

## *Are we on our knees yet?*



By Bill Johnson

American Decency Association hosted its annual conference at the Sunshine Community Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan with Steve Coughlin serving as the first speaker of the evening.

It was good that Coughlin's message was first. It was a foreboding message laden with heavily documented details forecasting ominous days ahead for the freedom of speech, liberty, and for American sovereignty.

Janet Porter presented a stirring message that drew a standing ovation as she shared details regarding heroic efforts that sought a rehearing of the Obergefell vs. Hodges (Supreme Court marriage decision) in which Justices Kagan and Ginsburg should have recused themselves from the decision-making process as they had both officiated at same-sex "marriage" ceremonies before the Supreme Court ruling.

Porter shared accounts where individuals, such as Phyllis Schlafly, President of Eagle Forum, had seemingly single-handedly overcome great odds to oppose destructive national political policy defeating the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Pastor Anthony Moore's Biblical message out of 2 Kings 6:6 where God answered acts of faith of Elisha by raising an iron axe head from the bottom of the Jordan River that had fallen off an axe and sunk to the depths of the waters.

Pastor Moore's message stirred the audience with Gospel hope as he reminded that God still does what seems impossible.

The audience of nearly 400 showed their affirmation by giving a standing ovation for Moore's powerful, hope-filled message.

The three-hour gathering, though marked with serious discourse, was anything but a "woe is me" evening. Judging by the evaluation sheets and conversations concluding the event, attendees were thankful for the realistic assessments provided by the speakers, but also for the speaker's solid acknowledgement of the power of God and His faithfulness to a wayward people.

Coughlin's message was jaw-dropping in its portrayal of what seemingly is the suicidal, self-inflicting destruction of America. As my wife Jan and I spent time with Steve, we saw a man passionately called to warn and teach whomever he can to understand the urgency America faces opposing an enemy that we have failed to name which incrementally is destroying America from within by our own lethargy and stupification. Coughlin's belief (widely accepted by conservative thinkers, Constitutionalists, and activists) is that the Muslim Brotherhood's long term plan to undermine America is far more advanced than most believe.

Part of Coughlin's message is that Islam has been at war with America for over 30 years and that our leadership categorically refuses to acknowledge Islam as the enemy.

Other knowledgeable experts such as Frank Gaffney, General Jerry Boykin, Michelle Bachmann, and Congressman Louis Gohmert (R-Texas) agree with that assessment.

Coughlin was often cited as the Pentagon's

leading expert on Islamic law and was in demand as a lecturer at leading Defense training institutions, including the Naval War College, Marine Corps HQ-Quantico, and at Staff, Command and Division levels, as well as for the FBI and other agencies and private sector groups.

The effectiveness of Steve Coughlin's briefings did not go unnoticed by the Muslim Brotherhood either. And, on January 3, 2008 his briefings were abruptly halted when Coughlin was notified by government officials that his contract would not be renewed as his message had become too "politically hot."

Coughlin was removed from his direct and critical role in strengthening United States military leadership at the highest levels for identifying Islam as the enemy, for providing military leadership with clear identifying markers of the enemy, characterizing and defining their strategy to destroy America from within.

One of the great obstacles Steve Coughlin faces, is the near impossibility of getting people to understand the depth and breadth of the penetration of the Muslim Brotherhood into our societal and governmental fabric.

This issue likely will be with us for a long time and has the potential of bringing us into captivity under a totally different system of thought and submission. This is not hyperbole. Are we on our knees yet?



From the desk of Bill Johnson

### We must rise!

I have never relished standing alone. But, by the grace of God, I have done it. As I have stood alone in His name, I have found it exhilarating in the Lord. *Blessed are they who ...*

There is, I believe, an ever deepening regard and kinship experienced with those who are standing alone (for righteous reasons) with great opposition against them.

Steve Coughlin’s message, though extremely concerning and even intellectually challenging, was recognized by most at our conference as exemplary and a calling out to hear and take very, very seriously that all is not well in our beloved homeland.

It can seem like all is well because we can still go to the church of our choice. Or not go to church. We can still vote even if those who we vote for break their campaign promises (i.e. Mitch McConnell, John Boehner). CNN, MSNBC, Fox are still broadcasting the news, or are they? Is this what the land of the free is all about or is it more than this?

