

# **Commentary: God first, not America first**

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I am quite distressed by the current political situation in the United States. The drawn-out scuffle for Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives is just one example. Watching the drama in Washington has brought to mind lessons I've learned over the years as a drama teacher.

When I first started directing plays with young people back in Sioux City, Iowa, I quickly realized I could not make it my primary objective to put on a great play.

When a fabulous production was my goal, I ended up making decisions that were not necessarily in the best interests of the students I was teaching. Their growth was the primary goal, and I had to keep that in the forefront of my mind to stay on track.

I think we're committing a similar mistake as a nation. We've made America too important.

## **Wrong hope**

Over the course of human history, nations have risen and fallen. America may fall at some point, too, which will be tragic but not cataclysmic. Though the United States might crash and burn, the kingdom of God still will survive. In fact, God's kingdom might flourish all the more.

Contrary to the belief of many on the Christian right, the United States is not a chosen people. We are not the hope of the world. The hope of the world is Christ.

We've also made the American government too important. It seems we expect our government to solve all the problems in our country.

"The American people are immoral, selfish and stupid," we say. And how do we fix that? Pass laws so nobody sins anymore. Create social programs so nobody suffers anymore. Fix the educational system so everyone knows all the right things and none of the wrong things.

What are we thinking? When did morality become Congress' domain? When did the president become the hope of the oppressed? When did the powers that be become the source of all truth? Are these not the domain of Christ? Yes, they are. I'm quite sure of that, in fact.

## Wrong goals

We are focusing on the wrong goals. If our goal is to make America great—by whoever's definition—then we will be tempted to do things that are not good for the people of America and things that certainly are not in line with God's kingdom.

I do fear for our nation. I love my country. But my primary citizenship is not in this young, experimental republic. My primary citizenship is in God's kingdom—a kingdom not of this world.

Saving the country in a political sense is not my desire. God's kingdom is my desire. Let us never forget God's kingdom is not the least bit dependent on the success of the United States of America. But it does require God's people to behave like God's people—serving others, denying themselves, and following Christ above all.

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