

CHRISTIAN LIFE REPORT

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Dwight David Eisenhower and the Pledge of Allegiance

Dwight David Eisenhower (1890-1969), the 34th President of the United States, was also the Supreme Commander of Allied Forces during World War II. On the night of July 10, 1943, General Eisenhower observed the armada of 3000 naval ships that he had ordered to battle, sailing from Malta to the shores of Sicily. He saluted his men, then bowed his head in prayer. To the officer next to him he commented:

There comes a time when you've used your brains, your training, your technical skill, and the die is cast and the events are in the hands of God, and there you have to leave them.

On June 14, 1954, President Eisenhower supported and signed into law the Congressional Act, Joint Resolution 243, which added the phrase "under God" to the *Pledge of Allegiance*:

In this way we are reaffirming the transcendence of religious faith in America's heritage and future; in this way we shall constantly strengthen those spiritual weapons which forever will be our country's most powerful resource in peace and war.

President Eisenhower then stood on the steps of the Capitol Building and recited the *Pledge of Allegiance* with the phrase "one Nation under God" for the first time:

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

(The *Pledge of Allegiance* was first written in 1892 by a Baptist minister from Boston named Francis Bellamy, who was ordained in the Baptist Church of Little Falls, New York. He was a member of the

staff of *The Youth's Companion*, which first published the Pledge on September 8, 1892. At the dedication of the 1892 Chicago World's Fair on October 12, 1892, public-school children first recited the *Pledge of Allegiance* during the National School Celebration on the 400th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of America. The words "under God" were taken from Abraham Lincoln's famous Gettysburg Address, "...that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth...")

In 1954, President Dwight David Eisenhower, said:

The purpose of a devout and united people was set forth in the pages of The Bible... (1) to live in freedom (2) to work in a prosperous land...and (3) to obey the commandments of God...This Biblical story of the Promised land inspired the founders of America. It continues to inspire us...

In his Inaugural Address, January 21, 1957, President Dwight D. Eisenhower exclaimed:

Before all else, we seek upon our common labor as a nation, the blessings of Almighty God. And the hopes in our hearts fashion the deepest prayers of our whole people.

Dwight D. Eisenhower stated:

The spirit of man is more important than mere physical strength, and the spiritual fiber of a nation than its wealth.

The Bible is endorsed by the ages. Our civilization is built upon its words. In no other book is there such a collection of inspired wisdom, reality, and hope.

(*America's God and Country Encyclopedia of Quotations*, by William J. Federer)

*The articles in this issue were gathered from various sources
The opinions in the Christian Life Report are not necessarily the opinions of the Christian Life Commission*

The Soldier and Religious Freedom

by Otis Corbitt

There is an old saying that soldiering is a young man's game. If that's true, what possessed me at the age of 46, after a twelve year break in my military service, to begin drilling again as a National Guard Chaplain?

The short answer is that God led me to, but there is really a lot more to it than that. I believe that our soldiers who defend our democracy are also defending the world's best chance for religious freedom, without which many people will never come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Let me explain:

My twelve year break in military service resulted from the appointment of myself and my wife as international missionaries in 1995. During our years of service with the International Mission Board we served in places where a Bill of Rights like we cherish in America does not exist. In most of the world's nations the right to religious freedom is either denied or closely restricted. The impact of this on people's lives is hard for Americans to realize. We have grown up in a country where our freedoms are guaranteed in writing in our Constitution. The sad fact is that the vast majority of people in the world do not have the freedom to make up their own mind about whom they will worship and how.

We also don't need to make the mistake of underestimating the religious motives behind the current global war on terror. Those who attacked our country

on September 11 want nothing less than the total domination of the world by their religious faith. In truth, our defense of our democracy is even more important than we realize. Should those extremists who wish to remove the right of the people to worship based on their own consciences prevail, then the cause of Christ will be set back for decades.

Therefore, all who serve in our armed forces do more than just defend our democracy and our way of life. They also defend against those who would take our faith away from us. America is not perfect, far from it, but the rights enshrined in our Constitution and enforced by our government allow each one of us to profess Christ and to worship God as He leads us. Therefore, those who defend those rights and those freedoms are as Romans 13:4 says, "ministers of God" and I am blessed to serve alongside them.

