America's founding document. They rang that bell—we know it as the Independence Bell—to summon the people to hear the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence on July 4. After our Founding Fathers unanimously approved the Declaration of Independence, they signed it on July 4 to make it legal, on behalf of the United States of America! Recall that the Liberty Bell rang in celebration. And the very first bell they rang was on Independence Day, July 2, and it was signed on July 4 to make it legal, on behalf of the United States of America. For our Founding Fathers unanimously approved the Declaration of Independence on July 2, and it was signed on July 4 to make it legal, on behalf of the United States of America! Freedom will ring louder, freedom will ring clearer, if Christians all across America will do these five things and “give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.” Just imagine the impact Christians could have on the direction of our government, the character of its leadership, and the moral health of our nation if we all simply applied biblical principles to every aspect of our lives—including our patriotic duty as citizen Christians. Make a commitment today to register to vote, register a friend, vote your values, live your values, and pray for God to bless America! A sound in One Nation Under God. Our Founding Documents (Bethlehem: For Faith & Family Publishing), 18.

For Faith & Family is a ministry of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.
INTRODUCTION:
On July 4, 1776, in Philadelphia, our Founding Fathers signed a document declaring our independence from the tyranny of those who would enslave the minds, the souls, and in many Americas do. It is that with the same document, we not only declared our independence from Great Britain, but we also declared the dignity upon Almighty God. For the Declaration of Independence begins by proclaiming that we are subject only to the laws of nature and nature’s God. Do you remember how 5 ends? It ends with these words: “With a firm reliance upon the power of Providence we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.” Do you know what the word reliance means? It means dependence. The signers of the Declaration were staking everything on God watching over them and seeing them through in their struggle for freedom. “With a firm reliance upon the power of Providence.”

Hear this statement well: Our Founding Fathers did not believe in the separation of God from government. They believed that this nation was founded by God, protected by God, preserved by God, and blessed by God. It all depends on God! And based on that belief, they were willing to pledge their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor. And the nation they sacrificed so much to help found is still intact for us to enjoy its freedoms. May God bless America!

How You Can Have Maximum Patriotic Impact

1. SEEK GOD FOR YOUR GOVERNMENT

> Scripture: (1 Tim. 2:1-4). Notice Paul says: “First of all.”

> Focus on praying for your elected officials at two points:

1. Pray for their wisdom to lead our nation according to the Judeo-Christian principles this nation was founded upon.
2. Pray that they would come to know Christ and be saved (v.4). The only way our nation will be changed is through the Gospel. It will happen in the court rooms, in the State House, in the church. As our nation’s elected officials will lead in such a way that will be able to live “peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness” (v.7).

> Point out that the biggest burden for the health of our nation does not rest on the White House, but on the Church House, it rests on you and me.

> Scripture: (2 Chron. 7:14). If we do not pray for our nation and our leaders, not only will we continue to have little impact on the direction of our government. As Lincoln put it, a “government of the people, by the people, and for the government.

2. SUPPORT YOUR GOVERNMENT

2A. A couple of ways we can support our government:

2. Point out that even though there is a lot of waste and questionable spending, we do benefit from the goods and services provided by the government, such as military defense, law enforcement, roads, schools, libraries, parks, etc.

3. We all have a small part to play. You can take pride in your country as well as pay your taxes to your country and in that way support your government.

3. SUBMIT TO YOUR GOVERNMENT


> Point out that the Greek word for “submit” means to fall in rank under an authority. Government exists to keep order, punish evil and reward good, so we must submit to the rule of law. Christians of all citizens ought to be model citizens. If we rebel against the rule of law, we are in fact rebelling against the God who ordained it (Rom. 13:1-2).

> Point out that we are to show these authorities respect, even when they are less than perfect. Example: Nero was Caesar in that day. We may not have much respect for the man of the office, but we must respect the office of the man. Submit to your government. That said, sometimes you must...

4. STAND UP TO YOUR GOVERNMENT

> Scripture: That God has staked everything on us. God said we are to stand up to our government, to face the test and place for civil disobedience, but it should come only as a last resort. However, if the government commands what God condemns, or if the government prohibits what God promotes then you are obligated to disobey God.

> Examples: Midwives > Pharaoh (Exod. 2:15-23). Daniel > Imperial edict to swear: “Caesar is Lord” or else you will be thrown into the lions’ den. Daniel > King Darius (Dan. 6:1-23). Christians > Imperial edict to swear: “Caesar is Lord” or else you will be thrown into the lions’ den. Christians > Emperor (Matt. 10:13, 5:10).

