

# The Timeless Voice: Make the gospel great again

*Commentary by Greg Baker*

*“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” – Matthew 6:33.*

We are often called to patriotism and love of country. “Make America great again,” we are told.

But while we should love our city, state, and nation and desire what is best for our neighbors, we must also remember this is not our eternal home.

I love Des Moines, and I love America. I am so thankful that this is where God has placed me. I love showing off my city to visitors and sharing with them all Des Moines has to offer. I want what is best for my city and my country. It brings me joy when they are both doing well.

I must remember, however, this world is perishing, including my nation and my city. All of these things are temporary and will someday come to an end (Matthew 24:35). It is the Kingdom of God that will reign forever, not the kingdom of man. If I put all of my effort into merely building this nation without building God’s Kingdom at the same time, my labor will be in vain. As Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 7, we must learn to make the most of our place in the world without becoming engrossed in it, because this world in its present form is passing away.

This world is also no longer my home. I have been adopted by God, and because of this I am no longer a citizen of this earth. Rather, I am a citizen of heaven (Philippians 3:20). Heaven is now my home, and, as a co-heir with Christ, the world to come is my inheritance.

The greatest thing we can do for the nation God has placed us in is be His ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20). This world needs us to speak truth to the dying, to be the aroma of life (2 Corinthians 2:16). When hope is placed in Wall Street, Washington, a 401k, or even the American dream, what Americans really need is God's ambassadors to share the true hope they can have in Christ and His coming Kingdom. God's Kingdom is greater than any nation, political party, career, denomination, sports team, or other worldly thing that divides us.

Put the Kingdom first. Put the Kingdom first by serving your neighbor. Put the Kingdom first by investing more in the next life than your 401k. Put the Kingdom first by serving Christ's Church more than your career or hobbies. Put the Kingdom first by campaigning for the gospel more than for a political candidate. Put the Kingdom first by holding and proclaiming the truths of the Cross higher than the American flag. Put the Kingdom first by allowing the Bible to form your worldview more than any worldly ideology. Then your labor will never perish and will never be in vain.

*"Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain" – 1 Corinthians 15:58.*

*Greg Baker is vice president of church engagement for The FAMILY LEADER.*

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**[On MSNBC: Bob calls for](#)**

# justice AND mercy at U.S. border

The FAMiLY LEADER President and CEO Bob Vander Plaats joined MSNBC host Hallie Jackson Wednesday morning for a frank discussion on children being separated from their parents at the U.S./Mexico border.

Watch the interview below:

The MSNBC interview was prompted by [Bob's op-ed in The New York Times](#), in which Bob called on the president, U.S. attorney general, and members of Congress to work out a solution to immigration enforcement that embodies the "do justly and love mercy" spirit of Micah 6:8.

"Let the adults get around the table, and let's stop this now," Bob told Jackson. "We cannot let the worst of Washington keep these kids hostage and separate families."

[\*\*Read Bob's New York Times column that prompted the interview, "Cruelty at the Border Is Not Justice," by clicking here now!\*\*](#)

Bob has also been interviewed recently on local TV networks, including WHO-TV and KCCI-TV, Des Moines. You can watch those interviews below:

[\*\*Read Bob Vander Plaats' column, "Cruelty at the Border Is Not Justice," on The New York Times website by clicking here.\*\*](#)

[\*\*Bob previously wrote a USA Today column about solutions to America's immigration woes in February 2018. Click here to read the USA Today column.\*\*](#)

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# Bob Vander Plaats calls for border 'justice and mercy' in NYTimes

The FAMIly LEADER President and CEO Bob Vander Plaats wrote [an op-ed published by The New York Times](#), calling upon American authorities to enforce immigration policy with both “justice and mercy.”

The news media has inundated the American public with heartbreaking stories of children being separated from their parents after crossing the U.S./Mexico border illegally. Some stories report federal agents acting with outright cruelty.

The Trump administration, however, asserts it is only enforcing the law, and parents who break the law will naturally be separated from their children before being sent to jail.

Vander Plaats [argues](#) the government can secure the American border and honor American values at the same time: “We can have justice with mercy. It is possible to be ‘tough on illegal immigration’ without being cruel to illegal immigrants.”

And while many voices in Washington, D.C., and on the news point fingers and assign blame, Vander Plaats insists all parties should set aside the partisan game to do what’s right.

“Regardless of whether we agree or disagree with the Department of Justice’s ‘zero tolerance’ policy of border enforcement, we can all call on our government to do better. We can demand that the government deliver justice consistent

with our values,” Vander Plaats writes. “President Trump, Attorney General Jeff Sessions, Congress: Fix this.”

