

# THE AMERICA PLAN\*

## THE SEVEN STEPS OF EFFECTIVE CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP FOR CHURCHES

### **ARTICULATE** A BIBLICAL POSITION ON IMPORTANT ISSUES OF THE DAY

Teach sound doctrine; Address citizenship and current moral issues from the pulpit as appropriate; Speak to the crucial moral issues of the day from a Biblical perspective, and why Christians must be active citizens.

### **MOTIVATE** CONGREGANTS TO BE GODLY, RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS.

Most Christians do not become effectively and Biblically involved in any ministry or take action related to cultural and political change unless inspired by their pastor, led from the pulpit and called to appropriate activity.

### **EDUCATE** BELIEVERS ON THE "WHY" AND "HOW" OF GODLY CITIZENSHIP

Biblical Worldview; American Christian Heritage; Understanding the Biblical role of Government; and Effective Community Involvement.

### **REGISTER** ALL ELIGIBLE ADULTS IN THE CHURCH TO VOTE

If a person is 18 or older and an American citizen, this is not an option! The goal is 100% registered, 100% voting.

### **INFORM** THE CONGREGATION ABOUT IMPORTANT POLICY AND MORAL ISSUES

Pending legislation – local, state and national  
Current moral issues – sanctity of life, pornography, gambling, marriage, Biblical justice, etc.  
Candidates' character, philosophy and positions on vital issue

### **COORDINATE** WITH OTHER LIKE-MINDED PASTORS IN THE COMMUNITY

Establish a permanent, inter-racial, inter-denominational Pastor Council of senior pastors who will stand together, speak together and act together in your area.

### **ACTIVATE** MEMBERS TO EFFECTIVE PRAYER, SERVICE AND CIVIC ACTION IN THE COMMUNITY TO PROMOTE BIBLICAL RIGHTEOUSNESS AND JUSTICE.

Create or support a **Christian Citizenship Ministry** in the church to facilitate the above activities in an organized manner, and to serve as the church's link to the community team.

#### **FOUR STEPS TO COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION: 2 CHRONICLES 7:14**

- 1. Pray, fast and repent- get our spiritual "house" in order *first***
- 2. Serve our neighbor - meet needs, share the Gospel**
- 3. Raise the standard of righteousness - get involved culturally and politically**
- 4. Reap the harvest - transformed lives, transformed culture**

\* The AMERICA Plan was created by Dave Welch (Executive Director, US Pastor Council) and is trademarked by Vision America.

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## **ARTICULATE** A BIBLICAL POSITION ON IMPORTANT ISSUES OF THE DAY.

Essentially every vital issue of our day has clear Biblical relevance. Just a few for example:

- ✦ Is there a Scriptural mandate to address moral issues from the pulpit?
- ✦ Sanctity of Life
- ✦ Defense of Traditional Marriage and Family
- ✦ Pornography/Sexual Immorality
- ✦ Race Relations and Equal Justice
- ✦ Religious Freedom
- ✦ Creation vs. Evolution
- ✦ Socialism/Marxism vs. Constitutional Republic

In the course of this part of the series we will address these and other issues to provide Pastors more tools and resources in serving what we believe to be a vital role of the local church. Most pastors would agree that sermons are most effective in impacting believers when solid Biblical truths are expounded to make them directly relevant to the needs in people's lives. The above listed and many other issues directly affecting our families merit periodic attention from the pulpit.

## **A-MOTIVATE** CONGREGANTS TO BE GODLY, RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS.

Some of the "Why" regarding the role of the pulpit in addressing current events was covered in the previous section, however the vital effect of motivation warrants separate focus. Simply put, when a lay leader asks individuals in a congregation – or the entire congregation – to do something, it will have limited effect. Exceptions may occur if the lay leader has a unique and prominent role of respect and credibility within the church, but that will be rare. With few such exceptions, the Senior Pastor is the "E.F. Hutton" of the congregation, for those of us old enough to remember those commercials. The slogan was, "When E.F. Hutton speaks, people listen."

The dynamic difference between a request for action given by a lay leader or even another pastoral staff member and one given by the Senior Pastor is quantifiable and dramatic. Some pastors may respond by saying, "Boy, do I wish my congregation would do what I ask!" The fact remains however, that where there is a healthy relationship between pastor and congregation, the pastor is committed to a vision and is willing to exert leadership, many more people will respond and act. A pastor may ask:

- ✦ How can I give my congregation a compelling "Why" to be Biblically responsible citizens?
- ✦ How do I create an environment in which a balanced approach to citizenship is fostered?
- ✦ How do I motivate "the troops" without unnecessarily creating fear and anxiety?
- ✦ What are the foundational principles that will help me motivate them for the long term?

