

"America's children today are a lost generation. No other generation in history has been so plagued by sex, drugs, alcohol, greed and murder at such a young age. My question is, who is to blame?"

Everyone knows something terrible has happened in our nation's schools. Crime and violence have become so common, many school buildings now have metal detectors. Seventh-grade boys are able to obtain guns and mow down their classmates with no sorrow at all.

Our educational system itself has become vile and perverted. Teachers are introducing students to atheism, evolution, homosexual lifestyles, permissive sexual attitudes, anti-religious bigotry. A teacher can't place a Bible on his desk - but he can display literature on subjects ranging from communism to pornography.

Ever since our judicial system shut God out of our schools, satan has taken them over. Yet I am convinced it is not our corrupt school system that is damning our children.

Our entire society is experiencing a moral collapse. Cultural programs and art exhibits have become filthy and vulgar, making profanity commonplace. Even respected leaders in government and business positions use vile language freely. They curse Christ and damn God's Name without even thinking about it.

America's moral collapse has become so urgent, even liberal atheists acknowledge that our foundations are being threatened. Yet it is not our corrupt society that is damning our children.

The entire media today appears to be demon-controlled. MTV is the devil's private network, with satan

Who Is Guarding The Front Door Of Your House?

himself presiding as CEO. Music videos have become nothing more than lewd pornography with wicked, demoralizing lyrics.

You have to wonder what kind of demon-possessed minds could push such perversion on an entire generation of youth. The sellers of this hellish filth obviously have wrecked their own lives, and now they'll settle for nothing less than ruining the next generation. Yet even the wicked music scene isn't responsible for damning our youth.

In advertising, sex sells everything. No sexual act is considered sinful anymore. Anything goes, so that with every passing hour America sinks deeper into debauchery. And it's all being promoted by a media in collusion with the powers of hell. Yet as bad as advertising companies have become, they aren't to blame for damning our youth.

You may wonder about the influence of a dead, compromising church that brings worldly filth into God's house. Many pastors now routinely deny the existence of heaven, hell and the virgin birth. Their churches have become empty shells, having a form of godliness but no power. And their services have become so bland that the youth leave in droves. Young people are left thinking Christianity is totally irrelevant to their lives.

Many worship leaders have replaced hymns with MTV-style

rock music that mentions Jesus only in passing. Instead of offering holy worship, churches now stage body-slaming punk-rock concerts, where menacing, tattooed, body-pierced band members gyrate wildly, polluting God's house with the music of angry rebellion.

Yet as dry and worldly as the compromising church has become, it is not the primary force that is damning our children.

Many parents - including Christians - blame all of these things for the loss of our youth. When their children stray, turning to drugs or alcohol, these parents rage against schools, the government, the media, the church, their kids' peers. Some end up removing their children from public schools and enrolling them in Christian schools. But too often their kids' rebellion only grows worse.

Even unconverted parents take such action with their kids. They want nothing to do with religion - yet they send their children to Sunday school hoping it will instill in them some positive principles. They expect that in just an hour each week the teachers will magically transform their young rebels into angels. But when it doesn't happen, those parents blame the church for the chaos their child still brings to their home.

**Who Is to Blame for the Loss of
Our Children?**

All of the forces I have named do play a part in the disintegration of our youth. But neither schools, culture, media, wicked music nor backslidden churches alone are causing all the ruin. The truth is, the responsibility for this generation of youth rests primarily with parents. The home is where most seeds of rebellion and wickedness are being sown.

I have to ask parents: Do you know where your children are while you're going about, seeking a blessing? Are you losing your kids in the process? You may testify that God has changed and revived you - but if your home is in disarray, with your children still showing signs of rebellion, you have missed God's best.

Did the fresh touch of God give you a renewed burden for your children? If not, how could you sit in God's house selfishly enjoying His presence and then go home unconcerned about the darkness in your house?

Please don't misunderstand - I am not putting down revival meetings or divine manifestations. I have experienced genuine spiritual awakenings and Holy Ghost stirrings myself. As a minister of the gospel, I know that the Spirit manifests in our flesh to break our pride, expose our spiritual apathy and renew our spirit. Nor am I blaming all youth rebellion on parents. There are other causes of their worldliness.

Now let me give you a definition of true revival: It happens when the walls and gates guarding God's house are restored. And those walls include the doors of every Christian home. Let me explain.

The Book of Nehemiah Offers A Vivid Picture of What Happens to the Church in Times of Ruin and Apostasy.

When Nehemiah and 43,000 other Jewish patriots returned to Jerusalem, they found the city lying in total ruin. The walls were torn down and the gates removed, so the inhabitants had no protection from their enemies. And a whole parade of antagonists were plundering the city as they pleased: Sanballat, Ammonites, criminals, thieves.

These enemies had been given total dominion because of Israel's backsliding and disobedience to God's Word. Nehemiah wrote, *"...because of our sins: also they [our enemies] have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we are in great distress."* (NEH 9:37).

Jerusalem here is a type of the church of Jesus Christ today. Like the Israelites, many Christians are under sin's total dominion. And the iniquity in God's house has brought on distress and bondage, spreading poison throughout the body of Christ.