But what if all is not necessarily well? There are many warning signs right in front of our eyes. Yet, for a variety of reasons many are neglecting to see them for what they are. WARNINGS. What to do?

#### Abraham Lincoln stated it this way:

*The dogmas of the quiet past, are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise – with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country... We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best hope on earth.*

This, my friends, is my concern and fear - that we are in great danger of losing the last best hope on earth.

Yet, most are incapable of hearing and understanding that warnings are being sounded as millions upon millions are too busy playing games on their cell phones or chatting with their “friends” on Facebook and/or willfully turning their minds and their rationality away from the rapidly expanding threat that is spreading into America.

My committing so much focus upon Coughlin is no disrespect to our other conference contributors, Janet Porter and Pastor Anthony Moore, for they received even far more complimentary comments for their presentations and their spirit-filled messaging. They were outstanding and their messages of hope were realistic and Biblical because indeed - “Light Wins!” In Christ, no matter what our circumstances - whether the Christian dressed in an orange suit along with 25 others kneeling before ISIS terrorists with knives lifted poised to cut off a head, or the 45 year old who has just found out that his/her cancer has spread to his liver, kidney, intestines - Christ is the victory that overcomes the world!

#### In Christ, we have abundant life both now and eternally!

But Lincoln’s words of long ago cut once again for those recognizing the urgency of our day: *The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise – with the occasion. ...*

Coughlin has risen to the occasion. He was called upon by the Army to research the subject of Islam in order to do a threat analysis. He did what he was asked. As a result of his acquired expertise through two years of diligent study, he was targeted and taken down by Muslim Brotherhood military insiders. He and his threat analysis were purged.

*As long as they can keep us from understanding the enemy doctrine, they can keep us from winning the war. There is no knowing this enemy without understanding that doctrine, and there is no victory without knowing the enemy. These are facts. We can lose a war— and our country— for want of readily available facts, which are ignored according to policy. Meanwhile, the main*

*thrust of the enemy’s advance continues unabated because our policymakers refuse to this day to recognize it for what it is. The Muslim Brotherhood sits on the board that advises our “Countering Violent Extremism” policy. The United States partners with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to discuss the implementation of its Islamophobia agenda against U.S. citizens. Our leaders apply government pressure to ordinary U.S. citizens and residents who engage in actions completely within the bounds of First Amendment practices but outside the acceptable boundaries of Islamic law. Our Department of Defense blames our troops when they are murdered by the very partners they have been ordered to help. ... We don’t have the situational awareness to recognize what is happening right before our eyes. ...*

*Time for corrective action is running out. Thirteen years after al-Qaeda’s attack on September 11th, we are further from understanding the enemy, further from victory, than we were on September 12th. The enemy’s doctrine tells him he is not supposed to strike us until he judges that we have already been defeated in our own minds. That fact carries with it some troubling connotations regarding just how far along the enemy perceives us to be on the path to defeat. When that point is reached, the civilization jihadists expect they will be able to tap lightly anywhere along the fragile house of cards on which our strategy in the War on Terror was built, and the entire edifice will come down. They may be right.*

~ Stephen C. Coughlin, *Catastrophic Failure*

Will America wake up and return to God - or are we like Israel of old doomed to be carried away captive by enemies without?

# What Does the Rainbow Mean for Gays?

by Dieudonne Tamfu - DesiringGod.org



What do you think of when you see the rainbow flag?

Most likely, you think of homosexuality or the wider LGBT movement. Gilbert Baker, the man credited with pioneering the celebratory rainbow flag flying over the gay movement, recently lauded his craft, noting that it's something beautiful. He answers those who think it's not, saying, "The rainbow's in the Bible. It's a covenant between God and all living creatures." According to Baker, the God of the Bible knows the struggle of gays and lesbians, and that is where he finds hope.

God does indeed know the internal and social battles of gays and lesbians, but the question is, Does he approve of their practice? Would God approve of their use of the rainbow to symbolize this movement?

