

## **Old Testament Principles for Following God**

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***A gospel that does not deal with the issues of the day is not the Gospel at all.*** --Martin Luther

Christians who are careful observers of the surrounding culture and concerned about the apparently diminishing influence of Christianity in our world—especially in Western culture. In contrast to the pre-World War 2 situation in the U.S., today the voice of Christianity often seems distant and weak, barely affecting the world, hardly viable.

Perhaps you have noticed this shift—less interest in traditional Christianity, fewer church-goers, more people questioning basic tenets of the Christian worldview. Perhaps you have wondered why the Christian faith is weak and ineffectual in dealing with the big issues in our culture—politics, law, economics, business, media, and entertainment—and sometimes even the daily issues of life. Throughout the history of our nation, people of Christian faith have influenced their communities and have assisted in the development of public education, workers' rights, economic development, the free press, moral standards, and help for the victimized and disenfranchised.

In her book, *The Old Testament Template: Rediscovering God's Principles for Discipling All Nations*, Landa Cope suggests that biblical principles from the Old Testament that can be used to address the issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in a redemptive way. When God revealed himself to the Hebrews after they came out of a life of slavery to form an entirely new nation, he called them to transformed lives. The transformation was both personal and national. The principles God set forth for the Hebrews can still transform individuals and nations today. If we Christians are going to influence and reclaim our society, we must raise up leaders who will affect the culture by encouraging and facilitating the adoption of ethical and moral standards in economics and business, politics and government, media, entertainment, family, religion and education. Unfortunately, the focus of Christianity for the last half century has been on evangelism or recruiting more than on transformation and blessing. The Christian solution to the problems of our world is to change nations from the inside out, beginning with a Christian community solidly committed to becoming "a light to the nations".

Cope's book provides helpful ideas for how transformation can occur in a modern society. My own short list of requirements includes the following. First, we must seek to understand where we went wrong and how we can correct course. Self-evaluation and analysis will help us see the challenge of penetrating the contemporary culture more clearly. Second, the church will never be relevant in the contemporary world until we think biblically and theologically and generate practical ideas for penetrating our world. We must think Christianly and then think carefully about how Christianity can effectively spread in our world. Third, we must seek our own transformation and recommitment to the principles of God. Fourth, we must renew our desire to have an impact on those around us, even as Isaiah encouraged Israel to see their responsibility as a light to the nations. May God make us people who desire to see our culture impacted for Christ!