How has this happened? The walls of truth have been torn down - those protective barriers that are erected when believers stand on God's Word. Because of our sin and compromise, those protective gates are falling, leaving multitudes of Christians open to satan's power.

Yet Nehemiah here represents God's plan of restoration. This man knew that for any true revival to take place, there had to be a safe, protective wall of truth surrounding God's people.

So, did Nehemiah stride into the wall-less city calling for a revival of supernatural manifestations? No. The only manifestations seen after Nehemiah's arrival were men and women with picks and shovels in their hands. They were doing the hard work of rebuilding the city's walls and restoring its gates. And Nehemiah was leading it all.

This work of restoration began the moment Nehemiah took on the Lord's burden over the ruin in His house. When Nehemiah saw the affliction and reproach God's people were suffering, he fell to his knees crying, *"The wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire."* (NEH 1:3).

What did Nehemiah do next? He fasted and prayed night and day, confessing Israel's sins. *"It came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven."* (VERSE 4).

This is the beginning of true revival - when a godly Nehemiah company takes on the Lord's burden for a church trapped in sin. This godly

company fasts and prays, pleading with God to begin rebuilding the walls and gates that will protect His people from every enemy.

Once Jerusalem's Walls Were Rebuilt and Its Gates Set Up, Gatekeepers and Watchmen Were Appointed To Every House.

Walls and gates are no good without gatekeepers who know what can or can't be allowed in. Thus, Nehemiah says, *"It came to pass, when the wall was built, and I had set up the doors, and the porters and the singers and the Levites were appointed."* (NEH 7:1).

Notice that these gatekeepers were not strictly priests. They were lay-people - musicians, porters, people from all walks of life. And they were instructed: *"Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun be hot; and while they stand by, let them shut the doors, and bar them."* (VERSE 3).

God was saying to His people, "My house is going to be a place of light, with no darkness allowed in. Let everyone and everything that enters here be an open book, subject to the light of My Word."

I learned recently of a tragic story involving the minister of a very large church. This man was well known in his area, and he was exposed for committing adultery and misusing church funds. Some godly pastors in the area grew concerned and approached the elders of the minister's church. They suggested that the minister be given six months off. Then they offered to gather around him to provide support, discipline, ministry and restoration - all according to Scripture.

But the elders rejected the offer. They decided instead to keep their minister, with no discipline whatsoever. They told the pastors, "We don't want to miss our minister's sermons. He's such an eloquent speaker. And besides, he's really a good man deep down, a real buddy to us in the church. You know, we all have our weaknesses."

A woman in the congregation agreed, saying, "I don't care what our pastor did. His preaching is the only way I can get my unsaved

husband to go to church with me. I vote for him to stay."

These people all had a clear charge from God to act as gatekeepers. But they refused to close their gates to darkness. Sadly, they allowed themselves to be bribed by a human bond.

I say to every elder who is reading this message, including the elders at Times Square Church: Don't ever allow yourself to be blinded to God's Word by your close ties to any minister. You have been appointed by God to be a keeper at the gates of His house. And if anyone brings a gospel into your church that isn't according to Scripture, it is your duty to lovingly tell that preacher he is wrong.

I am not advocating that elders be bossy and controlling. I once experienced the horror of being abused by such a group in my very first pastorate. The tight-fisted elders in that church had driven off every pastor they'd had in the previous thirty years.

I was only nineteen when I began pastoring the church, and any nineteen-year-old is going to make mistakes. But one day four of the elders called me aside, sat me down in a room and accused me of being a dictator. They went on and on with their accusations, not allowing me to get a word in. It was the worst experience of my young life.

When it was over, all I could reply was, "God's Word says not to touch His anointed. So, if you believe the Lord has anointed me to pastor this church, then you're wrong to accuse me this way. I'll leave you for God to judge." Sadly, all four of those men received the Lord's judgment in some way thereafter.

As gatekeepers, we are to guard the doors of God's house in humility - through fasting, prayer and loving concern expressed through the fear of God.

Nehemiah Said, "Appoint Watches of the Inhabitants of Jerusalem, Every One in His Watch, and Every One to Be Over Against His House" (NEH 7:3).

According to Nehemiah, guardians were to be appointed not just to the

gates of the holy city, but to every home as well. In short, the heads of every household - that is, the parents - were responsible for everything that came into their home.

God's message here is crystal clear: Fathers and mothers, you are charged to guard your home from every demonic enemy that tries to enter. This means you are responsible for every book, every record, every friend your child brings through the door. You are also responsible for every influence within your home, whether it's TV, videos or the Internet.

I sincerely believe that parents today need more wisdom and discernment than at any time in history. Satan has many more wicked inventions and subtle disguises to use against God's people. And only through daily, diligent prayer and immersion in God's Word will we have power against him as guardians over our homes.

Before I go any further, I want to encourage all single parents: God knows your struggle to be both a father and a mother to your children. Yet His charge to you remains the same: You are the appointed guardian over your house. You can't wait for a mate to come in and do the job for you. The Lord promises to provide all grace and strength to you if you will stand up for His Word in your home.

