

Monday Morning Rewind – May 3, 2010

Good morning! It's the first Monday in May. Do you know where your kids are? Spiritual speaking, that is.

On Sabbath we paused from our series on the Lord's Prayer to highlight our children, and to confront a growing crisis that is more devastating than the gulf oil spill crisis. According to new research by George Barna and others, nearly two-thirds of the children sitting in Protestant churches today will be gone in their 20s. If it was merely an absence in church attendance, the situation would be disconcerting but not necessarily a crisis. What makes this situation devastating, however, is that a large percentage of young people who go missing from the church, do so because they lose faith in the accuracy and authority of God's Word.

Lamentations 2:19 is a call to prayer for the children. "Arise, cry out in the night, as the watches of the night begin; pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord. Lift up your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint from hunger at the head of every street."

During the final days of the kingdom of Judah, Jerusalem was under siege by the Babylonian army. The people of Jerusalem suffered the most intense hardships during this time of deprivation and captivity. Jeremiah sees the suffering of the most vulnerable victims—the children—and urges the adults to pray for their lives, holding nothing back.

Our children are also under siege today, not by the Babylonians, but by a secular society that is increasingly hostile to faith in general, and Christianity in particular. How are we to pray for our children? Rewind to Nehemiah 1:1-11 and 2:2-5 and from Nehemiah's example, we will discover four principles for effective prayer in a crisis.

1. You get what you pray for when you are concerned enough to ask. [vss. 1-2]

When Nehemiah's brother Hanani came for a visit, along with some friends, he asked about the condition of his people and Jerusalem. Nehemiah knew that God's reputation was tied to the welfare of his people and his city.

The principle is clear: we cannot pray effectively until we know what we're praying for. Are we inquiring about our children's relationship with God? How concerned are we with what goes on inside our children's Sabbath School class? Do we care enough to ask?

2. You get what you pray for when you are moved enough to weep. [vss. 3-4]

When Nehemiah heard the report that the people of God were scattered and the walls of the city were broken down, he wept. God's people were vulnerable to attack and in disarray. It bothered Nehemiah and he wept. What moves us to weep? Or to cry out to God for the salvation of our children?

Leonard Ravenhill said, "The trouble with many believers is that they get angry over trifles and are unmoved about tragedies. They are angry because of some personal slight, but are Sphinx-like while the wolves of lust devour our youth and while demons of false doctrines scatter the flock."

The enemy's assault on the faith of our children should be cause for passionate prayer. Nehemiah set the example for us. He wept, prayed, and fasted over the brokenness of Jerusalem. Do we fast and pray to concentrate on the overwhelming needs of our children? God used Nehemiah to rebuild walls of Jerusalem. God wants to use you and me to build walls of prayer and support around our young people.

3. You get what you pray for when you are honest enough to confess. [vss. 6-7]

Nehemiah confesses on behalf of the Israelites but also his own sin. Where have we dropped the ball in the faith development of our children?

The number one perception of the Christian church today is "Hypocrisy"--saying one thing and doing another. Praying "Thy will be done," but living "My will be done." This disconnect is seen in the younger generation and causes them to turn away from the faith.

Nehemiah confessed the sin of conformity. We must confess the same. Ask yourself, is the world more like the church or the church more like the world? We are called to be holy and therefore set apart. We must sadly confess that sometimes we forget who we are and Whose we are.

In another study, 20 percent didn't feel connected to the people in their church. We need a greater connection with young people. And we can start by simply knowing their names. Are we honest enough to confess where we have sinned against God and against this generation?

4. You get what you pray for when you are bold enough to risk. [2:2-5]

Nehemiah was willing to carry out the will of God, even if it meant risking his own life. He took a chance in making a request of the king because the stakes were so high. The safety and faith of his people was at risk as long as the walls were down and they were exposed to attack. The safety and faith of our children is at risk today. Two-thirds of the young people here today may already be gone if the Barna studies are accurate.

In a recent survey, a thousand young adults who have left the church were asked if they believed that all the accounts and stories in the Bible are true and accurate. Of those, 44% said NO. Those 44% were then asked "What made you begin to doubt the Bible?" Here were the results:

- 4% - Christians don't live by the Bible
- 7% - There's so much suffering in the world.
- 11% - The Bible has errors
- 14% - Science shows the world is old
- 15% - The Bible contradicts itself
- 18% - It was not translated correctly

24% - It was written by men

4% - Evolution proves that the Bible is wrong

Added together, 82% of those who said they did not believe all the accounts and stories in the Bible are true and accurate did so because they doubt the authority of the Bible. **They don't believe the book from which we speak.**

Psalm 11:3 says, "If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" Our foundation is the Word of God. His Word is the "Wall" around our children to establish their faith. But the walls are down. We must be "repairers of the breach" and once again, as in Israel of old, give God's word priority in our homes. (See Deut. 6:4-9.)

Most modern homes have Bibles, but in how many of those homes is it actually read? After a day in our public schools when our children are being taught that the Bible is not to be believed, how "real" is God's word outside the Church?

And don't overlook the fact that Nehemiah sought to be the answer to his own prayer. He asked the King if he could go and rebuild the walls. He was willing not only to *pray* the price, but to *pay* the price. **You get what you pay for.** I'm not talking primarily of the price of tuition in our Christian schools, but the price of involvement, volunteerism, and your willingness to be the answer to your prayers. At Kuna our goal is not just kids in Sabbath School, but Kids in discipleship, and that means parents in discipleship as well. The price for both is involvement. Knowing their names. Investing time. You get what you *pay* for.

Lastly, **you get what you stay for.** After you pray and pay, stay. Invest yourself in this process and fight for what you pray and pay for. Stay involved, stay connected to the kids, stay in prayer, and stay in the battle.

Which of our kids will fall prey to what Paul warned about in 2 Cor. 11:3? "But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ." None have to if we will be concerned enough to ask, moved enough to weep, be honest enough to confess, and be bold enough to risk.

What are we willing to risk to rebuild the walls of righteousness for our children? Be bold. Teach and live the Word of God for our children, and trust God with the results. "Pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord. Lift up your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint from hunger at the head of every street." *The need is great. The key is prayer. The time is now!* –Pastor Randy

p.s. Pray and ask God how you might be involved in the children's ministry at Kuna. You may not be gifted to work with children or to lead a Sabbath School class, but helpers are needed, and a 13-week commitment is all you may be asked to make. Plans are being developed to ensure that our teachers and helpers avoid burn-out and can stay fresh with shorter teaching rotations. Also consider volunteering during this year's Vacation Bible School (June 13 – 17). Register and volunteer online today at: <https://www.groupvbspro.com/vbs/hl/kunasdavbs/gpgs/home.aspx>.

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2 Chron. 7:14

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