

## USA: 246 Years Old

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July 4, 2022, marks 246 years since John Hancock and 55 other delegates of the thirteen colonies signed the Declaration of Independence. As flawed human beings, neither they nor we have ever completely succeeded in practicing the lofty goals and principles of that matchless document. Nevertheless, those goals and principles shine forth like a beacon to challenge us to improve.

*“Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people”* (Proverbs 14:34). No nation in history has been without fault; that certainly includes America! Genocide against the original inhabitants of the country and the institution of slavery are but two of many stains that tarnish the nation’s image. Denying or minimizing those sad realities only prevents us from improving.

It is equally erroneous and counterproductive to ignore improvement while denouncing the entire nation because perfect solutions haven’t been reached. As long as flawed humans are in charge (and that will always be the case), ideal solutions aren’t even in the realm of possibility. Humans will never create Utopia!

Christians can and should be a preserving influence. A mere ten righteous people would have moved the Lord to spare the sinful city of Sodom (Genesis 19:32). The very sin that spelled Sodom’s doom was heralded all of last month in America as something to be proud of! The same Satanic forces are in a dither now that their “right” to slaughter pre-born humans will be restricted in several states. Given the genocidal and racist nature of abortion in America, the hypocrisy is staggering.

While never stooping to their level of vulgarity or resorting to violence, we must kindly, firmly, and plainly teach and practice the truth as revealed in God’s word. May God help us to be the salt of the earth and light of the world!

## A Soft Answer

**A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger** (Proverbs 15:1)

In the preceding passage, the wise man gives some great relationship advice. We’ve all found ourselves in confrontations at some point in our lives. While some folks revel in a good fight, most of us would rather avoid those uncomfortable situations all together. The bible is not short on advice and warnings about controlling our anger and resisting the temptation to fly off the handle when things frustrate us.

Uncontrolled anger and confrontation always lead to hurt feelings and alienation in our relationships. However, the mature Christian has developed a sure-fire way to handle anger through prayer and self-control. I suppose one of the hardest things we have to do is keep our cool while someone is letting us have it “with both barrels”. But that’s exactly what this proverb is telling us to do.

Remember the old cartoons, where the characters avoided getting blown up by a bomb by licking their fingers and pinching off the fuse? You and I can “defuse” difficult situations by following these simple suggestions (all of which the Scriptures encourage).

First, be kind and patient, even if the other person is being unreasonable. Second, don’t fight back, because nothing can take the momentum out of a fight better than an unwilling sparring partner. And finally, never go to bed angry, even if the other person is unwilling to make up. Be sure that you are at peace with yourself and God, then pray about your relationship with the person with whom you’ve had a disagreement.

*“Be angry, and do not sin do not let the sun go down on your wrath”* (Ephesians 4:26)

--Jay Launius (Maud, TX)

## The Daily Dozen

The following is a list of 12 simple things you can do on a daily basis to make life more productive and pleasant:

1. Make up your mind to be happy. Learn to find pleasure in simple things.
2. Make the best of your circumstances. No one has everything, and everyone has something of sorrow intermingled with the gladness of life. The trick is to make the laughter outweigh the tears.
3. Don’t take yourself too seriously. Don’t think that somehow you should be protected from misfortunes that befall others.
4. You can’t please everybody. Don’t let criticism worry you.
5. Don’t let your neighbor set your standards. Be yourself.
6. Do the things you enjoy doing, but stay out of debt.
7. Don’t borrow trouble. Imaginary things are harder to bear than the actual ones.
8. Since hatred poisons the soul, do not cherish enmities or grudges. Avoid people who make you unhappy.
9. Have many interests. If you can’t travel, read about new places.
10. Don’t hold postmortems. Don’t spend your life brooding over sorrows and mistakes. Don’t be one who never gets over things.
11. Do what you can for those less fortunate than yourself.
12. Keep busy at something. A very busy person never has time to be unhappy.

--Author Unknown (via Athens, AL)