The Supreme Court's decision on gay "marriage" has made the rainbow symbol ubiquitous. Those who celebrate so-called same-sex marriage are painting social media with rainbow colors. Even the White House was lit up with red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple.

God designed the rainbow to symbolize something far greater and far more glorious than homosexuality, and if those in the homosexual community truly understood and embraced the symbol they are waving in their hands, they would experience true freedom and peace.

Throughout Scripture, the rainbow symbolizes God's glory — the radiance of his beauty, holiness, and perfection.

Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appear-

ance of the brightness all around. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell on my face. (Ezekiel 1:28)

And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald. (Revelation 4:3)

Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head, and his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire. (Revelation 10:1)

None of us have beheld God's glory with our eyes. The rainbow gives us a picture of the beauty believers will see when God comes again to live on the earth and to fill it with his glory (Habakkuk 2:14). In that day the lofty pride of all men, including gay pride, will be brought low, and the Lord alone will be gloriously exalted.

In Scripture, the rainbow also displays God's grace towards all humanity. When God enters into covenant with Noah, after destroying the sinful world with the flood, he vows that he will never again destroy the world in that way.

God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth." (Genesis 9:12-17)

To this day, the rainbow symbolizes that promise. According to Genesis 9, as long as the rainbow hangs in the sky, God will mercifully and graciously restrain his anger

towards humanity.

God is patient. The fact that he has refrained from sending another flood to destroy the world does not mean that he accepts homosexual practices, or any other kind of sin. God's covenant with creatures and the rainbow in our sky do not mean that sinners have nothing to fear. Rather, this kind of mercy shows us that God is patiently waiting for all, including homosexuals, to believe. God's gracious display of patience is meant to lead to repentance from sin (Romans 2:4), not celebration of sin.

Let us not be deceived. If God put a rainbow in the sky to symbolize the constraint of his anger, then he is still angry, and justly so because men are still sinners, as they were before the flood. One day, his anger will be restrained no more. The sky with its rainbows will be rolled up as a scroll, and our King Jesus will come from heaven in vengeance to defeat all of his enemies. And who are Christ's enemies but those who oppose the gospel and live lawless lives, scorning their Maker?

Let us, therefore, pray that the rainbow would point the LGBT community to God's grace, glory, and patience, and that God would bring them to repentance. Let us pray that those in the homosexual community would look past the rainbow to the final solution for God's anger towards sin. Christ's atoning death on the cross appeases God's anger forever, so that everyone who believes in Jesus is holy and blameless in God's sight.

The next time you see a rainbow flag, think of this. One day soon, God's glory, now seen dimly in the rainbow, will be fully revealed and draw everyone to worship. God's glory will fill the earth. The glory of the LGBT movement will soon fade, but God's glory and love toward those forgiven by faith in Jesus will last forever.



# Responses from our Conference



Here are a few comments from some of our conference attendees.

*The whole event was totally amazing – well put together. Our teenage children felt it was very informative and helpful as well. We hope to bring more people with us next time!*

*You did a good job! Forward, in the name of Christ!*

*Enlightening, but also encouraging.*

*Excellent – impactful.*

*Keep on with what you are already doing!*

*Thank you!! Very insightful!*

*Thank you for all you are doing for our freedoms.*

*Great stuff. Thank you!*

*Keep it up!*

*It was great!*

*Have it more often!*

*It was wonderful – thank you.*



Steven Coughlin



Janet Porter



Pastor Anthony Moore

## Comments about our speakers

*Janet focused on the power of prayer and God. Gives us hope and more of a drive to make a difference. Please get her back to motivate & move us from being passive.*

*Amazing encouragement!*

*Great, uplifting message. Great close!*

*Speaks on our level – motivating.*

*Excellent message!*

*Loved her message and her passion!*

*Very heady stuff!*

*Amazing message!*

American Decency Frontline  
Vol. XXIV, Issue VIII  
Published monthly by  
American Decency Association

Bill Johnson, President and Founder  
bjohnson@americandecency.org

Lisa Van Houten, Executive Assistant  
Kimberly Cargill, Administrative Asst.  
Chris Johnson, Technical and Web  
Development

P.O. Box 202  
Fremont MI 49412-0202  
Phone: 231-924-4050  
Fax: 231-924-1966  
www.americandecency.org



## We Must Speak for the ‘Specimens’

by Chris Johnson



This is my young son, Calvin Paul.