As I think of the two boys in Colorado who killed their classmates and themselves, I wonder: Where were their parents? Those boys were making pipe bombs in the family garage. And their rooms were full of clues about what they were up to: hate material, threatening notes, black coats and hats. Didn't their fathers check up on them occasionally? Didn't their mothers ever go into their rooms to clean up, and notice all the demonic paraphernalia? Apparently, there was no guard at their door.

Today, whenever I see teenagers with pierced tongues, demonic symbols and spiked hair, I recognize these as mere symptoms. Such kids are crying out, "Mom, Dad, you're neglecting me. You're too busy - you don't even notice I exist."

One day we're all going to stand before the judgment seat and answer to the Lord for how we raised our children. And in that moment, none of us will be able to offer excuses or blame anyone else. Therefore, we have to examine ourselves today, asking: Have we brought up our children in the fear and admonition of the Lord? Have we modeled for them a life of love and reverence for God?

I remember playing outside as a boy and hearing my mother pray for me from the third floor of our house. Her example remains vivid in my memory. Later, when Gwen and I were raising our children, we did the same, praying for our kids according to Proverbs: "Lord, make our sons as oaks beside the waters of life. And make our daughters as polished stones in your palace. Keep them all from the schemes of the wicked one."

Every Christian parent has high hopes for his child. I see this regularly in our congregation, as parents bring their children forward to be dedicated to the Lord. Our pastoral staff prays for God's love and protection over these little ones. Then we anoint them with oil and ask the Holy Ghost to put a wall of fire around them.

But occasionally, I can't help wondering: How many of those precious children are going to end up in the devil's clutches - on drugs, into crime - because their mom or dad got careless about the spiritual atmosphere in their home? Will they end up in ruin because their parents were wrapped up in their own problems, never giving them attention or proper discipline?

Maybe you're a parent who hurts because your grown son or daughter no longer serves the Lord. Or, perhaps you're heartbroken because your youngster is hooked on drugs or alcohol. You've seen your once-tender child grow bitter, hard and lost.

This message is not meant to condemn you. No one can take back his or her past. But I do have a question for you. As you look back on your parenting years, ask yourself: Were you a true guardian over your home? Did you bathe your children in prayer daily? Or were you too busy? Did you allow your kids to intimidate you?

That is all in the past now. Yet there remains something you can do: You still have a calling as a watchman to pray diligently for your child's salvation. That's right - you can make up in prayer today what you might have missed in past years. You can still seek God's face, bathe your loved one in prayer, and call down Holy Ghost conviction on him to bring him to the cross.

I must warn you, however - if your kids are backslidden or unsaved, you must not preach at them. Simply pray for them. You can't nag anyone into the kingdom of heaven. Addict after addict has told me, "My ears still ring from my mother's screaming. I could hear her all the way down the block."

There is no real power in raising your voice, because all power rests with the Holy Spirit. Therefore, be empowered by your respect for God's Word. When someone walks through your front door, they should sense God's authority in your home right away, without a word being mentioned. And until your children become adults, you are the guardian in charge who has authority to set down all the rules.

Scripture makes it very clear that if you raise your children on the authority of God's Word, they won't depart from that training in their later years. They may veer away from it for a while, even for years - but ultimately it will bring them back to truth.

The Bible Offers a Word of Hope to All Parents Who Grieve Over a Backslidden Child.

Here is a covenant promise that every parent should memorize. It applies both to children who have been lost and to those presently under your care:

"Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: Thus saith the Lord that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen.

"For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses." (ISA 44:1-4).

This word of promise to Israel is also meant for us today. Its words of comfort are given to all who are chosen (see verse 1) - meaning, all who are in Christ.

The Lord begins by telling us in verses 1-2, "I am the Lord who made you, and I know your pain. I am going to help you now. You don't have to fear." The word for Jesurun in this verse means righteous one. In other words, God makes these promises to His righteous ones - glorious, binding, covenant promises. The promises are:

* God will provide water to satisfy our thirst: *"I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground."* (VERSE 3). Has the Lord brought you His thirst-quenching Word? Has He come to you in your dry spells and flooded you with His Spirit? Are you drinking the pure water of His Word?

If so, you are ready to claim another covenant promise:

* *"I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses."* (VERSES 3-4).

As you may know, willow trees grow fast and tall and they spread wide. You often see them growing beside streams or bodies of water. God is saying here, "Because you are my chosen, I'm going to pour my Spirit out on your children. And I will cause them to grow tall and strong in the Lord."

As you read and reread these verses, I urge you to fill in your lost child's name. Claim God's promise to you by praying, "Lord, you said you would pour your Spirit on my child. Now, bless my child, Michael. Pour out your Spirit on my young one, Susan. Cause both of them to thirst for your living water."

* Finally, God says your children will testify, *"I am the Lord's"* (VERSE 5). What an incredible promise.

Yet these promises are not for everyone who merely says, "I am of Christ." They are only for hungering, thirsting parents - those who drink in God's Word daily, praying regularly, asking the Spirit to pour out on them His power and presence.

If this describes you, then plead God's promises. Claim them as yours, and hold the Lord to them in your intercession. Then bathe your family in prayer - and watch the enemy flee.

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