

A Manifesto for American Renewal

First, know history. Do not buy into the historical revisions about America's founding and Founders that are so prevalent. The rhetoric is emotional, but it is simplistic and deceptive. It paints these good and noble men primarily as ardent racists and greedy capitalists. This is extremely misleading and unfair¹ (also go here²). Even though the Founders weren't perfect, they still got a great deal right, and Americans through the decades, as well as the world, have benefitted immeasurably because of the sacrifices they made. Wallbuilders³ and WallbuildersLive!⁴ are excellent go-to organizations for reliable information about American history. So is Drive Thru History,⁵ which has a DVD series on pivotal events in America's past.

Second, pray for our country, including both leaders and citizens. Pray for religious leaders, too! We need national reform, including a spiritual awakening. As Christians, we need to be about sharing the gospel⁶ with our family members, neighbors, coworkers, friends, and acquaintances.

Third, as Christians, we need to know our Bibles and **live according to a Christian worldview,** applying biblical tenets in every area of our lives. This means, among other things, being pro-life⁷ in the sense that we will never consider supporting abortion in any form, or any candidate who supports it in any form. It means being pro man-woman marriage⁸ as well. I believe it also means being pro free enterprise.⁹ And it means rejecting the rhetoric and the narrative of social justice — because justice¹⁰ as we see it in Scripture needs no adjective.

Fourth, we must **speak up.**¹¹ As Dietrich Bonhoeffer observed,¹² "Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act."

Fifth, we must **participate in the political process and seek to hold elected leaders accountable.** One possible way to work toward this is through a

movement worthy of our consideration and investigation, the Convention of States.¹³ Reasonable people can disagree about this approach, but it is out there as an option.

Sixth, it is critical that we realize the ideals the Founding Fathers upheld in the Declaration of Independence either are biblical truths or are rooted in biblical truths. Do you say you believe Scripture? If you genuinely do, you cannot reject any of the ten principles we have highlighted in this series. I am not saying the Declaration of Independence is inspired by God as Scripture is inspired by Him. I *am* saying that the Declaration's tenets reflect biblical, eternal truths. Here are five terms we need to try to get people in our country to carefully reconsider, and to understand from the Founders' perspective.

- A respect for **law** is the key to ordered freedom and liberty. By law we mean both natural law — laws that are "self-evident" in nature, and God's moral law. Founding Father Benjamin Rush said, "[W]here there is no law, there is no liberty; and nothing deserves the name of law but that which is certain and universal in its operation upon all the members of the community."¹⁴ Gouverneur Morris, a signer of the US Constitution, said this: "[F]or avoiding the extremes of despotism or anarchy . . . the only ground of hope must be on the morals of the people. I believe that religion is the only solid base of morals and that morals are the only possible support of free governments. [T]herefore education should teach the precepts of religion and the duties of man towards God."¹⁵
- **Liberty** cannot be maintained if people insist on being autonomous, or free to follow their own desires without regard for others or the rights of others.¹⁶ Significantly, the biblical text inscribed on the Liberty Bell is taken from Leviticus, one of the first five books of the Bible. These first five biblical books often are called the Torah, or the Law. Leviticus 25:10 says in part,

¹ <https://bit.ly/2zGcnx1>; <https://bit.ly/371SG4n>

² <https://dailysign.al/30Puax7>

³ <https://wallbuilders.com/>

⁴ <https://wallbuilderslive.com/>

⁵ <https://drivethruhistory.com/>

⁶ <https://bit.ly/3e7t9Ei>

⁷ <https://bit.ly/30zcs00>

⁸ <https://bit.ly/3dWzh25>

⁹ <https://bit.ly/3dV7GOV>

¹⁰ <https://bit.ly/2BZMidd>

¹¹ <https://bit.ly/2YqJkpx>

¹² <https://bit.ly/2YrSEJR>

¹³ <https://conventionofstates.com>

¹⁴ <https://bit.ly/2UCtQxF>

¹⁵ <https://bit.ly/2UAx8BC>

¹⁶ <https://bit.ly/3fkl7bd>

"[P]roclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof."¹⁷

- **Rights** that are consistent with ordered liberty are negative rights, which are innate and endowed by God.¹⁸ These are maintained when government stays out of the way and allows citizens to pursue their dreams, and when the people permit their fellow citizens to achieve and accomplish all they can. As long as an individual's quest respects the rights of others, he or she should be allowed to work to reach his or her God-given potential. Positive rights — rights that government creates, engineers, and maintains, actually are counterfeit rights. The more citizens demand government grant them, the closer the nation moves toward national bondage and even tyranny.
- When the Founders used the word **entitle**, they were referring¹⁹ to a recognition from other nations that "the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God [would] entitle them." This entitlement has a parallel in the "unalienable rights" to which the Declaration soon would refer. Either by implication or directly, Founders linked both the recognition from other nations and unalienable rights to God and His unchanging laws.
- **Equality** is not achieved through government manipulation. Instead, government must recognize it as already present, and work to make sure that, because all people are of equal value and worth, all must be *equally unhindered* from engaging in their own pursuits of happiness. Again, as long as the unhindered pursuits of citizens do not infringe on others' rights, they should be allowed to work to achieve their dreams and reach their God-given potentials.

The critical battles we face are battles of ideas. We need to contend for the Founders perspectives on law, liberty, rights, equality, and the meaning of the word *entitle*. **We need to create a massive movement to educate the public** about these ideas and terms. This is the **seventh** item on our list.

Let's start with our own children. Noah Webster said, "Every child in America should be acquainted with his own country. He should read books that furnish him with ideas that will be useful to him in life

and practice. As soon as he opens his lips, he should rehearse the history of his own country."²⁰

Then let's talk about these matters in our churches. They are, after all, thoroughly biblical. Daniel Webster declared, "If truth be not diffused, error will be."²¹

As Christians, we are agents of truth. Yes, we are to be loving agents of truth, but bearers of truth nonetheless. We are to uphold the truth even when doing so may appear to be unloving. Yet, while the surgeon's knife cuts and therefore wounds, it does so ultimately to bring about healing.

The truth may sometimes be hard, but in the long run it is liberating. Let us get about doing this important work.

Liberty is at stake!

ADDITIONAL STATEMENT

In an article titled "Recapture the Spirit of '76,"²² I highlighted 12 qualities the signers of the Declaration of Independence demonstrated before, as, and especially after they affixed their names to America's founding document. Go here²³ for the list. We must, with God's help, emulate them in 21st-century America in order to preserve the liberties they bequeathed to us.

We in this context includes liberty-loving black Americans and Americans of other minorities, whites, women as well as men, young adults and older ones—all liberty-loving Americans who appreciate the Founders, despite their flaws, and what they bequeathed to us at the founding and the during the early years of this nation. We stand joyfully together, and we stand with firm resolve! The truth is, the Founders themselves set the United States of America on a course that has helped move it ever closer to practicing with an increasing degree of consistency the ideals these noble men initially laid out in the Declaration. Sadly, in other ways we have departed from their convictions, and we are losing our liberties because of it. This is one of the main reasons we need everyone who appreciates liberty and freedom to band together and to call this nation back to its founding principles.

¹⁷ <https://bit.ly/37kZyoc>

¹⁸ <https://bit.ly/2YLY6ri>

¹⁹ <https://bit.ly/2NCgrlk>

²⁰ <https://bit.ly/2YpDW6i>

²¹ <https://bit.ly/30xXg3V>

²² <https://bit.ly/2zugE6Q>

²³ <https://bit.ly/37o3mFo>