CAN CHRISTIANS BE PATRIOTS?

Contributed by Jim Jordal
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By Jim
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Nathan said to David, "You
are the man. This is what Yahweh, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king
over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. I gave you your
master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house
of Israel and of Judah; and if that would have been too little, I would have
added to you many more such things. Why have you despised the word of
Yahweh, to do that which is evil in his sight? You have struck Uriah the
Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have slain
him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword will
never depart from your house, because you have despised me, and have taken the
wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.'   2
Sam. 12:7-10 WEB

In this
biblical example, King David’s arrogance and lust got the better of him as he
took the beautiful Bathsheba, another man’s wife, for himself; then had the
innocent husband, Uriah, killed in battle; then mounted a conspiracy to cover
it all up. Sounds like it could happen today, doesn’t it? But the dastardly
deeds couldn’t be hidden from the Lord, who sent the prophet Nathan to confront
David with these unequivocal words, “You are the man.”

These days
we hear much about patriotism as both political parties and most candidates
wrap themselves in the flag as they propound great theories as to what’s wrong
and what they will do about it. But we the public need to judge for ourselves
whether candidates are merely posturing for the news cameras, or whether they
really intend to identify and deal with the pressing issues of the day.

On the
surface there appears to be little conflict between Christianity and
patriotism. After all, weren’t some of our greatest patriots and Founding
Fathers like George Washington and most of the members of the early government
also Christians? And William Bradford, governor of the Plymouth colony, said on
many occasions that he believed God had directly founded the American colonies
to carry forward God’s work on earth.

But today
the definition of patriotism assumes new meaning because of the vast number of
national values and behaviors that appear directly antithetical to Christian
biblical principles. So is a patriot one who supports government and its
leaders, right or wrong? Does a patriot blindly support militarism whatever its
motivation, goals, or outcomes? Does a patriot favor a government/corporate partnership
aimed at producing ever-more goods at whatever the cost to the environment?
Does a patriot refuse to criticize government whatever it does? And does a
patriot always support the same political party with no thought of
discriminating voting?

You’ve
probably heard all of these professed by zealots as true patriotism. And you’ve
no doubt heard the opposite of these beliefs labeled as “unpatriotic,” or even
treasonous. So is someone who questions government policy or action really
unpatriotic? Are they a danger to freedom and public order?

Real
patriots don’t unthinkingly “go with the flow.” As Texas political commentator Jim
Hightower says, “…even a dead fish can go with the flow.”

 When the prophet Nathan confronted King David
with his grievous sins of adultery, murder, and conspiracy by leveling the
charge: “You are the man,” was he acting in an unpatriotic manner, or was he
exercising real patriotism by confronting evil in government?

Real
patriotism is daring to speak out and then be willing to act against evil
wherever it is found---in government, corporations, schools, medical facilities,
the military, or anywhere else. Anything less is merely courting public favor
without serious risk. When you hear candidates speak, consider these points.

Yes,
Christians can be patriots. All it requires is a bit of biblical knowledge,
some common sense, and the courage to resist entrenched injustice.