So why do I beat my middle-aged body into submission so that I can serve as a National Guard Chaplain? Because this is one war we don't dare lose. Not just to preserve democracy, but also for the cause of the Gospel of Christ.

(Corbitt is a state missionary and an Alabama (Army) National Guard chaplain)

The Price of Liberty

by Jack Redfearn

Liberty carries a high price tag in terms of human loss. Our founding fathers and those who fought in the Revolutionary War (1775-1783), and all wars since knew they might have to "give their lives" for their "way of life." As a young, eighteen year old Marine going through boot camp at Paris Island in 1975, I recited these words daily for three months: "I am an American fighting man. I serve in the forces which guard my country and our way of life. I am prepared to give my life in their defense . . ." These are only the first three sentences of the Code of Conduct which all of our military men and women are required to memorize. They are good words, sobering words – words that remind soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines that they too may be called upon to make the ultimate sacrifice for liberty.

At times, the cost of liberty becomes deeply personal. On July 23, 2003, my son-in-law, Captain Joshua Byers was killed by a roadside bomb in Iraq. Josh was such an inspiration to me and others he came in contact with. He was a fighting man, a West Point graduate, an Army Ranger – but he was also a "soldier of the Lord." Josh knew how to take the fight to the enemy and "take it to the Lord in prayer." I always referred to him as "the best

of the best" America had to offer a world filled with conflict and war. I miss him so much!

You would not believe the number of people who have asked me if I was angry at our President for sending our military forces into Afghanistan and Iraq, which ultimately cost Josh his life. My reply to these well-meaning folks has always been "Why should I be?" I am not angry at our government, I am angry with the Iraqi soldiers that killed Josh! I am angry that there are people in our world who want to take away our freedoms, especially the freedom to believe in Jesus and share His love with others. I am angry that there are people who want to terrorize this nation that I love.

Americans should not be in "sticker shock" over the price of liberty – not after 233 years of engaging enemies both domestic and foreign. We must be convinced the war on terrorism is a "good fight." I am! Why? Because "I am an American fighting man" who knows that the ongoing conflict we are in will never "be over" until Jesus personally comes back to "take over" our world.

(Redfearn is pastor of West Hartselle Baptist Church and serves on the Christian Life Commission)

Citizen Christians: Their Rights and Responsibilities

by Richard Land

Christians are citizens of two realms—the earthly and the spiritual—and they have *rights* and *responsibilities* in both spheres.

As citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20), Christians are commanded to be obedient to the Lord Jesus (Ex. 20:1-5). Our Lord's instruction to "render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's and unto God the things which be God's (Lk. 20:25) means giving ultimate allegiance only to God. It means paying our taxes. It also means much more.

The apostle Paul instructs us that as Christians we have the responsibility to be good citizens of the state "for conscience sake" because God has ordained government to punish and restrict evil-doers and to reward and protect moral behavior (Rom. 13:1-7). Christians are to support the civil government unless the authorities require a believer to support or to do evil in direct contradiction to their ultimate allegiance to their Heavenly Father.

Christians also are commanded by Jesus to be the "salt" of the earth and the "light" of the world (Matt. 5:13-16).

This involves Citizen Christians in active engagement with the world, preserving as salt and illuminating as light. Thus, the responsibilities of Citizen Christians include not just obedience to the state, but involvement in society.

The *Baptist Faith & Message* confession of faith

affirms this call to involvement with the world when it states that "All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society." The confession also says "In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose...every form of greed, selfishness, and vice," as well as "seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love."

This statement clarifies our *responsibilities* as Christians, and our *rights* as citizens. When we bring our religious and moral convictions into the public marketplace of ideas and involve ourselves in the political arena, we are standing solidly within the best of our traditions as Americans and as Baptists.

Clearly, as American citizens we have the *right* to be involved in the public and legislative arena. As obedient Christians, we have the *responsibility* to be involved.

Citizen Christians are called upon not just to enjoy, but to exercise, not just to preach, but to practice their liberties. Surely, there could be no better thing for Americans and for America than for Citizen Christians to awaken to the *exercise* of their *rights* and to the *fulfillment* of their *responsibilities*.

