues.org you will find three action steps on voting.

> Step 1: Register to Vote: Statistics: According to the U.S. Census Bureau, as many as 25-35% of the voting age population are not registered. That translates to between 45 and 65 million Americans! What’s worse is that less than half of those registered actually vote in a given election!

> Action Point: Registering to vote is easy to do. Fill out the Voter Registration Form and return it to the county election office. We have people who are here to help.

> Step 2: Register a Friend:

> Action Points:

1. Take your friend a Voter Registration Form and help them fill it out and send it in.
2. Send your friends an e-Card from iVoteValues.org where they can fill out their form online, print it, and mail it in.
3. Help organize a voter registration drive in your service club, school, place of business, etc.

> Reminder: Be sure to get permission.

> Step 3: Vote Your Values: Statistics: In 2000, a little over half of eligible Americans voted. In 2002's mid-term elections, only 39.7% of eligible Americans voted! In 2004, 60.7% voted, but the number fell back to 40.4% for 2006. Of self-described evangelical Christians, numbering around 60 million, the percentages are worse. In 2000, only 25% voted. While nearly 50% voted in 2004, the number fell back to about 33% in 2006. This kind of apathy is indefensible, especially among the Christian community, which has been commanded by Christ to engage our culture as salt and light (Matt. 5:13-16) and participate in government (Matt. 22:21). So go against the rising tide of apathy in America—Vote!

> Saying: Old proverb that is still true: “Bad politicians are elected by good people who don’t vote.”

> Point out: simply voting is not enough, you must vote your values. Every candidate has his or her own set of values and positions on important issues.

> Questions to ponder: Don't you think that where a candidate stands on the issues is far more important than the party he or she belongs to? Shouldn't we vote for candidates who share our values?

> Point out: Many believers don't even consider their values when voting, often choosing candidates whose positions are at odds with their own beliefs, convictions, and values. Statistic: A recent study by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life shows that nearly two-thirds of Americans say their faith has little to do with their voting decisions.

> Action Points: Jesus expects us to let our faith influence every part of our decision making—including the democratic process (Matt. 5:13-16).

1. Be informed on the issues.
2. Study the party platform statements.
3. Know what the candidates stand for.
4. Check out the candidate's website.
5. Find out their friends and their enemies.
6. Weigh the candidates' values against biblical values.
7. Prayerfully choose the ones who most closely match up with your values.

www.iVoteValues.org is a great place to start. Remember, how you vote today impacts tomorrow!

> Scripture: Prov. 29:2.

> Quote: Our nation's first Supreme Court Justice, John Jay, said: “It is the duty, as well as the privilege and interest of our Christian nation, to select and prefer Christians for their rulers.”⁷

> Caution: Aligning ourselves too closely with a political party or a politician is unwise, because we need to be free to call all political parties and politicians to repentance when they step outside of biblical morality and principle.

> Quote: Founding Father Benjamin Rush is quoted as saying: “I have been alternately called an Aristocrat and a Democrat. I am neither. I am a *Christocrat*.”⁸

> Point Out: Our loyalty needs to be with the Lord Jesus Christ. Strongly consider voting for candidates who believe like you do. Don't just vote—vote your values!

> Question: Examine your core values as you approach Election Day. Would your list include the War on Terror, National Security? Health-Care? Economy? Education? As important as those issues are, think about what your core values should be as a follower of Jesus and how they apply to your patriotic impact on the leadership and laws of our nation. Mention three: Life, Family, and Freedom.

> Life: Life is precious. Miraculous. Delicate. Created by a loving God who makes every human being unique (Ps. 139:15-16). Life made in the image of God is a fundamental, God-given right. According to the Declaration of Independence, "All men are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights. Among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."⁹ Therefore, human life should be protected. Defended. Rescued.¹⁰

> Scripture: Prov. 24:11. Statistics: 1.3 million Abortions per year; 25% of all pregnancies end in Abortion.¹¹

> Action Points: Find out where the candidates stand on the value of life. Ask what their position is on abortion, embryo-destructive stem cell experimentation, cloning (SNT), and euthanasia. We value life. Second, we value –

> Family: Family is essential. Basic. Necessary. The family is the basic building block of society, and the first institution created by God (Example: Gen. 1-2). As goes the family, so goes the nation. Unfortunately, the family as God intended it is an endangered species in America.

> Statistics: U.S. Census figures from 2000 show that the traditional family is in a statistical free-fall.¹²

- Families consisting of a husband and wife in their first marriage with children dropped below 25% percent of all homes.¹³
- Households with unmarried partners grew by 72%.¹⁴ In fact, cohabitation has increased by close to 1,000% over the last generation.¹⁵
- A third of all babies were born to unmarried women, (33%) compared to only 3.8% in 1940.¹⁶
- The number of same-sex homes skyrocketed over 400% since 1990.¹⁷

> Point Out: The U. S. Supreme Court declared state laws against sodomy illegal and essentially established homosexuality as a constitutionally protected lifestyle.¹⁸ The Massachusetts Supreme Court followed by ruling that same sex "marriage" should be legalized, and that state has been issuing marriage licenses by the thousands.