At the time this picture was taken, he was 10 weeks old. That means that roughly 25 weeks earlier, he could legally have been forcibly removed from the uterus and had his body parts sold for medical research.

I could describe the method used to kill babies like my son as they're violently removed from their mother's womb, but frankly I can't cope with putting those words on the same page as my baby boy's name.

This, however, is standard procedure for America's largest, taxpayer funded abortion provider - Planned Parenthood.

The Center for Medical Progress dragged this atrocity into the light with an undercover video shot by actors posing as buyers from a human biologics company as they discuss purchasing the organs of children with the Senior Director of Medical Services for Planned Parenthood over lunch.

"We've been very good at getting heart, lung, liver, because we know that, so I'm not gonna crush that part," says Dr. Deborah Nucatola as she crunches her salad, "I'm gonna basically crush below, I'm gonna crush above, and I'm gonna see if I can get it all intact."

Sickeningly, as the drugs often used to kill the baby before the abortion would render the organs unusable, all that crushing is done to a live infant.

Since that first video was released on July 14, a similar undercover project was released by the same group on July 21, and then a third on the 28th. The Center for

Medical Progress says it has enough footage to keep this subject in the national conversation for months.

The second video shows abortionist and director of Planned Parenthood Pasadena and San Gabriel Valley, Mary Gatter, bargaining with another set of undercover pro-life activists posing as buyers over the price of each "specimen" from her clinic.

She recognizes the difficulty that the doctor performing the abortions would have to use a "less crunchy" method, so that the "specimen" would remain intact, which would violate the agreement with the patient that they're not changing their care as a means to collect the "tissue," i.e. Baby's livers, hearts, etc. However, she seems quite sure that wouldn't be a problem.

Of course, they're not in it for the money, she hastens to point out, although later she jokes that she hopes to buy a Lamborghini with the profit.

The third and most recent video (at the time of this writing) interviews a former "procurement specialist" for one of the companies which buys organs from Planned Parenthood, and also shows undercover footage as an actual employee of the company digs through the remains of an aborted child, finding useable parts.

The former employee recounts how on her first day of work, when she was told to pick a leg out of a Petri dish, she passed out. When she awoke, they told her that many "procurement specialists" never get over the nausea.

As President Barack Obama once said, "Thank you, Planned Parenthood. God bless you."

I apologize for the nausea that you are likely feeling right now as you read about these atrocities which are not only legal, but which we are involuntarily funding with our tax dollars. However, the heinousness of Planned Parenthood's little side business, let alone their larger business of providing

abortions, cannot be downplayed. We must see the gruesome reality so that we can respond with appropriate action.

We need to keep the pressure on our representatives in Congress until this inhumane, barbaric organization is defunded. The bile raised by these revelations gives us our best shot in years at dismantling some of the damage Roe has done.

These videos are not even the first of their kind. The Live Action organization has been releasing videos for years documenting Planned Parenthood's cover up of statutory rape, human trafficking, and myriad other atrocities all while the organization receives somewhere in the ballpark of half a billion dollars in U.S taxpayers' money every year.

As the head of the undercover video project said at the video's release to the public, "Planned Parenthood's criminal conspiracy to make money off of aborted baby parts reaches to the very highest levels of their organization. Elected officials must listen to the public outcry for Planned Parenthood to be held accountable to the law and for our tax dollars to stop underwriting this barbaric abortion business."

It is our prayer that with these revelations and the known dark history of Planned Parenthood, America's political leaders would find the will to, at least, cut the bloody ties that bind the American taxpayers' conscience to Planned Parenthood's dirty work. Of course, it is our ultimate prayer that this atrocity, this genocide of the unborn, this gruesome murder of innocents by the million would be denounced by our government and treated by the law as the barbaric nightmare that it is.

