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*If this is not the bottom, then how deep does this pit go?*

This was the question of a distraught parent whose child is daily indoctrinated in the socially left curriculum of a New York public school. Although the school system claims that it is bankrupt, it did find enough money to publish a new curriculum that teaches the acceptance of homosexuality in the first grade and mutual masturbation in junior high. "Condoms," say some parents, "are given to the students instead of textbooks; and classes in how to practice various forms of immorality have become a substitute for the three R's."

Little wonder former education secretary William J. Bennet gives our nation a failing grade. In his *Leading Cultural Indicators* research, he has shown that during the past thirty years there has been

- a 560 percent increase in violent crime
- more than a 400 percent increase in illegitimate births
- a quadrupling in divorce rates
- a tripling of the percentage of children living in single parent homes
- more than a 200 percent increase in the teenage suicide rate
- and a drop of almost 80 points in SAT scores

No matter how much the government spends on pathologies, he says, the situation is only becoming worse: "Many of the most serious social and behavioral problems we now face (particularly among our young) are remarkably resistant to government cures."

Never before have our children been less cared for, less emotionally healthy, and less prepared for life. When novelist Walter Percy was asked what concerned him most about the future of our nation, he said, "Probably the fear of seeing America, with all of its great strength, beauty and freedom . . . gradually subside into decay through default and be defeated, not by the Communist movement, demonstrably a bankrupt system, but from within by weariness, boredom, cynicism, greed and in the end *helplessness before its great problems.*"

Helplessness before its great problems! Resistant to government cures! When a Chicago newspaper asked its readers for suggestions on how to stop the alarming crime rate in the inner city, the response (even from church leaders) was largely silence. How ironic that our nation with its mighty resources is unable to restore respect for human life, commitment in marriage, and care for children. Even secularists are

beginning to realize that our problems are not educational, not cultural, and not even moral, but spiritual. *We have lost our way.*

If we could speak to our “Founding Fathers,” they would tell us simply, “You have forgotten God.” Historians can debate the details of what each of them believed, but all of them firmly agreed that faith in God was the foundation of democracy. Respect and decency cannot be maintained apart from a belief in God and moral absolutes. As the saying goes, when men cease believing in God they do not believe in nothing; rather, *they believe in anything.*

Will America be given another chance? Will God again be honored in our homes, schools, and courts? Do we have reason to believe that “In God We Trust” will be more than an anachronism still engraved on our coins but not on our hearts? Can we win the battle for America’s heart and soul?

Thankfully, there are tens of thousands of Christians who are swimming against our cultural stream, refusing to be intimidated by social pressures, the agenda of the media, and the world’s seductive values of wealth and pleasure. When sounding the alarm, it is easy for us to fall into the “Elijah syndrome,” who in a moment of skewed perspective cried out, “I have been very

zealous for the Lord the God of hosts . . .  
And I alone am left; and they seek my life to  
take it away" (1 Kings 19:14).

He thought the whole nation had collapsed into paganism! But to this doom-and-gloom prophet, the Lord gave this startling reply: "Yet I will leave 7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him" (v. 18).

As we shall see later, not all news about America is bad. There are many Elijahs who are sounding the trumpet. But we must also candidly admit that no country has had more Christian radio stations, more books, more seminars, and more churches with proportionately less impact on society. If, as Elton Trueblood has said, the strength of the church should be determined by its impact on its surrounding culture, we desperately need an injection of spiritual life. We are confounded with the pollsters who tell us that religion is up but morality is down.

Ideally, we could win our cultural war through the positive impact of individual Christians living out their faith wherever God has planted them. Some think there are faint signs that the nation is moving away from the socially left policies of our educators, entertainers, judges, and politicians. Perhaps