

Chapter 3: I Pledge Allegiance . . .

Go ahead and end the sentence “. . . to the flag of the United States of America.” There it is stated, but what does that mean? In general, when we say the pledge of allegiance, we are stating that we personally pledge allegiance (loyalty, faithfulness, devotion) to our country. A country that is represented by the stars and stripes flag. A country that is a republic that stands as being one nation under God. And as being under God we display the will of God - liberty and justice for all.

My family has held a celebration for this country for many years on the 4th of July - Independence Day, where America celebrates the thirteen colonies claiming independence from England. In that celebration we have always brought out the fact that we are one nation under God. The liberty we have in this country comes from the blessings of God. The justice this country displays for all is because of the Holy God living through believers who reside in this country. When we live as Christ-like individuals then justice is displayed for all. This is why we needed to purge our country of such things as slavery and female injustices. These practices are ones that do not align with the Word and love of God. That is why it was worth fighting for them to be purged from this land.

With that foundation stated, let me express further. Our allegiance has gone too far. We have allowed our freedoms to become what we are holding our allegiance to and not God and His ways. When they take “under God” out of the pledge, that is when I will stop saying it. Because you see it is not this country I am pledging allegiance to, but it is God. Under God, I have been led to be loyal to my governing officials. Under God, I have been led to fight for the freedom of individuals from sin. And under God, I have been led to speak out in the form of this study. That is why I love the ones that are claiming to be homosexuals, but I hate the sin that is destroying their lives. My heart breaks for them and the suffering they are going through. So I strive to always speak the truth in love of God’s Word into their lives. That is why I love the ones that have allowed abortion to be a choice they make, but I hate the sin that led them to feeling they HAD to make this choice. My heart breaks for them and the suffering they are going through. So I strive to always speak the truth in love that God’s Word says the individual they are carrying in their womb is God’s created loved one from the point of conception. But at the same time I share grace of a forgiving God. Grace that they can be redeemed from these sins and healed from the tragic consequences they leave behind. The sin is what I hate, not the sinner. Believers, when are our hearts going to start breaking for the ones that are suffering from sin and stop condemning. When are we going to allow God to penetrate our hearts so much that we look at an individual through His eyes - eyes that love through the grunge and dirt of sin. The sin is what we should hate because God hates the sin. The sinner is the one we should love because God loves the sinner. All sin is tainted in the eyes of God. It doesn’t matter the sin, it pollutes our life. When we are to address sin - ALL sin, even the sin of my life - we should address it with speaking the truth of love that God’s Word states. While I may falter in the way I express this belief, I humbly stand before my Lord each and every day asking Him how I can show His love more. We will address this concept more in chapter nine when we talk about the true Christ Jesus. But for now, let’s absorb from this that our pledge of allegiance is to the Lord and the country He has blessed us to live in. Above all, the decisions we make should be under that rule and none other.

So this leads me to speak of 2016. An election year that has brought to the surface the sin of pride that has overtaken our lives. I will not speak of the ones who ran for office (presidential or otherwise). I will not speak of their behavior, for it only is exemplified because they are at the forefront. I will not speak of a political party over another. As I stated before, my allegiance is to God and God alone. However, I will speak of the sin of pride that has caused us to draw a line in the sand and begin to fight within. America’s greatest enemy is within. From within is where Satan has attacked. He has attacked our lives personally which has led to attacks on the lives of our families. Families are what make up communities and communities are what make up a state and ultimately a country. We have allowed Satan in our lives and, thus, our lives are reflecting pride that has led us to pledge allegiance to our own freedoms instead of

our God. When we pledge allegiance to our own freedoms, we begin to look at our own ways of living and seeking to find out how to live in that way. That is what leads us to redefining relationships, marriages, and ultimately families. Pride is what leads to the sins in our lives.

But when we pledge allegiance to our God . . . let me stop right there, soak in that thought - pledge allegiance to our God! . . . doesn't it make you want to stop and humble yourself. Doesn't the thought of WHO our allegiance belongs to make you want to shrink into the smallest being you can. It does me. I stand convicted before my Lord when I consider my behavior and how it shows my loyalty, faithfulness and devotion (or lack thereof). Humbly we pledge our allegiance to the Lord and when we do so we look to Him as to how we should live our lives. We seek Him to find out what pleases Him. That is what defines the trueness of what relationships, marriages and families were created for in the first place - created to give God all the honor and glory that belongs fully to Him and not ourselves.

Researching and seeking God through His Scriptures has enlightened me to many of these truths. I know with all my heart that God does not desire for families to be broken in the manner our American society has broken them. But we have the delusions, we seek false gods and the leader of all the gods we seek is pride! And pride is a product of Satan. Pride surrounds himself with the advisors of greed and self-dependence. Greed and self-dependence must employ self entitlement, manipulation, and deception. Without these staff members they are out of business. They might as well close shop!