**Planned Parenthood Federation of America**

Cecile Richards - President

434 West 33rd St.

New York, NY 10001

212-541-7800

office@ppfa.org

# Whatever Our Lot, Bring Glory to God

by Chris Johnson



Since the Supreme Court's ruling on marriage was handed on July 26, I've read many reactions. A few Facebook friends were excited, even a few I didn't expect, and many were angry. Columnists have talked about how the church should prepare itself; some have apologized to the gay community for the way other Christians have reacted; Canadian ministers have shared their perspective with American pastors, and so on.

While many of them had good points, none of them really hit home for me. None of their reactions brought any peace to my despondent mind after the troubling Obergefell decision.

Then I found Rod Dreher's column at Time.com, "Orthodox Christians Must Now Learn to Live as Exiles in Our Own Country."

Dreher makes these points:

*For one, we have to accept that we really are living in a culturally post-Christian nation. The fundamental norms Christians have long been able to depend on no longer exist. To be frank, the court majority may impose on the rest of the nation a view widely shared by elites, but it is also a view shared by a majority of Americans. There will be no widespread popular resistance to Obergefell. This is the new normal.*

*For another, LGBT activists and their fellow travelers really will be coming after social conservatives. The Supreme Court has now, in constitutional doctrine, said that homosexuality is equivalent to race. The next goal of activists will be a long-term campaign to remove tax-exempt status from dissenting religious institutions. The*

*more immediate goal will be the shunning and persecution of dissenters within civil society. After today, all religious conservatives are Brendan Eich, the former CEO of Mozilla who was chased out of that company for supporting California's Proposition 8.*

*Third, the Court majority wrote that gays and lesbians do not want to change the institution of marriage, but rather want to benefit from it. This is hard to believe, given more recent writing from gay activists like Dan Savage expressing a desire to loosen the strictures of monogamy in all marriages. Besides, if marriage can be redefined according to what we desire — that is, if there is no essential nature to marriage, or to gender — then there are no boundaries on marriage. Marriage inevitably loses its power.*

I think those points are an excellent summary of the position orthodox Christians find ourselves in. This is a defining moment in history.

Dreher then draws this conclusion:

*It is time for what I call the Benedict Option. In his 1982 book After Virtue, the eminent philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre likened the current age to the fall of ancient Rome. He pointed to Benedict of Nursia, a pious young Christian who left the chaos of Rome to go to the woods to pray, as an example for us. We who want to live by the traditional virtues, MacIntyre said, have to pioneer new ways of doing so in community. We await, he said "a new — and doubtless very different — St. Benedict."*

*Throughout the early Middle Ages, Benedict's communities formed monasteries, and kept the light of faith burning through the surrounding cultural darkness. Eventually, the Benedictine monks helped refound civilization.*

I'm not going to lie, a monastery sounds fantastic right now - surrounded by like-minded believers, self sufficient, comfy long robes, and peaceful chanting puts up a good fight against rainbow profile pictures

and the realization that a good share of society considers us to be bigots. Now, I realize that Rod Dreher is probably not suggesting an actual monastery, robes and hoods and all, but still it wouldn't be so bad if he was, right?

Eric Erickson at RedState.com builds on Dreher's argument for the Benedict Option.

*Here is what I would say, though, to the conservatives thinking of departing for broad fields, no neighbors, and a life of small town values. The wildfire is burning. But, whether you think it nature or God, nature has a way of exerting itself and wildfires eventually run out of fuel or get rained on.*

*Certainly there is destruction along the way. Some will be burned up. Maybe that is me. Maybe that is you. But there are always others who survive. There is the tree around which all is burned, but that is spared. There is the burn line where on the other side [life] thrives and those within the fire take refuge. Maybe that is me. Maybe that is you.*

*...Because you are not alone though they want you to think you are alone. You have to remember that. The wildfire may burn all around you, but through the smoke and flames there are others just like you.*

**Those of you who are Christians are commanded to "go". You cannot withdraw completely. You have to go into culture and make disciples...**

And there it is.

That's why a monastery is sadly not an option. As Erickson continues to say, we can cancel our cable and tune out the internet; we can move to the country and withdraw from pop-culture.

But let me tell you, that's essentially my life already, and our sinful culture will reach you even here.