(Dr. Land is the president of The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention)

Patriotism

by Page Hughes

Do you get chill bumps when fighter jets fly in formation over a sporting event? Do your eyes fill with tears as you look at the rows of graves at Arlington or one of our other military grave sites? Are you grateful when you sing the national anthem and see the American flag being hoisted to full height? When I think of patriotism, these are the images that fill the pictures of my mind.

Patriotism is much more than military jets, grave markers and music. It is the pride that we have because we have been given certain rights and privileges. Each of these emblems represent people who have believed so much in the rights and privileges we have that they fought sometimes to death to protect those rights. We live in a generation that has little pride in it at all. We are an easy come easy go society. We expect things to come quickly and easily to us, and if they don't we give up. This must change if we are to remain a free country.

In November, we will be electing a new leader for our nation. I have heard many who have voiced frustration about the choices of candidates. I have even heard some say they will not vote at all. My heart is broken to hear them say that. It is a dishonor to those who have fought to give us the privilege to vote. We cannot give

up. We must stand up and fight. If you are not pleased with the choices, do something to change it. Vote for local and state legislators who will represent your opinions. Get involved by supporting Christian organizations who lobby legislators. You can always write letters and make phone calls to those who represent you allowing them to know how you feel and the way you would like for them to represent you. The greatest thing we can do is pray. 1 Timothy 2 tells us to pray for everyone, "for kings and all those who are in authority." Philippians 4:6 reminds us "don't worry about anything, but in everything, let your requests be made known to God."

In a time when we feel powerless and at times less than patriotic, I urge you to not give up the fight that those who have gone before us have lost life and limb for. Continue to pray, vote, and be active in keeping up with those who are representing you. If they do not represent you well, vote them out of office and put people in that do reflect your values. We can express true patriotism no matter what age or stage of life as we stay in the fight.

(Hughes is an inspirational speaker and serves on the Christian Life Commission)

FACTS & ISSUES

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SMOKING

A Massachusetts study suggests that restaurant smoking bans may play a big role in persuading teens not to become smokers. Youths who lived in towns with strict bans were 40 percent less likely to become regular smokers than those in communities with no bans or weak ones, the researchers reported in the May issue of the *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*.

Montgomery Advertiser, May 6, 2008

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASE

Alarming is the word used to describe Alabama's teen sexually transmitted disease rate—34 percent of all reported cases of sexually transmitted diseases in Alabama infect teenagers. In other words one in three Alabama teens is infected with an STD. Nationally one in four girls has a sexually transmitted disease.

Montgomery Advertiser, March 23, 2008

Pastor Joe Wright's Prayer

When Pastor Joe Wright, of the Central Christian Church in Wichita, was asked to open the new session of the Kansas House of Representatives in 1996, everyone was expecting the usual politically correct generalities. But, what they heard instead was a stirring prayer, passionately calling our country to repentance and righteousness.

"Heavenly Father, we come before You today to ask Your forgiveness and seek Your direction and guidance. We know Your Word says, 'Woe on those who call evil good', but that's exactly what we have done. We have lost our spiritual equilibrium and inverted our values. We confess that:

- ◆ We have ridiculed the absolute truth of Your Word and called it pluralism.
- ◆ We have worshipped other gods and called it multiculturalism.
- ◆ We have endorsed perversion and called it an alternative lifestyle.
- ◆ We have exploited the poor and called it the lottery.
- ◆ We have neglected the needy and called it self-preservation.
- ◆ We have rewarded laziness and called it welfare.
- ◆ We have killed our unborn and called it choice.
- ◆ We have shot abortionists and called it justifiable.
- ◆ We have neglected to discipline our children and called it building self-esteem.
- ◆ We have abused power and called it political savvy.
- ◆ We have coveted our neighbor's possessions and called it ambition.
- ◆ We have polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it freedom of expression.
- ◆ We have ridiculed the time-honored values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment.



Search us, O God, and know our hearts today; cleanse us from every sin and set us free. Guide and bless these men and women who have been sent here by the people of Kansas, and who have been ordained by You to govern this great state. Grant them the wisdom to rule, and may their decisions direct us to the center of Your will. I ask it in the name of Your Son, the Living Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen."



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