



"Cross Connection"

Radio Ministry of Hope Wesleyan Church and Wells of Salvation Ministries
Ultimate Oldies Radio – FM 97.7 and 101.5, Huber Heights, Ohio



Series: Christian Messages In Secular Music

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Program 35 – “God Bless The USA” – © Lee Greenwood

Why should this or a similar phrase be so controversial in America? The primaries season leading to the 2008 presidential election spotlighted a candidate’s pastor shouting, “Not ‘God Bless America’ – ‘God D_____ America!’” to his congregation.

Why do our legislators and judges diligently work to keep prayer and references to God out of our schools, yet can be seen gathered on the Capitol steps collectively singing “God Bless America” in times of tragedy, such as the 911 terrorist attack?

God does not tolerate double-mindedness (see James 1:8).

Jesus said, *"He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters."* – Matthew 12:30, NIV

You may have heard it often said that we are living in the post-Christian era, which one source has defined as “...where Christianity is no longer the dominant civil religion, but one that has, gradually over extended periods of time, assumed values, culture, and worldviews that are not necessarily Christian.”¹ These are challenging times for followers of Jesus Christ – not just here in the US, but anywhere!

Someone once observed that “Timing is everything”. Did you know that when Lee Greenwood released his trademark number “God Bless The USA” in 1984, it only rose to #7 on the country charts? Did you know that Lee Greenwood has had 7 of his songs reach #1 on the country charts, but not this one? Perhaps hard-core country fans knew that, but I sure didn’t. But in the wake of 911 and the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the timing was better – this song has clearly been adopted as a patriotic anthem in the US²:

- The song is played at Marine Corps boot camp during the Emblem Ceremony, where the recruits receive their Eagle, Globe, and Anchor and are finally recognized as Marines.
- When performed by the Marine Corps Band, the second verse is sometimes replaced with the first verse of the Marines' Hymn, which fits the tempo nearly perfectly
- The song is played when Navy recruits complete "Battle Stations" (the final evolution in Basic Training), receive their Navy ball caps, and are recognized as sailors
- During US naturalization ceremonies a video is presented to new citizens that features the song played over patriotic images

Just as we root for our schools when they compete in sports, we stand behind our country and its leaders when we go to war. Does the Bible say anything about patriotism? Let’s take a look in relation to the lyrics of this song...

¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postchristianity>

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_Bless_the_USA

12 ***Blessed is the nation*** whose God is the LORD,
the people he chose for his inheritance.

18 *But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him,*
on those whose hope is in his unfailing love,

19 *to deliver them from death*
and keep them alive in famine.

22 ***May your unfailing love rest upon us, O LORD,***
even as we put our hope in you.

-- from Psalm 33, NIV

If tomorrow all the things were gone,
I'd worked for all my life.
And I had to start again,
with just my children and my wife.

I'd thank my lucky stars,
to be livin here today.
'Cause the flag still stands for freedom,
and they can't take that away.

And I'm proud to be an American,
where at least I know I'm free.
And I wont forget the men who died,
who gave that right to me.

And I gladly stand up,
next to you and defend her still today.
'Cause there ain't no doubt I love this land,
God bless the USA.

From the lakes of Minnesota,
to the hills of Tennessee.
Across the plains of Texas,
From sea to shining sea.

From Detroit down to Houston,
and New York to L.A.
Well there's pride in every American heart,
and its time we stand and say...

That I'm proud to be an American,
where at least I know I'm free.
And I wont forget the men who died,
who gave that right to me.

And I gladly stand up,
next to you and defend her still today.
'Cause there ain't no doubt I love this land,
God bless the USA.

Examples of patriots in the Bible³:

- Moses pleaded with God not to destroy the Israelite nation after one of its many rebellions against Him ([Deuteronomy 9:6-29](#))
- In exile, Nehemiah mourned, wept, prayed and fasted for his native land ([Nehemiah 1:4](#))
- Daniel prayed and fasted with sackcloth and ashes for the restoration of the nation of Israel, Jerusalem and the temple ([Daniel 9:1-19](#))
- The Apostle Paul said "*Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved*" ([Romans 10:1](#))

"...our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" ([Philippians 3:20](#)). "Our" = those who have fully submitted to God through true repentance and have become a part of His Church. Their citizenship records reside in heaven. Their names are written in the Book of Life.³

As Christians, we have dual citizenship. It is noble and appropriate to be patriotic toward our earthly nation, but we also should have a higher and more fervent patriotism for our heavenly Kingdom, which will be established on earth at the return of Christ. He tells us to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" ([Matthew 6:33](#)).³

- All of Lee Greenwood's observations are true – Americans are among the freest people on earth.
- We can be proud to enjoy life and liberty here
- But freedom anywhere is not free – it has cost the lives of thousands

³ <http://www.ucgstp.org/lit/gn/gn044/patriotism.html>

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where at least I know I'm free.
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God bless the USA

- Discussion questions:
 - Does God side with certain countries in earthly confrontations or dealings?
 - What is the Christian's role with respect to supporting his / her country? Should our response hinge on the nature of a given country's government (e.g., Godless, repressive, abusive?) (also see 2 Chronicles 7:14)

"Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God" – Romans 13:1, NIV

"I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior..."
– 1 Timothy 2:1-4, NIV

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you"
-- Matthew 5:44, KJV

Final Thoughts:

As we celebrate the birthday of our country here in the United States, let's put on the lapel pins, wave the flag, and stand in awe of the fireworks displays, but let's also remember that God loves all people (John 3:16), and so must we. It's great to love our country, but it is even better to love the God whose blessing upon our nation we ask. God bless the USA!

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