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Walk Humbly with Your God

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Walk Humbly with Your God

Abstract

"For much too long now, the United States has relied more on its military than any other means to bring about peace."

Posting about a Biblical response to world problems from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/walk-humbly-with-your-god/>

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Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

Walk Humbly with your God

 [all in allthings.org/walk-humbly-with-your-god/](http://allthings.org/walk-humbly-with-your-god/)

Charles Veenstra

As we come to the end of 2015, we as a nation reflect on major events of the past year and should determine how to move forward. A presidential campaign year seems to make all the more urgent our need to consider what God requires of us in terms of promoting justice and loving mercy.

Two themes emerge, and both are significantly related to the Middle East. The first consists of American attitudes toward the mass exodus of Syrians from their homeland because of the complicated Syrian civil war. The second theme involves the quick hope in our country that reliance on the U.S. military will solve most problems in the Middle East.

The brutality of all parties drives the Syrians out while the West scrambles to address the challenge. We have all seen the stories of boatloads of refugees trying to get to the mainland of Europe, Syrian families walking many miles in the hope of freedom, being held back by Hungary — all while Western countries try to decide how many refugees each country can take. The United States is moving slowly in talking about accepting only a few.

Recent terror attacks in Paris, San Bernadino, and other places fuel American attitudes against taking in refugees. Because these terrorists apparently are Muslims, we now hear many who say we should not allow any Muslims into our country. The same attitude is demonstrated toward Hispanics who wish to enter through the southern border of the United States. This anti-immigration spirit is fueled by the presidential campaigns.

What is at work here is a self-centered and selfish attitude from many in our country. They seem to have forgotten their history. Perhaps they don't even know about the tragedy of the S.S.St. Louis in 1939 when 900 Jews from Europe were not permitted to set foot in the Cuba, the United States, or Canada. They have forgotten the stories of grandfathers who immigrated to this country in the hope of seeking a better life. They have ignored God's command to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Rather than taking on responsibility for sponsoring refugees, many Americans look to the government to protect them from refugees and terrorists. Citizens want government to serve their own selfish interests. Increasingly, the sphere of government seems to be taking a larger role than several other spheres in society. We look to government to do things citizens should do, such as caring for refugees. Americans seem to want a huge wall to protect themselves, even though walls never work.

The second issue is closely related to the first. All of us know of recent ISIS attacks in Syria, Iraq, Paris, and other places. Notice that the first reaction of Americans is that we must destroy ISIS and the only way that can be done, according to many, is through military force. America celebrates the military. The flag is almost sacred; we are told to hold our hearts while the national anthem is played and we pour large amounts of money into military coffers. Now we hear candidates say that we must cut the head off of ISIS through military power and now that includes Americans on the ground as well as significant air strikes. That is the only response many have.

Will those two perspectives — asking the government to take care of our selfish interests and relying on military force to solve world problems — work? No. The heart of an America that turns away refugees will only grow colder. An America which relies heavily on military force will likely become more belligerent.

John Mearsheimer, an expert on the Middle East, claims that military force will not defeat ISIS. It is possible that ISIS would lose some battles, but then it would melt away into the towns, countryside, and mountains, then come back to fight another day. He says that you do not use military force to defeat an ideology.

For much too long now, the United States has relied more on its military than any other means to bring about peace. While its intentions may be good, its practices are not. For example, for many years, the U.S. refused to talk and listen to the dictator of Syria, Bashar Al-Assad. Until recently, we could say the same for Iran. When the Arab Spring made its first appearance in Syria in 2011, the first thing the U.S. Secretary of State said was that Assad had to go. The U.S. failed to recognize that Assad had maintained peace for a long time in Syria, including protection of Christians. Now, more than four years later, many thousands of people have been killed, the country has been destroyed, millions of Syrians have been displaced, and ISIS has gained a foothold in that area.

How should we move forward? Clearly, we must “walk humbly with our God.” When we walk humbly, we learn to listen. Why have many Muslims rejected American culture? How could they interpret Christianity as the same thing as American culture? When we take time to listen to others, we demonstrate respect. We learn how they think. Then, we can calmly explain how the dominant secular American culture is not Christian.

We must pick up on the element of mercy in Micah 6:8. That means compassion, which is in really short supply today. We see almost no compassion for any immigrant — Syrian or otherwise. In fact, self-centered approaches almost always exclude compassion. Check how well your candidate demonstrates compassion.

Christians need to lead the way with the famous Micah passage as our guide. We need to show others how to listen and how to show compassion. By the way, the news media often likes to run stories that illustrate compassion.

One more urgent final requirement. II Chronicles 7:14 stresses the need for prayer. Prayer must include all world leaders — even the ones we do not like.