

The Truth Project

Lesson 10 - The American Experiment: Stepping Stones

Introduction

Before we leave the subject of the state, we're going to examine a particular example, asking, "What is a proper form for this agency that is divinely appointed to administer justice, punish evil, and encourage goodness among its citizens or subjects?"

In the founding of America, people with a strong Christian worldview were afforded an unparalleled opportunity to create from scratch what they considered an ideal system of government. After we study how the American Experiment began with promise, we'll see how it has gone terribly wrong.

Quote Unquote

What did they say? Fill in the blanks as you watch this presentation.

1. Faith in the prayer-hearing God is an _____ and _____ faith. — *John Dewey*
2. Cursed is all learning that is contrary to the _____. — *Princeton's Founding Statement, 1746*
3. In my view, the _____ is the most important and one of the first things in which all children, under a free government, ought to be instructed. — *Noah Webster*
4. Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, _____ and _____ are indispensable supports. — *George Washington*
5. Religion and good morals are the only solid foundations of public liberty and _____. — *Samuel Adams*
6. The Americans combine the notions of Christianity and _____ so intimately in their minds that it is impossible to make them conceive one without the other. — *Alexis de Tocqueville*
7. Only a virtuous people are capable of _____. As nations become corrupt and vicious, they have more need of masters. — *Benjamin Franklin*
8. Our _____ was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other. — *John Adams*
9. There is no guarantee that I'm aware of in the Bible or anywhere else that this _____, which has produced so much good for so many people, will continue to exist.. — *Robert Sirico*

Notes or Questions

While watching the video, use these lines to record your thoughts, any facts you want to remember, questions that arise, etc.

Hosea 13:6

"When I fed them, they were satisfied; when they were satisfied, they became proud."

Truth 1 - Built on the Rock

America was founded by people who held to a comprehensive biblical worldview.

1. Were you surprised by all the evidence showing how profoundly Christian most of America's founders were? How much of this had you already been exposed to in high school or college?

2. Do you believe that America was in some way created by God himself, or rather that it was just formed by the good intentions of some of His followers? What did the founders say about America's birth? Why?

3. How did a Christian worldview lead the founders to adopt the structure of the federal government that America still enjoys today? Why is it important for each branch to hold separate powers?

Truth 2 - A Nation Adrift

In the late 1800s, America began a long journey away from its founding beliefs and principles.

1. Why did John Adams say that "our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other"? Where does that leave us today?

2. What happens when law becomes based merely on precedent and on society's current notions of right and wrong rather than on biblical principles and the law of nature? When you read about a trial in the news today, how much difference do you detect between what is deemed legal and what is morally right or just?

3. Why do you think it is in vogue today to hate America? How much of it is a response to America's religious roots, and how much of it is a reaction to the nation's drift way from Christian principles?

Truth 3 - "If My People..."

Christians must not abandon America but rather pray and work hard for a return to biblical roots.

1. Is it necessary for a nation to go through the cycle of being blessed by God, then forgetting Him, enduring His judgment, and finally repenting so as to be blessed again? What hopes, if any, do you have that America might return full-circle to its roots? If you are an American what can you do toward that end?

2. How would you describe the church's impact on American culture today? Have Christians lost their ability to be a preserving "salt" in the world? A light in the darkness? If so, what must we do to regain influence in our multicultural society?

3. Do you have a heart for America? A passion for the ideals on which it was founded? How might you, or your friends, have been influenced by those who view America with disdain? How do you think God feels about this nation today?

Wrap Up

Today, America has largely forgotten God and denied the validity of her biblical roots. As a result, we see the power of the state expanding. This is a manifestation of the perennial cosmic battle, which is fought most fiercely in the social realm.

Ultimately, we must face the fact that the American Experiment is likely to fail altogether if we do not take intentional and deliberate steps to salvage it. Just as the experiment was instigated by Christians, so it must be carried on by believers who care deeply and passionately about their country.

What Is What?

Here's an exercise to try on your own. Draw a line from each term in the first column to its definition in the second column. Terms are taken from the lecture.

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| 1. George Washington | a. principal author of the Declaration of Independence |
| 2. Noah Webster | b. political thinker who wrote <i>Democracy in America</i> |
| 3. Alexis de Tocqueville | c. first president of the United States |
| 4. Thomas Jefferson | d. law fundamental to human nature rather than invented |
| 5. <i>New England Primer</i> | e. "the father of American education" |
| 6. natural law | f. law that evolves through previous court decisions |
| 7. case study method | g. law shaped by the state rather than a higher authority |
| 8. American Experiment | h. attempt to establish a nation built on biblical principles |
| 9. United States Constitution | i. document that created a union of sovereign states |
| 10. legal positivism | j. early textbook that taught children how to read |

Check It Out

For your reference and further review, here are some of the key Scripture passages that were mentioned in the video you just watched.

Deuteronomy 8:10-20

Hosea 13:6

2 Chronicles 7:13,14

Romans 13:1-6

Isaiah 33:22

Revelation 2:5