Citing the Bible’s Micah 6:8 – “He has shown you, O man, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God” – Vander Plaats asserts, “That means we should execute justice, yes. But not with the kind of cruelty we’re reading about from the border with Mexico. ... We’re a better country than that.”

[Read Bob Vander Plaats’ full column, “Cruelty at the Border Is Not Justice,” on The New York Times website by clicking here.](#)

[Bob previously wrote a USA Today column about solutions to America’s immigration woes in February 2018. Click here to read the USA Today column.](#)

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## **STATEMENT: Judge rules taxpayers must pay for sex-change surgeries**

A judge today [ruled](#) against state regulations that ban Medicaid dollars from paying for transgender-related transition services and sex-reassignment surgery.

The presumed result will be that Iowa taxpayers will soon begin paying for “sex-change” surgeries that the Department of Human Services had previously ruled “cosmetic” and medically unnecessary.

But according to [the Iowa District Court for Polk County judge’s ruling](#), DHS attorneys did not even argue whether such services are a justified taxpayer expense. The ruling repeats

that attorneys “offered no dispute” to claims the procedures are medically necessary and left their opponents’ arguments “unrefuted by any evidence.”

According to the ruling, “[Plaintiffs argue that] a person’s gender identity is developed early in childhood, has a strong biological basis, cannot be altered, and is not subject to change through outside influence, [and the] DHS does not refute this issue.”

In the end, the judge ruled the DHS could not deny a supposedly “medically necessary” procedure.

In response to the case and its ruling, The FAMiLY LEADER has issued the following statement:

*“The real issues – whether transgenderism is biologically fixed and immutable and whether sex-reassignment surgery is medically necessary – weren’t even debated in this case, but conceded by the DHS. Therefore, our disagreement isn’t with the judge, but with the defense. For we believe God designed human biology and that embracing Christ and His design for our lives is the surest path to healing and happiness.”*

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## **The Timeless Voice: We have a higher hope than U.S. law**

Every day we see the problems facing our country – drug abuse, violence, crime, education woes, and so on. And though we often point the finger at external circumstances, the root of each of these problems is the sinful heart of man. No one is immune from sin, and we can see its fruit all around us.

Throughout history, people have tried to control and contain this sin through laws. A just society must. Yet laws alone fail to resolve the root problem. Laws can provide guidelines and restrictions, but they cannot change the heart of man. Man-made laws will continue to fall short of the solutions we really need as long as we continue to fall short of holiness.

We can see the shortcomings of the law most especially as we look at ancient Israel. The Israelites were blessed by perfect law from the Holy God. Yet, Israel still faced enormous problems in their own nation. Their hearts were still wicked, and so the problems persisted.

The perfect law was unable to do what only God can accomplish, to give God's people new hearts. God promised this inner transformation to Israel through the Prophet Ezekiel: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws" (Ezekiel 36:26-27). Only after this transformation would Israel have the power to obey the law.

If God's perfect law could not sanctify Israel, then certainly, our laws cannot sanctify America.

That is not to say we should ignore the legislative process entirely. As Paul explained, the law is a guide and a moral teacher (Galatians 3:24). Without the law we would not know we need a Savior (Romans 7).

The problem arises, however, when we put our hope for cultural transformation into worldly solutions. We cannot put our focus, our passion, or our hope into changing laws. It cannot become our "gospel." Rather, we must focus on the only true and lasting change, a transformed life through the salvation of Jesus Christ.

True transformation will only come by witnessing the gospel

and one-on-one discipleship. America will be transformed one person at time. Yes, it is more work than just passing a law, but it is the example that Christ set for us. When we all do our part as the body of Christ, we will be amazed at how much impact we can have in our communities, state, and nation.

If we are to engage in legislation, let us use it as a tool to witness the gospel. Let us use law to point to people's need for a Savior and a deeper transformation that can only come through Christ. Let us lead people to the One who has power to bring hope, life, and love – the power to make all things new.

As the famous hymn says: "My hope rests on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name."

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## [Victory for religious liberty in Supreme Court cake case](#)

In a 7-2 ruling handed down today, the U.S. Supreme Court defended religious liberty from blatant, government hostility in the case of *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission*.

The case surrounded Jack Phillips, a custom cake baker and devout Christian, who ran afoul of the State of Colorado after he declined to make a wedding cake for a same-sex ceremony, citing his religious beliefs.