The reality is that if we don't have a compelling "why", we do not care about the "how." Training and equipping people to do something that they are not motivated to do is at best frustrating and at worst a counterproductive use of valuable time and resources. Motivation, therefore, is directly linked with the subsequent section to Educate.

## **A-M-EDUCATE** CONGREGANTS ON THE "WHY" AND "HOW" OF GODLY CITIZENSHIP.

As discussed, a critical element of *effective* and *responsible* action is well-grounded education. Our research and experience reveals numerous topics and principles to cover in building a Scriptural, historical and legal foundation of knowledge for Christians to be Biblical citizens. Those categories include:

- ✚ The critical difference between "politics" and "stewardship"
- ✚ Is "Separation of Church and State" Biblical and Constitutional?
- ✚ The "paper tiger" of threatening a church's tax-exempt status?
- ✚ Biblical Worldview- viewing all of life through the lens of Scripture
- ✚ American Christian Heritage – the truth about the role of Christianity in our founding
- ✚ God's Design for Government – The Biblical and Constitutional purposes of government
- ✚ Effective Community Impact – Practical, responsible involvement to impact our culture and government for Christ

This section provides an overview of each category plus supporting resources drawn from a wide variety of credible scholars, historians, theologians, authors and pastors. We attempted to "boil it down" to the most crucial information. Categories are presented in a strategic order. As mentioned, the "why" is first priority, and more specifically it must be firmly grounded in Scripture for believers. Scripture tells us that "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." How we think determines how we act, and if our thoughts are not generated by a Biblical Worldview the result will be ungodly decisions.

Our next step is knowing the role that Christians and the Bible have played in the development of western civilization, political and religious freedom and civil government. The intentional misapplication of "Separation of Church and State" has deceived many and must be refuted by truth. In addition, we can still make poor decisions in regard to electing leaders and legislation if we do not understand the legitimate function of government as defined by Scripture and proven by history. Finally, we do not want believers to be "dressed up with nowhere to go". The Great Commission says to "Go!", and each citizen will be responsible to apply what they have learned. Those citizens must be fully equipped and informed in a variety of areas in order to know *exactly* how to do that.

## **A-M-E-REGISTER** ALL ELIGIBLE ADULTS IN THE CHURCH TO VOTE.

Once we accept the premise that God ordained the form of government we live under, the following presuppositions must follow. First, since "We the people" ARE the government, it is clearly the right and duty of each citizen to choose our representatives at each level of government. We do that by casting a vote for each position on Election Day, and the qualification for that process is that we be registered to vote according to the laws of our state. The sad truth is that many eligible Christian voters are not registered to vote and have therefore abdicated their responsibility to choose godly leaders. Equally destructive are the majority of Christian voters who do not vote regularly, at all or vote unbiblically.

It is a legitimate role of the local church to assure that every eligible adult is registered to vote and that the registration is current and accurate. That process is simple, compliant with IRS guidelines for non-profit corporations and can be accomplished with a nominal amount of training. Why is this important? Think back only as far as the 2000 Presidential election when the deciding Electoral College votes were determined by less than 600 votes cast. Given that there were 105,405,100 votes cast for President in that election, it is safe to say that EVERY vote counted.

Myriad elections are decided by tiny margins. Therefore, one vote can carry even larger significance in local, low turnout elections.

The bottom line is that *EVERY* Christian American over the age of eighteen has a sacred duty to vote in every election. If God's people do not participate in God's ordained institution of government, it is unreasonable to expect it to reflect God's principles.

# THE AMERICA PLAN (CONTINUED)

## **A-M-E-R-*/INFORM*** CONGREGANTS ABOUT CANDIDATES' POSITIONS, IMPORTANT LOCAL, STATE AND NATIONAL POLICY AND MORAL ISSUES

One of the great frustrations of the responsible Christians who do vote – or at least wish to – is the often confusing and contradictory information available about candidates vying for public office at the local, state and federal levels. An oft spoken – albeit poor - reason for not voting is a lack of credible information about the values and beliefs of candidates. Another critical service the local church can provide is to approve and authorize the distribution of credible, non-partisan voter education materials that provide congregants sound information about candidates' positions on key issues of concern.

