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THE FOUNDATION CRISIS

The saga of a nation is the saga of its families written large. If we are to reverse the course that we are heading in as a society, it must start with the rebuilding of our families.

In the book of Nehemiah, God's chosen people are going through national, cultural, and family crises. The society is in disrepair, wasting away. Their captors have torn down Jerusalem's defensive walls, and the people of Israel have been living in exile for 150 years.

During this critical time, God raised up two men who were willing to lead their people from physical ruin. God put a fire in Ezra's and Nehemiah's hearts to lead His chosen people and to urge them to fight for their families. Nehemiah and Ezra understood that in order to repair a broken society, you must not only rebuild the walls, you must rebuild the people.

You must remind them about the importance of family. Lasting change must occur in individual hearts and in homes.

At the beginning of Nehemiah's story, Ezra had already been preaching in Jerusalem for fourteen years. He was sowing seeds into people's hearts, telling them to listen, learn, and believe in God. In the midst of this spiritual environment, Ezra had created hope for social change. The ground had been softened with spiritual truth, admonishing the people to base their lives on the standard of truth, which would then translate into the political and social arena.

God's Word made the way for social change, family renewal and cultural transformation. When the fertile ground was ready, God brought Nehemiah in.

Fast-forward just a bit and we see that Nehemiah rebuilt the city's entire infrastructure in a mere fifty-two days. In less than two months, Nehemiah solidified the foundation of not only the families but of a nation whose stature had crumbled just assuredly as Jerusalem's walls under 150 years of total confusion and disrepute. Nehemiah dealt with the physical needs of this people, repairing the fissures and building upon a firm and solid foundation.

But in the midst of this rebuilding effort, opposition rose up against them. As I say it, there were haters in the house. There were people who didn't want to see the society turn back to God, wholeness, and wholesomeness. We read in Nehemiah,

Now it came about that when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became furious and very angry and mocked the Jews. . . . Now when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repair of the walls of Jerusalem went on, and that the breaches began to be closed, they were very angry. All of them conspired together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause a disturbance in it. (Nehemiah 4:1, 7–8)

The opposition had determined that they were not going to allow this nation to return back to God's intended purposes. They did not want to see society ordered as God had decreed and established, so they began to devise a plan in order to make the Israelites fail.

Friend, Satan has a plan against the house of God today as well. As our nation continues to steer away further from God's intended order, Satan's plan escalates. Just like the Devil had a plan in the garden of Eden, he has a plan in the garden of America today. And the primary target of this plan is the family. As goes the family, so goes the nation.

BATTLE CRY

If Satan can dismantle God's prescribed intention and foundation of the family, it can lead to all manners of chaos, destruction, and devolution in our society. This is because

the family houses the building blocks of society. It is both through and within the family that children, future leaders, and contributors of society are created and matured.

Nehemiah recognized the importance of the family; in fact, he relied on it as he fought to rebuild Jerusalem. We read that his response to the opposition carefully centered on the organization and motivation of the home. It says,

When the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times, “They will come up against us from every place where you may turn,” then I stationed men in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, the exposed places, and I stationed the people in families with their swords, spears and bows. When I saw their fear, I rose and spoke to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people: “Do not be afraid of them; remember the LORD who is great and awesome, *and fight for* your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives and your houses.” (Nehemiah 4:12–14)

Nehemiah positioned the people and proclaimed the fiercest battle cry, “Fight for your families!” Nehemiah knew that it was time for each and every person and family to defend not only the present but also the future of their people as a whole. First of all, he called the men and stationed them behind the walls. Next, he included the practical aspects of

the battle; he gave every man a sword, spear, and bow. Then he brought in the spiritual portion, reminding them that it is “the Lord who is great and awesome.” Finally, he compelled them with the profound call to fight for their families.

I was on a conference call not too long ago with dozens of pastors discussing, at times debating, the Christians’ role as salt and light in the culture, particularly with regard to the issue of the redefinition of the family through legalizing same-sex marriage. One of the common arguments that kept resurfacing on this call was the thought that “We can’t impose Christian standards on society.” Yet the institution of family, and primarily of marriage, was not given to Christians only. It was given to society. It was given to the human race.

That’s why John the Baptist could condemn Herod for how he was functioning in his marriage. See, Herod wasn’t a believer. Didn’t claim to be a believer. Didn’t live as a believer. Yet John’s condemnation was rooted in the fabric and function of society, not purely in religion.

Others on the call claimed that Christ never addressed the issue of homosexuality from a spiritual standpoint, biblically. I found, and still do find, it difficult to comprehend this claim in light of His clear and direct words recorded in Matthew 19. We read,

“Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them *male* and *female*, and said,

‘For this reason *a man* shall leave his father and mother and be joined to *his wife*, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh.”
(vv. 4–6)

When Jesus Christ specifically referred to marriage as that between a male and a female, stating that the male and female are one in marriage, He spoke clearly and without stuttering on homosexuality, polygamy, and any other deviation from the prescribed union of marriage. Marriage is a standard not only given to Christians; it is a standard that was first established for society.