The Supreme Court overturned lower court rulings and decided in favor of Jack.

"This is a victory for the Constitution and for the free

exercise rights of all Americans,” commented The FAMiLY LEADER’s Chief Legal Counsel Chuck Hurley. “The ruling clearly states the government cannot decide what is and isn’t ‘acceptable’ for you to believe or think. And the government can’t be hostile toward your faith.”

Hurley called the ruling a “landmark decision” that is “rescuing freedom of religion from hostile activists in government across America. It helps ensure people of all faiths – or no faith – will get a fair hearing in court.”

Justice Kennedy’s majority opinion is limited in scope, as it specifically addresses the deliberately slanted and even hostile way the Colorado Civil Rights Commission handled Jack Phillip’s case, without necessarily answering how all Christian bakers, florists, and other businesspeople should handle same-sex weddings.

“This ruling didn’t determine what happens in every conflict in the marketplace,” Hurley continued. “But it did ensure that when those conflicts arise, the government must give people of faith, or no faith, a fair hearing and can’t be hostile towards you because of your religious beliefs.”

[Click here to read Justice Kennedy’s majority opinion in the Masterpiece Cakeshop case.](#)

[Click here to read more from our friends at Alliance Defending Freedom, who represented Jack.](#)

**Jack Phillips released the following statement after the ruling was announced:**

“I serve all who walk through my doors, people from all walks of life. I’ve spent many years honing my craft as a cake artist, combining baking with my love of sculpting, painting, and sketching. And I love my work because a cake is a canvas on which I express ideas, celebrate events, and bring joy to people’s lives.

“It was shocking to me that the government would try to take away my freedoms and force me to create something that went against my faith. The government’s hostility directly impacted my family’s shop. We faced death threats and harassment, all for choosing not to design a cake that celebrates one particular event.

“I’m profoundly thankful that the Court saw the injustice that the government inflicted on me. This is a great day for our family, our shop, and for people of all faiths who should not fear government hostility or unjust punishment.

“Today’s decision makes clear that tolerance is a two-way street. If we want to have freedom for ourselves, we have to extend it to others with whom we disagree about important issues like the meaning of marriage.”

#### **Thoughts from Iowa’s Dick and Betty Odgaard:**

Dick and Betty Odgaard, former owners of the Gortz Haus Gallery in Grimes, Iowa, faced a similar crisis of conscience when a same-sex couple wanted to use their facility for their wedding ceremony. The Odgaards stood on their faith, and consequently faced a lawsuit and were subjected to harassment and threats. Eventually, they were forced out of business.

Dick and Betty spoke to The FAMiLY LEADER about the Masterpiece Cakeshop victory at the Supreme Court.

“We are thrilled and delighted for Jack & Debi Phillips! We were privileged to be in the chambers of the SCOTUS in December when this case was argued, and the decision is far beyond our expectations,” the Odgaards told The FAMiLY LEADER.

“This is truly a big step in the right direction for our society, but it is only a one step,” they continued. “While those who oppose this decision are predictably prophecying rampant discrimination, those in favor should be reminded there will still be false accusations to battle. Hopefully

this decision will change the legal process for the better.”

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## **TFL's Capitol Connection: Iowa's Heartbeat Law faces injunction**

TFL's Drew Zahn, Chuck Hurley, and Bob Vander Plaats were on hand at the Polk County Courthouse on June 1 to witness the injunction hearing in Iowa's Heartbeat Law case. From the Courthouse itself, they report what happened, why it happened, and what YOU need to know:

For more, including a statement from the pro-life attorneys and the Coalition of Pro-Life Leaders, [click here](#).

***Get YOUR NAME entered into the official court records, telling America's judges to stand for life! Click here today!***

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## **STATEMENT: Temporary injunction in Heartbeat Law case**

Attorneys representing the State of Iowa in the lawsuit over the “Heartbeat Law” have today agreed – or “stipulated” – to a temporary injunction prohibiting the law from going into

effect on July 1 as scheduled until the full case can be heard in court.

Martin Cannon of the Thomas More Society will represent the State and defend the Heartbeat Law at the anticipated full hearing some months away. He explained in a statement why attorneys consented to the temporary halt in the law's enforcement:

"I very much appreciate your prayers and support in this challenge before us. After much discussion, considerable thought, and a lot of our own prayers, we have agreed ... to place the heartbeat bill on hold until the challenge to it can be heard on its merits instead of in the shortened hearing that precedes a temporary injunction," Cannon said.