**[Continued on Page 7]**

## Whatever Our Lot, Bring Glory to God

[Continued from Page 6]

It was in this gloom that I found the column I was looking and hoping for - this piece from Hershael York hammers home the peace that Christians ought to be able to find, even in such a dark day for our nation.

*I am excited...*

*Two exhilarating possibilities emerge: revival among believers and a greater gospel impact beyond our walls. Think about it like this: has the church in the United States ever had a more advantageous time to stand in stark contrast to the world, to distinguish itself from the prevailing understanding of morality, to present a true counter-culture, to model the gospel? When we had greater numbers and political influence the world thought our great concern was with numbers and political influence. If we profess Christ and stand on the Word when it costs us dearly, however, then even our detractors and persecutors will see that it's not about us, but about our Savior.*

*I anticipate that the churches who stand firmly and lovingly on the Word of God, who focus on the gospel of Christ and preach the necessity of genuine faith and repentance for salvation, are about to experience an indisputable and authentic movement of God's Spirit. The Christ-modeled balance between an unyielding commitment to the Word and a lavish love of people will offer the world something that they desperately need but cannot find anywhere else.*

***People are no more lost now than they have ever been, and Jesus is no less Lord now than He will ever be. We dare not cower in our churches as though God has lost anything. The only decision handed down that matters is that the gates of hell cannot prevail against His church!***

Let that be true. Let us in our exile remember the Gospel, let us simmer in God's grace, and percolate in His truth. Let us live lives worthy of the Death of Christ, lives of "unyielding commitment to the Word and lavish love of people."

Let us, whatever our lot, bring glory to God.

## Alone, But Not Alone

by Lisa Van Houten



In the days and weeks following the Supreme Court ruling where five justices invented a Constitutional "right" to homosexual marriage, the one-sided media coverage praising that decision seems designed to make us think that it's only a few backward, religious extremists who still oppose gay marriage.

If we based reality on what the media tells us is real, we can feel very alone. It seems as if the entire nation has jumped on the gay marriage bandwagon and we're left choking on the dust. And yet, as the dust clears, a recent Associated Press poll proves that we're not as alone as we thought.

In spite of rainbow icons peppering Facebook, now that people are faced with the reality of gay marriage as the law of the land, support for homosexual marriage has dropped 6 percentage points since April. Down from 48 percent, now only 42 percent of Americans support same-sex marriage. And the AP poll found that more people oppose the Supreme Court's ruling which redefines marriage than support it. Just over one-third of the population - 39 percent - approve of the Supreme Court decision which imposed homosexual marriage upon the nation.

Even more encouraging, when it comes to religious liberty, Americans recognize the threat this ruling will have on freedom.

As numbers of county clerks across the country have recently declined to issue same-sex "marriage" licenses because it would be a violation of their religious beliefs, the Associated Press poll shows that a majority of Americans support their free exercise of religion. When asked whether local officials who have religious objections should be required to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples,

47 percent said that should be, but 49 percent stated they should be exempt from being forced to issue same-sex "marriage" licenses.

And the support for religious liberty grows even stronger when religious liberty collides with "gay rights." As the AP reported: *Overall, if there's a conflict, a majority of those questioned think religious liberties should win out over gay rights, according to the poll. While 39 percent said it's more important for the government to protect gay rights, 56 percent said protection of religious liberties should take precedence.*

In addition, 59 percent of those polled stated that wedding-related business owners who have religious objections should not be forced to take part in a same-sex "marriage" ceremony. This figure is up from 52 percent in April.

Eyes are being opened as Americans are already witnessing Christian bakers and florists being fined, threatened with jail time, and losing their homes and businesses because of their deeply-held religious beliefs.

And in a day of Constitutional illiteracy when, according to National Review, "only 19 percent of Americans know that religious freedom has explicit First Amendment protection," the growing recognition of the importance of protecting religious liberty is encouraging.

As one man told the Huffington Post: "What the Supreme Court did is jeopardize our religious freedoms. You're going to see a conflict between civil law and people who want to live their lives according to their faiths."

One thing we can learn from the results of this poll is that we are not alone! God's design of marriage as the union of one man and one woman is supported by millions of our fellow Americans. While that's encouraging, our comfort should not be in polls, but rather in the One who calls us to be willing to stand alone. Whether we are few in number or many, we are always called to speak truth into our culture.