Pride is destroying our families!

I know without a doubt as I study God's Word that the family unit is dear to His heart. And right now His heart is breaking over us allowing the enemy to destroy the families. God established families. He gave Eve to Adam to be his helper in nurturing families to love Him. He told them to be fruitful and multiply because He desired for them, and us today, to know Him more through understanding what it feels like to love someone so much that you would give your life for them. A parent's relationship with their child comes real close to that understanding, but God loves us even more than we can experience in this manner as well. God wants us to realize that the family unit is important for us to understand Him more and learn to love as He loves. This is why the enemy has waged full attack on our families. We need to take back our families. We need to fight against the stronghold Satan has had on them. And that need begins within ourselves.

The other day I had the opportunity to go grocery shopping by myself. Since I didn't have my own children with me, my attention was free to notice the other children in the store. Unfortunately, I also saw how they were ignored. Many times parents on phones were the culprit. However, I will have to say there were several times I noticed an outright ignoring that I know breaks the Father's heart. There was one child that stuck out particularly. She was approximately 5 years old and she walked up to the sandwich meat section and had obviously discovered something they were looking for. "Momma," she said "the meat, the meat." This was repeated several times before I turned my head to see why this child was continuing to repeat herself. To put it simple, the parents were sitting and talking and just outright ignoring the child. Now, I am not judging why the parents were ignoring her. She could be a regular chatty. They could have already acknowledged her and she was continuing to repeat the phrase. However, overall the incident just reminded me how we misplace our focus when we ignore our children. Our children are in great need for attention!! They are in dire need of being taught God's commands. We must put them high on our priority list. God called for us to do so in Deuteronomy 6:7 when He commands us to talk to them regularly and tell them about His commands throughout the whole day. If we do not, then the commands of the Lord will be taught to them by this world. This will mean they will not be taught God's commands at all or they will learn them in a manner that is not real truth. Is this a risk you are willing to take in regards to your children? Not me!

This is an individual problem that is deep within our hearts. The desires of our heart are for something other than what God desires. I notice this readily with the men of our society. My heart has ached as I consider how the Father's heart is breaking over the men He created to lead the families. They have either abandoned the family unit or overstepped their roles all together. This abandonment has been either physically or spiritually. I hear about stories over and over again of how a man who lives in the home might as well not be there because spiritually he is not leading his family towards loving God. Satan has attacked through means like climbing the corporate ladder or other worldly means. They have succumbed to these attacks and their wives are left alone with the family to raise children her own. I applaud the wives who take up the banner of holding God as their Leader above and beyond their husband. It is these wives in whom God has used to bring some stability in the homes of many even in the lack of the father being there physically or spiritually. However, God's heart is still breaking. He desires for the families to function as He intended and for them to seek to love Him because He knows this is what is best for them physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Our Father's heart is breaking over the women of whom He created to be man's helper. Ladies, let me speak to you from one female heart to another. We are quite special in our role as helper to our husbands. However, we can't understand how special we are unless we allow our husbands to grow in the Lord by leading their family. They were created for this role and God desires for them to lead their families in His truths. So many times I have seen in my own life how I have hindered the process of God working in my husband's heart as he is called to lead our family. It is a struggle for the men to come to the conclusions of how they are to lead their family. Women are to help him to overcome that struggle, not create the struggle. Reading in Genesis 2:18-25 we see that God looked at Adam and said it is not good for him to be alone. He brought all the animals before Adam and Adam named them. But in that process God saw that Adam was still in need of someone. That is why God created Eve to be Adam's helper. He created her from a rib and it is my opinion that God did this to show Adam she is to be by his side. Not under his feet and not above his head, but by his side. However, so many times we wives get in the way of our husbands. We try to be overly submissive and thus add to his ego and, in the process, pride is allowed to take over his being. Then there are the times when we lord over him ourselves and make the decisions of life that we should be allowing him to make. This allows pride in the door as well because we embrace it ourselves.

This is not the way God intended the family unit to work. We can see this in the way He created life. He created man first because He wanted a relationship with man and He desired to be the Lord of his life. He then created woman from the man's rib so we would see that she is to be by his side, equal to him in the form of creation, but a helper to him in the form of roles. God is both man and woman's Creator. Through this, we see that He is to be the Leader of both as well. Next we look at the way God arranged for procreation and we see that the man and woman are to have the roles of leadership in the lives of their children. They are to show them how to place God first in the appropriate roles of man and woman as He has established.

Husbands, this is what your wife needs whether she realizes it or not. She needs for you to stop treating her as an equal as this society has taught you and start treating her as your partner and helper as God intended her to be. Wives, realize, we are NOT our husbands equals in the roles we hold nor should we desire to be. My husband was made special by God to be the leader of my family and I was made special by God to be the nurturer who helps my husband develop a God-fearing family. Let's help our husbands see how they are allowing Satan to have a foothold in our families!