> Result: The time-honored definition of the family in general and of marriage in particular is in mortal danger.

> Action Points: Find out where the candidates stand on the issue of family. Find out how they voted on the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). Ask for their position on the proposed Federal Marriage Amendment (FMA) defining marriage as only between one man and one woman. Christians ought to stand against any and all efforts to undermine and redefine marriage, which is the foundation for a healthy society. We value family. Third, we value –

> Freedom: Freedom is priceless. Cherished. Fragile. Scripture: Gal. 5:1. Freedom must be nurtured, defended, and protected, which is the original intent of the First Amendment: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."¹⁹

> Point Out: The Supreme Court has ignored the original intent of the Founding Fathers, trashed three centuries of America's Judeo-Christian heritage, and turned a statement in one of Jefferson's private letters on its head in declaring a two-way "Wall of Separation" between church and state.

> Result: All religious influences must be removed from public institutions. The Court outlawed public prayer in the schools in 1962,²⁰ out went public Bible reading in 1963,²¹ and in 1980, down came the Ten Commandments from school house walls!²² This agenda of radical secularization has not only been zealously prosecuted by the activist courts, but by extension, the various public entities, including some school boards, educators, and teachers.

> Action Points: Find out where the candidates stand on religious liberty issues. Find out if they are aligned with groups who seek to remove our freedoms. Find out which candidates are in favor of protecting and even restoring our Judeo-Christian heritage. Reminder: If we don't use our freedom to defend our freedom we will lose our freedom. Find out where the candidates stand on our First Amendment right to public religious expression. We value Life, Family, and Freedom!

CONCLUSION

After our Founding Fathers unanimously approved the Declaration of Independence, there was a call to celebrate –to fire cannons, to fill the sky with fireworks, and to ring the bells! And the very first bell they rang was in the belfry of the very hall where they approved the Declaration of Independence to summon the people to hear the first public reading of our founding document. They rang that bell—we know it as the "Liberty Bell." Where did it get its name? From July the fourth? From the

Declaration of Independence? No. The name comes from the Scripture imprinted on that bell (Lev. 25:10), which says: "Proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof!" Proclaim liberty throughout the land. Let Freedom Ring!

Freedom will ring louder, freedom will ring clearer, if Christians all across America will do these 5 things and "give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." Just imagine the impact Christians could have on the direction of our government, the character of its leadership, and the moral health of our nation if we all simply applied biblical principles to every aspect of our lives—including our patriotic duty as Citizen Christians. Make a commitment today to register to vote, register a friend, vote your values, live your values, share your Savior, and pray for God to bless America!

¹ As found in *One Nation Under God: Our Founding Documents* (Nashville: For Faith & Family Publishing), 10.

² *Ibid.*, 18.

³ Summarized from Paul Harvey, *Our Lives, Our Fortunes, Our Sacred Honor* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1976). See also, D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe, *What If America Were a Christian Nation Again?* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 37-40.

⁴ Abraham Lincoln, "Address at Gettysburg," delivered on November 19, 1863 as found in *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, edited by Roy P. Basler (Rutgers University Press, 1953), 7:22.

⁵ Attributed to George Washington by Frank J. Wiltach, *A Dictionary of Similes*, 2d ed., (New York: Bonanza, 1924), 526.

⁶ Samuel Adams, *The Writings of Samuel Adams*, Harry Alonzo Cushing, editor (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1907), 4:256, originally in the *Boston Gazette* on April 16, 1781.

⁷ John Jay, *The Correspondence and Public Papers of John Jay*, Henry P. Johnston, ed. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1890), 4:365.

⁸ David Ramsay, *An Eulogium upon Benjamin Rush, M.D.* (Philadelphia: Bradford and Inskeep, 1813), 103.

⁹ *Founding Documents*, 10.

¹⁰ Obviously those who are justly sentenced to death by Capital Punishment are another story (See Genesis 9:5-6).

¹¹ 2003 Statistics from the Alan Guttmacher Institute. See http://www.agi-usa.org/pubs/abslides/abort_slides.pdf.

¹² See <http://www.census.gov>.

¹³ Eric Schmitt, "For First Time, Nuclear Families Drop Below 25 Percent of Households," *The New York Times*, May 15, 2001, A1.

¹⁴ Barbara Kantrowitz and Pat Wingert, "Unmarried, with Children," *Newsweek*, May 28, 2001, 46.

¹⁵ David Popenoe and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, "The State of Our Unions 2000," The National Marriage Project, Rutgers University. See

<http://www.marriage.rutgers.edu>.

¹⁶ "Unmarried, with Children," 46.

¹⁷ Genaro C. Armas "Census...most comprehensive count yet of gays and lesbians," *Associated Press*, August 21, 2001.

¹⁸ *Lawrence et al. v. Texas*, No. 02-102 (U.S. Supreme Court, 2003).

¹⁹ *Founding Documents*, 46.

²⁰ *Engel v. Vitale* 370 U.S. 421, (1962).

²¹ *Abingdon School District v. Schempp* 374 U.S. 203, 220-221 (1963).

²² *Stone v. Graham* 449 U.S. 39 (1980).