A number of Christian organizations research and produce voter guides that comply with IRS guidelines for 501 (c) (3) corporations. The Christian Citizenship Ministry Coordinator and ministry team can use the information in this section to help develop a plan for acquiring and/or producing voter education materials for each election. Also in this section is information about such issues as:

- ✚ Scriptural qualifications for leaders – including those seeking public office
- ✚ How to inform the congregation without being “used” by opportunistic candidates
- ✚ Encouraging those who are called to this area of ministry as workers and candidates
- ✚ Discerning “wolves in sheep’s clothing” who speak “Christianese” well

Also addressed is the effort of liberal interest groups who use threats and intimidation to pressure churches to avoid participation. The threats are groundless and must be faced squarely with legal and Scriptural facts. Throughout history the church has served as the prophetic voice of righteousness to the Kings and governing authorities – until 20th and 21st century America.

The process of gathering credible and sufficient information can be time consuming – particularly for city, county and non-partisan races. We can clearly not afford the alternative of being ignorant of the character, moral values and core philosophy of candidates who will make decisions that directly affect the lives of your congregation. We are all too familiar with the consequences of such ignorance.

## **A-M-E-R-I-*COORDINATE*** WITH OTHER LIKE-MINDED PASTORS IN THE COMMUNITY BY FORMING A PASTOR COUNCIL.

We understand the distinctions between the *Universal Church* (comprised of every follower of Jesus Christ throughout the world) and the *local church* (comprised of those who identify themselves with a specific church body whether they are actual members or simply attend regularly). Very often the denominational, racial and municipal lines that have developed within the Universal Church have served to also separate both Pastors and laymen when it comes to impacting and influencing the culture and government.

The scenario very often goes like this: A “moral crisis” occurs (e.g. school board votes to allow gay clubs on a high school campus, Planned Parenthood is given access to school children to “educate them”, a Sexually Oriented Business plans to open near a neighborhood, etc.) that motivates a pastor to speak out. He takes a few – or even many - members of his church to the public meeting, voices his concerns and subsequently two things occur. Even if effective he is usually greeted with hostility from peers, foes and even within his church.

Very simply, the task of impacting our culture and government with Biblical principles is not the responsibility of “a” local church; it is the fundamental duty of “the” Universal Church. No pastor or church should stand alone with the burden of being the sole prophetic voice of God’s righteousness and justice.

This section provides suggestions and a model plan to develop a team of pastors and their selected lay leaders who will stand together, speak together and act together. Some say it cannot be done, that there are too many “turf”, doctrinal and even ego issues to overcome. Those claims are an offense to the very nature of Christ and the clear Scriptural identity of ‘one body’.

*There is at least a remnant of pastors and churches who CAN and WILL come together for this purpose – will you be part of that remnant? For information on organizing a Pastor Council, contact the Texas Pastor Council. All contact information is below.*

# **A-M-E-R-I-C-A** ***ACTIVATE*** MEMBERS TO EFFECTIVE PRAYER, SERVICE AND CIVIC ACTION IN THE COMMUNITY TO PROMOTE BIBLICAL RIGHTEOUSNESS AND JUSTICE.

If faith without works is dead, then certainly education and training without action is worthless. Often the most difficult step to take is any that moves us away from our established pattern of behavior. If we have not been involved, or if we have been involved in an unproductive – or even unbiblical – way, it is not easy to change our course. This is where the rubber meets the road, however, and will determine both the level and the duration of influence. We have categorized the action into three areas:

- ✚ Pray, Fast and Repent
- ✚ Serve the Community
- ✚ Raise the Standard of Righteousness

We believe that the vital first “action” to change our own hearts, our families, our churches, our nation and our world is sincere repentance and dedicated prayer. We are called to be intercessors as our Lord intercedes on our behalf before the Father and if we attempt to “fix” any of the aforementioned arenas on our own knowledge, wisdom and strength...we know what the results will be. Corporate repentance is a forgotten virtue that our forefathers understood very clearly. On Monday, March 30, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued a Proclamation appointing a National Day of Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer:

*"Whereas, it is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon, and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history: that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord..."*

We also earn the right to speak into people’s lives by our Matthew 24:34-45 service to our “neighbors”. Often our calls for morality in the culture are diluted by an apparent lack of Christ-like love for those suffering injustice around us. If we serve the community FIRST with right hearts, the message of righteousness will not sound like a clanging cymbal.

THEN we MUST raise the standard of righteousness by engaging the culture, speaking against immorality and promoting a Biblical standard of morality and virtue into the culture and government. If applied effectively the above steps have always led to true and lasting societal transformation from the inside out and the bottom up.

## **THE AMERICA PLAN**

**To start a Pastor Council, contact:**

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