Let's get real, believers! Yes, God sent His son to die on the cross for my sins just as much as he did my husband's sins or any other man's sins. As God looks at both of us through the blood of Christ, He sees two children of His. However, He created each of us for a special purpose to fulfill a special need in each of our families and that purpose, while it has the same goal, is NOT equal! It is different and needed to make the family whole as God intended.

Husbands, lead your families in loving the Lord with all their hearts, all their soul, all their strength and all their minds. Don't leave this responsibility to your wife alone. God never intended her to lead the family in this way. He intended her to help you in leading the family in this way.

For single dads and moms, I can just imagine the struggles you endure each and every day as you try to fulfill the roles of dad and mom in your child's life. Know that God has you on His heart and He desires to lead you. Look to Him and don't look to this world. If there is a need for a man or woman to come alongside you in this, He will send them to you. However, that search should not be your priority. You must look to God first as your leader and He will lead you even to an earthly husband or wife if that is His plan.

Let's close shop on allowing Satan to destroy our families. Let's focus our allegiance towards its proper place - God the Father. Let's take back our lives and place them before the Lord asking Him to help us see how we have placed our families before the advisers of greed and self-dependence. If you see the rotting fruits of self-entitlement, manipulation and deception in your home, ask God to show you where greed and self-dependence are hiding out. Ask Him to reveal to you the reality of how you have let pride enter your family!

Dear beloved, wherever you are in life, it is time to close shop on pride! Don't allow this world to lead you - allow God to lead you. It is time you take a stand in your life and start matching your way of living with God's standards. Oh, it took us a long time to get in the state we are in as a society and it will be a long route to align ourselves to God. But when we look toward the Source of all power - Jesus Christ - our strength will be renewed step by step. In Him we will take back our country, our families, and our lives. Through Him we are victorious for He is victorious!

Deepening the Walk

When referring to God's heart breaking it is important that we realize the ramifications of this spiritually. Spiritually what is being referred to is grieving the Holy Spirit. To grieve the Spirit is to act out in a sinful manner, whether it is in thought only or in both thought and deed. To understand what it truly means to grieve the Spirit, let's look at what the Scriptures say in regards to the Holy Spirit.

Read John 14:15-17; 15:7-15. How does Jesus describe the Holy Spirit in these verses?

What are the things Jesus said the Holy Spirit will do?

Read Ephesians 1:13-14. What does this Scripture say about believers in regards to the Holy Spirit?

All believers have the Holy Spirit indwelling in them. However, if they do not allow the Holy Spirit to work in their lives, there is spiritual concern. When we do not place our allegiance to the Father, we will not be in tuned with His Spirit and allow His Spirit to lead us in truth. This will grieve the Holy Spirit within us. How can we know that we are grieving the Holy Spirit? Paul gives us an idea in his epistle to the Ephesians.

Read Ephesians 4:17-32.

In these verses, how does Paul describe we should live as believers? (be detailed in looking over the reading)

We must allow God's Spirit to penetrate our hearts and transform us into being more Christ-like so that we do not grieve His Spirit. Sin in our lives and us allowing sin to rule in our lives is what grieves the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we need to be about the business of pledging our allegiance to the Father and His Spirit. Making ourselves faithful to Him and being obedient to Him.

What should I do when my government seems like it has me captive because it does not honor God? Hmmm . . . sounds like we should look at Daniel to see what he did. Recall He was taken captive (literally) and placed under a government that did not honor the Lord. Let's look at what he did.

Read Daniel 1:1-16. What circumstances was Daniel in? (vs 1-7)

How did Daniel show his dedication to God? (vs 8-14)

What did this dedication end up doing in the end? (vs. 15-16)

We like to read over that story and forget about what Daniel was actually going through. During those 10 days Daniel was going about His Father's business. They (Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah) were being obedient to the Lord and eating in the way the Lord had commanded. In other words, they were showing their allegiance and love for God by being obedient to His Word. Just like Jesus tells us in John 14:15, 23, if we love Him then we will keep his commands. Our first responsibility is to God alone and then we will rise in favor because of God.

Read 1:17-21. What ended up happening to Daniel in the Babylonian government?

It is important for us to note that even though Daniel was serving the Babylonian government, they were still a pagan government. However, Daniel, in staying true to his God, was placed in a position of influence. After all, isn't that what we have been called to do . . . influence and shine our light in the world for Christ?

And could it be that it is in this way that we play our part in reigning with Christ?

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.”

Isaiah 9:6-7

Reflect Upon God’s Desire:

Read Psalm 72. In this psalm, King Solomon is asking God to help his son rule the nation justly and wisely. This psalm points out God’s desire for justice and wisdom in the actions we, citizens of His kingdom, employ. List the desires of God as you see them reflected in the psalm.

Praise, Repent And Yield:

Lord, I **praise** You for . . .

I **repent** of . . .

I **yield** to You . . .