> Scripture: (Rom. 13:12). The men of the church were to be “subject to the governors, for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.” Christians must obey the government if it is not against God’s law. Christians must support the government if it is not against God’s law. Christians must obey God even when it means disobeying the government.

5. SELECT YOUR GOVERNMENT

> Focus on: There are many ways we can participate in our government, such as helping with a voter registration drive, commenting on legislation and public policy, speaking out on moral and social issues, hosting public office, campaigning for a candidate, volunteering for the election commission, etc. The most basic form of participation is voting—selecting our government. Voting is a simple act with a significant impact. When we vote, we help determine who will lead our nation, make our laws, and protect our freedoms.

> Quote: Founding Father Samuel Adams said, “Let each citizen remember at the moment he is offering his vote...that he is executing one of the most solemn trusts in human society for which he is accountable to God and his country.”

On iVoteValues.org you will find three action steps on voting.

Step 1: Register to Vote

Statistics: Statistics: According to the U.S. Census Bureau, as much as 28 percent of the voting age citizenship was not registered in 2004. That translates to about 55 million Americans!

> Action Point: Registering to vote is easy to do. Fill out the Voter Registration Form and return it to the county election office. We have people who are here to help.

Step 2: Register a Friend

1. Take your friend a Voter Registration Form and help fill it out.
2. Send your friends an e-Card from iVoteValues.com where they can fill out their form online, print it, and mail it.
3. Help organize a voter registration drive in your service club, school, place of business, etc.

Step 3: Vote Your Values

Statistics: In 2004, less than two-thirds of eligibles Americans voted. Of self-declared evangelicals, numbering around 51 million, the percentage is worse — nearly 40 percent did not go to the polls in 2004. The Christian community, which has been commanded by Christ to engage our culture as salt and light (Matt. 5:13-16) and participate in government (Matt. 22:21), must seize these opportu- nities to vote. So go against the raging tide of apathy in America—Vote!

> Saying: Old proverbs that is still true: “Bad politicians are elected by good people who don’t vote.”

> Pray: Simply voting is not enough; you must vote your values. Every candidate has his or her own set of values and positions on important issues.

> Questions to ponder: Don’t you think that where a candidate stands on the issues is far more important than the party he or she belongs to? Should we vote for candidates who share our values?

> Point out: Many believers don’t even consider their values when voting, often choosing candidates whose positions are at odds with their own beliefs and values. Scripture: Recent studies by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life shows that between 50 and 60 percent of Americans say their faith has little to do with their voting decisions.

> Action Points: Jesus expects us to let our faith influence every part of our decision making—including the democratic process (Matt. 5:13-16).

1. Be informed on the issues.
2. Study the party platform statements.
3. Know what the candidates stand for.
4. Check out the candidate’s website.
5. Learn about their friends and their enemies.
6. Weigh the candidates’ values against biblical values.

> Peacefully choose the ones who most closely match up with your values.

www.iVoteValues.org is a great place to start. Remember, how you vote today impacts tomorrow!

> Scripture: Prov. 29:22.

> Quote: Our nation’s first Supreme Court Justice, John Jay, said: “It is the duty, as well as the privilege and interest of our Christian nation, to select and prefer Christians for their rulers.”

> Caution: Aligning ourselves too closely with a political party or a politician is unreward, because we need to be free to call all political parties and politicians to repentance when they step outside of biblical morality and principle.

> Quote: Founding Father Benjamin Rush is quoted as saying: “I have been alternately called an Aristocrat and a Democrat. I am neither. I am a Christocrat.”

> Point Out: Our loyalty needs to be with the Lord Jesus Christ. Strongly consider voting for candidates who believe like you do. Don’t just vote—vote your values!

> Question: Examine your core values as you approach Election Day. Would you feel comfortable to have the War on Terror, National Security? Health Care? Economy? Education? As important as these issues are, think about what your core values are. You should be as a followers of Jesus and how they apply to your patriotic impact on the leadership and laws of our nation. Mention these: Life, Family, and Freedom.

> Life: Life is precious. Miraculous, delicate. Created by a loving God who makes every human being unique (Ps. 139:15-16). Life made in the image of God is a fundamental, God-given right. According to the Declaration of Independence, “All men are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights. Among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” Therefore, human life should be protected. Defended. Rescued.


> Action Points: Find out where the candidates stand on the value of life. Ask what their position on abortion, destructive embryonic stem-cell experimentation, cloning (SNT), and euthanasia. We value life. Second, we value...

> Family: Family is essential. Basic. Necessary. The family is the basic building block of society, and the first institution created by God (Example: Gen. 1:29). As goes the family, so goes the nation. Unfortunately, the family as God intended it is an endangered species in America.

> Statistics: U.S. Census figures from 2005 and 2006 show that the...