Choosing this path, Cannon explained, "We'll get to a proper hearing sooner, and our prospects for ultimate success are better."

The Coalition of Pro-Life Leaders, of which The FAMiLY LEADER is a founding member, further issued the following statement:

*The Heartbeat Law will save babies' lives when enforced, and while it's delayed, those babies will tragically die. That's horrible.*

*But the process gave pro-life attorneys too little time to build their best case. And we're not going to play into that game. **Babies' lives are too precious to put up a rushed legal defense.***

*Remember, we have to take the long view. This case was never going to be concluded this week. And we're confident that when the process plays out, and when the American people have the chance to hear all the facts, they'll see that the child in the womb ... she's a baby. And neither a just government, nor a just society, can tolerate the killing of innocent babies.*

Acceptance of the stipulation precluded the need for the full, preliminary injunction hearing. The judge consented to the injunction, which he stated would likely go into effect later in the day. The date of the full hearing, scheduled before Iowa District Court Judge Michael Huppert, has not yet been announced.

TFL's Drew Zahn, Chuck Hurley, and Bob Vander Plaats were on hand at the Polk County Courthouse on June 1 to witness the injunction hearing in Iowa's Heartbeat Law case. From the Courthouse itself, they report what happened, why it happened, and what YOU need to know:

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## **TFL's Capitol Connection, Ep. 16: Life battle leads session recap**

The FAMiLY LEADER's Bob Vander Plaats, Chuck Hurley, and Danny Carroll sat down to discuss what was supposed to be the final recap of the 2018 Iowa Legislative Session.

But with the nation-leading Heartbeat Law facing a court battle, "TFL's Capitol Connection" commits to keep going, to keep YOU informed:

**[Sign the petition for life that will be entered into official court records!](#)**

In the video, Bob and Chuck mention a historic petition, which very well may be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to have YOUR name entered into the court's official docket record, calling on America's judges to defend life!

History remembers the 56 brave men who signed their names to the Declaration of Independence. Will YOUR name be counted among those who signed this "Declaration of Life"?

**SIGN THE PETITION!**

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## [Watch Gov. Reynolds sign Heartbeat into law](#)

With dozens of legislators, families, reporters, and The FAMiLY LEADER in the room, Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds signed into law the most pro-life abortion restriction in the nation!

Now watch the governor's comments and exclusive interviews with the bill's floor manager, Rep. Shannon Lundgren, and other pro-life champions of the Heartbeat bill:

The Heartbeat law bans abortions in Iowa – with some exceptions – after an unborn baby's heartbeat is detected. But the law, which could save an estimated 3,000 or more babies' lives in the state each year, doesn't go into effect until July 1.

Looking ahead, the bill is certain to face legal challenge, and The FAMiLY LEADER plans to be a part of fighting for babies' lives in court.

And YOU TOO may have the opportunity to have **your name submitted in the official record**, telling the judges you want the courts to defend unborn babies by upholding the Heartbeat law!

*Sign up for TFL's text alerts today, so we can let you know when the window opens to have YOUR NAME added to the fight for life:*

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## [The spiritual groundwork for "Heartbeat"](#)

Passing a major piece of pro-life legislation like the "Heartbeat bill" doesn't happen overnight, and it doesn't happen at all without God breaking down major spiritual strongholds.

Bob Vander Plaats and Greg Baker talk about the years of work at the heart-and-soul level that have led up to one of the most significant pro-life victories in American history:

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## [TFL's Capitol Connection, Ep. 15: Heartbeat passes!](#)

"I believe a great thing is happening," says The FAMiLY LEADER Capitol Team member Chuck Hurley. "In our lifetime, the

sanctity of human life is on the front page of newspapers.”

Indeed, newspapers and news networks around the country are reporting the stunning, late-night development: The Iowa Legislature has passed the Heartbeat bill!

Bob Vander Plaats, president and CEO of The FAMIly LEADER, says the news is nothing short of a “sign of revival.”

In this week’s TFL’s Capitol Connection, Bob sits down with Chuck Hurley and Danny Carroll to share what’s happened and what’s next in Iowa’s nation-leading charge to defend life in the womb.

Along the way, Danny also shares a story from behind the scenes about the precursor to the Heartbeat bill and the first moment this session when he came to believe the Heartbeat bill was possible:

In the video, Bob mentioned an opportunity to thank the legislators who voted for the Heartbeat bill. The FAMIly LEADER has developed [a convenient tool](#) that enables you to email every “yes” vote in a single, easy step.

**[Click here to thank Iowa’s legislators today!](#)**