# Down in the Trenches, but ...

by Bill Johnson



The sound of bat meeting ball and the sight of the baseball soaring over the deep center field fence are exhilarating to a baseball fan.

I still enjoy the spectacle of a batter making solid contact with a baseball, though I seldom have the time to watch a baseball game. As a thirteen letter winner from my high school years and a physical education major in my undergrad days at Michigan State University, I am attentive to baseball trends.

So it is that I was moved by the story regarding a Detroit Tiger outfielder who has emerged out of the shadows to be selected as a representative for the Detroit Tigers in this year's 2015 All Star game.

J.D. Martinez was drafted in 2009 by the Houston Astros in the 20th round, 611th overall. A rather inauspicious beginning as many drafted at the lower echelons languish in the minor leagues struggling to make it and stick in the "big" - never quite getting there. With passing time, the Astros found Martinez expendable. However, a Detroit Tiger insider witnessed Martinez displaying homerun prowess during winter league play. The Tigers took a chance and made a low risk offer to J.D. Martinez. Martinez then, in the spring of 2014, became a property of the Detroit Tigers.

A Detroit Free Press article shares an account of how, through hard work and persistence, J.D. Martinez worked his way out of ignominy to become one of the top homerun hitters in all of baseball.

Martinez is quoted, saying: "I'm a firm believer that sometimes the best steps are

the steps backward. If I didn't do that, I wouldn't be the same hitter that I am now. There's no doubt in my mind about that. I would have been a good hitter. I would have always been able to survive, but I wouldn't have been able to do what I'm doing now when I hit the ball." ...

"I was so depressed and down," he said. "I was praying like crazy and nothing had ever happened, and then all of a sudden it was a blessing in disguise. You never know what happens behind the scenes."

Martinez's persistence to improve impressed me, prompting me to consider those in my life who haven't given in or given up when the odds were against them in their oft-time mundane, if not extremely difficult, lives.

Madeline comes to mind. In her sixties, she went through risky back surgery that threatened to leave her paralyzed. After surgery, she knew she faced not only months but years of continued exercise and therapy if she wanted to regain at least a semblance of her mobility and return to a portion of her physical capability.

With dogged determination and without complaint, Madeline battled on and still battles on. I have admired how she has come along side widows, needy young children, and strangers. Serving, feeding, volunteering, caring, faithfully attending, and serving in the church where she is a member. Behind the scenes. Not seeking a word of commendation.

Whereas Martinez earns millions of dollars for his advancement (with much more coming his way due to his enhanced performance), Madeline will find no financial remuneration for her gutty fight for fullness of life. Unquestionably though, Madeline finds contentment in fighting the fight of faith and joy in serving Jesus!

I say all of this to make this point.

Most of us (probably all of us) don't and won't find ourselves on a professional ball team making millions of dollars a year. If

one of us did, I would hope that person would give most of it away. Who needs even \$200,000 a year to live exquisitely? Not me. I would guess not you either.

Some of us (most of us?) are down in the trenches without fanfare. That's not a bad thing. But it is if you've given up and given in. It's not good if you aren't looking to God for help, hope, grace, mercy, forgiveness of sins, wisdom for the day, for the next moment.

What I am saying should make you think of Jesus' words in the Gospels: "Hearing they do not hear. Seeing they do not see."

Pollster George Barna and Wallbuilder's David Barton say that only 30% of Christians read the Bible and only 10% have ever read through the Bible cover to cover.

"In a country where between 78 to 80% say they're Christian, only 34% say they believe in absolute moral truth," David Barton, president of Wall Builders said.

The old adage goes: "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink."

In closing, my burden is for friends and loved ones - tired and discouraged ones who fail to stand up and fight against negative patterns and habits set by lethargy and poor choices. Too many are addicted to time-wasters and refuse to be helped and moved by God and His truth through devotions, the Bible, faithfully seeking God's help. Bow the knee. Bow the knee. Bow the heart!

You are needed for such a time as this. Be as Madeline. Seek out what you can do and do it with heart and soul and mind!

There are needs around you. Let us each one look - look beyond ourselves.