And yet once a group of people—a nation or a culture—not only allows for but also gives hearty approval to that which is in direct opposition to God’s prescribed purpose and standards of the family, they reap upon themselves the main expression of His judgment. We witness this in the letter Paul wrote to the church in Rome:

For their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. (Romans 1:26–27)

When they give “hearty approval” (Romans 1:32) to those who practiced the opposition of God’s standards and did not “see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God *gave them over . . .*” (Romans 1:28) to a litany of consequences creating personal, familial, and cultural chaos. It is more than fair to say that this is what we have been experiencing over the last four decades in our country as we have witnessed the dire ramifications—socially, economically, and morally—attached to the breakdown of our homes and our nation.

THE CRISIS IN OUR NATION

After more than thirty years of failed social programs and billions of governmental dollars aimed at fixing homes, communities, schools, and our country, the once stable America is on a downward spiral. Couples live as if they were wed by the Secretary of War rather than by the Justice of the Peace. We are still hearing the figure of a 50 percent failure rate for new marriages, a rise that shot up from single digits once the no-fault divorce was introduced legal on January 1, 1970. Materialism has become more important than maintaining marriages and personal happiness has taken priority over family unity.

The devaluation of women through the curse of pornography and the glorification of violence on television and in the movies have fueled family breakdown as well. Not to mention the devaluation that comes through

popular music lyrics that portray women as objects to be used, whether sung by a man or a woman.

In such an environment, it is no wonder that teen pregnancy continues to skyrocket and that gangs flourish in our cities—and yes, they have moved to the suburbs too. There is no longer any such thing as fleeing the problem of our society's disintegration. Urban problems are now suburban problems in many areas.

Yet in the inner city, the breakdown of the family is the greatest. Nearly seven out of ten black children are growing up without a father. Two-parent families are now the exception in the inner city and nearing the exception in the three major culture and ethnic groups in our nation: white, Hispanic, and black (an average of 44 percent belong to single-parent families).¹

Social science statistics objectively reveal a connection between a fatherless home (either through absence or neglect) with all of the major social ills which can plague a person. Fathers are critical to the foundation of a home. Fatherlessness leads to some of the greatest, most detrimental pathologies that afflict a nation. These pathologies unravel the fabric of stability in any land. Not only do they create chaos, but they also lay a heavy burden on the taxpayers who must foot the bill for increased welfare, crime, drug addiction, and the consequences of an illiterate and uneducated nation.

It is estimated that the decreased earnings and consequent

loss of tax revenue and economic investment of high school dropouts from one year alone will cost our nation more than \$319 billion in lost wages over the lifetime of that one class.²

Yet what I don't want you to do is to let all of this bad news discourage you. The family is fixable. Your willingness to learn about God's kingdom agenda to be one family under God is a great step toward that end. It is my hope that God will use this book, and the Bible study we've produced to go along with it, to educate and inspire you in your walk with Him and in your family relationships.

REBUILDING ONE FAMILY UNDER GOD

As you develop in your spiritual life through our study of God's Word and apply it to the family under God, I think you will find yourself entering into a whole new realm of spiritual life and see how the kingdom perspective can make a difference both for time and eternity. The problems seem enormous, but if each of us do our part, we can—like Nehemiah, who rebuilt Jerusalem in just fifty-two days—make swift and solid strides to healthier families, stronger communities, and a better tomorrow in our land.

Thousands of years ago, Nehemiah gave us the rally cry for the rebuilding of our country and our culture, and it begins with our homes. It begins with our families. It begins with men taking responsibility within the walls of their own homes, family members accessing and using the sword of the

Spirit that is the Word of God, aligning ourselves underneath the sovereign authority and power of God, and fighting for our homes.

Friend, it is high time to fight for not only our own families but also the families of our children and our children's children.

See, Satan's goal is not merely to disrupt and destroy your family. It is to disrupt and destroy your future and the futures of your family members. He wants your children to witness things happening in your home or in the homes within our culture that will set up a negative paradigm for them once they establish their own homes. In doing so, he sets in motion a destructive, cyclical archetype for the carrying on of generational curses, chaos, and dysfunction.

Only when we return to God's design and purpose for the family will we return to God. When we return to God and align our families under Him, we will experience the peace, protection, and restoration that the Israelites knew in the days of Nehemiah.

Too many in the body of Christ today have grown complacent toward the attack on the biblical family, and the call to the preservation thereof. Too many feel that it does not relate directly to them and so they have not recognized the massive curveball being hurled by Satan that seeks to topple the future of our homes and country.

Family members, position yourselves firmly within your

own walls—shore up your own homes, making certain that you provide the healthiest environment for your own family. Then, study the sword of the Spirit that is the Word of God in order to equip you to stand against the Enemy’s opposition; Satan’s schemes. Know that we serve an awesome and powerful God.

And fight for your families, for their future—for the future of all.