

The Family Can Save the Nation

One Household at a Time

By Cheryl Sacks

I will never forget the transformative moment when the Holy Spirit suddenly spoke to me in a resounding, almost audible voice. The impression rang out in my spirit with a shocking force and urgency: "Revival will come to America when the FAMILY ALTAR is restored!"

At that moment, I saw a vision of the nation covered in deep, impenetrable darkness. A few homes began to light up, glowing like stars across the dark night sky. The fireplaces in these homes were burning brightly where families were sitting together praying and praising the Lord.

Then, all at once, homes everywhere across the nation exploded with light as the families inside were worshiping and praying. This spread until the whole nation was ablaze with the power and presence of God.

I could only stand in awe—what I saw took my breath away!

"Lord," I cried out, "could it really be? Is the *family* the very key to unlocking the revival we've been praying for?"

I felt in my spirit that the answer was yes.

How God Uses Families in Times of Crisis

Our world is in crisis. Violent crime is increasing in major cities across America. We are seeing massive protests, riots, and revolutions. Widespread drought, floods, volcanoes, and

fires. Hyperinflation is skyrocketing as undisciplined governments drive up their national debt. The threat of nuclear war looms. Perhaps even more troubling, we are seeing the rapid loss of personal freedoms and retaliation against those who would confront evil in our day.

In the Bible, when the nation was on the brink of destruction and even annihilation, God had a simple, humble solution. In the darkest, most desperate times He used righteous families to bring deliverance and salvation to the nation.

During the most depraved time in human history—during the days of Noah—God used one family to resist the evil of their day and build the ark. Think also of the stories of Miriam, Aaron, and Moses, Esther and Mordecai, and Joseph, Mary, and Jesus. In these times of national crisis, God used families to bring deliverance.

We've also seen families in more modern times—seeking God as a family in their place of prayer and worship—take a dramatic role in their uncertain times.

In the 1800s, slave families in the American South would gather at night to pray together, often using the black kettles they kept for cooking and washing clothes to muffle the sound of their voices. Their cruel masters had forbidden them to gather and pray, fearing prayer would give them hope and inspire them to run away.

But these enslaved people persevered and would not let threats of punishment and even death deter them from their family altars. They did not presume to pray for their own freedom; they had no hope that it would ever happen. Instead, they risked their own lives to pray for the freedom of the next generation—their children and grandchildren.

During the same time period, Quaker families in the United States played a huge role in forming the Underground Railroad to help slaves escape to freedom.

During World War II in the Netherlands, the ten Boom family's faith prompted them to transform their home into a hiding place. Motivated by intense prayer and a strong faith in God, they not only sheltered Jewish people from the Nazis, but encouraged other Christians to open their homes as well. Besides their immediate impact on the people they saved, the ten Boom family's faith and legacy have inspired millions worldwide through Corrie's now-famous book, *The Hiding Place*, and a movie by the same name.

None of the families mentioned above likely had any idea that God would use them to save their nation, much less the world. They simply sought God together, heard from Him, and faithfully and courageously served Him in their sphere of influence. Together, they prayed, listened for God's voice, discerned His plan, and stepped out in faith and courage to follow the assignment He gave them.

Is Your Family Prepared to Be Used?

What might this look like for 21st-century Christian families? Is setting aside time as a family to seek the face of God together even a reality in our fast-paced, chaotic world? Can we "be still" long enough to wait in His presence, to hear His wisdom for the decisions and crises we face? Are we positioned to be used by Him when He calls us?

Wherever a "family altar" is burning—where family members set their hearts to pray, worship, and seek God together—a home radiates with light that quenches the darkest of cultural depravity or scarcity. "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it" (John 1:5, nlt). In times of crisis, God's fire from our family prayers will overflow from our homes into the surrounding community.

When my good friend Arlyn and her family moved into a new house in a rural area, they had no idea of the spiritual darkness they were about to encounter. They discovered that

their new neighborhood was riddled with alcohol and drug abuse, domestic violence, and crime.

Rather than moving away, the Lord led Doug and Arlyn, along with their five young children, to begin praying together for their neighbors and their neighborhood. They drew a map of the streets directly around their home, labeling the houses with what little information they knew about their neighbors—names, observations, impressions, etc. As a family, they began to prayerwalk their neighborhood regularly, noting clues that might indicate the needs of the families living in the houses, and how they should pray.

At one house, they frequently felt drawn by the Holy Spirit to pause, noting its run-down appearance and sensing a deep need. They prayed.

One day, the police were called there, lights flashing and bull-horn blaring. Doug and Arlyn learned the live-in boyfriend had been arrested on a domestic violence charge. Doug, Arlyn, and their children prayed fervently for this household, that God would do a miracle and bring salvation and healing.

Not long afterward, this same family showed up unexpectedly at Doug and Arlyn's church. The woman explained, "Our life is a mess and we need help. When I was a small child, a bus would come to our trailer park to pick me up for Sunday school. This was the church it brought me to. I didn't know where else to go."

Doug and Arlyn were able to befriend the couple and lead them to the Lord. After coming to Christ, the couple was married, and the man was set free from a longtime drug and alcohol addiction.

Another set of neighbors, observing the first couple's transformation, also gave their lives to Christ. That husband, too, was delivered from drug addiction. These new, young

believers joined Doug and Arlyn's church fellowship and the small-group Bible study that met weekly at Doug and Arlyn's house.

As they all continued to pray over the neighborhood, a drug house was shut down and demolished, and a beautiful new home built in its place. The abandoned house next door to it sold to a Christian missionary family, who moved in and contributed to the changing climate of the neighborhood.

Within the growing small group were two sheriff's deputies who also lived in the community, one the head of the SWAT team, and one the head of the narcotics squad. At the same time, the new believers were still struggling to overcome their addictions and past lifestyles. All were coming together to pray and worship the Lord together—it was a diverse group, to say the least!

"We all experienced a mini-revival that changed the course and direction of multiple families and our entire neighborhood," Arlyn says.

All because one family built a "family altar" and prayed!

Are We Ready?

Are our families prepared to be used by God when He calls us? While the ten Boom family's courageous decision to begin hiding Jews in their home was a significant one, it was simply the next logical step in a pattern of life characterized by prioritizing the family altar of worship and prayer and serving those in need around them.

Remembering the vision I had years ago, I can see again in my mind's eye the "fire from heaven" falling on families, spreading to the family of God—a concentric move of God that starts in our own hearts, as the Holy Spirit prepares us to become a place once again where He is welcome.

In the tumultuous times in which we are living, God is calling His people to again light the family altar—to establish our homes as places to regularly meet with and encounter Him. He is saying, “I want to come into your homes and lives in a fresh, new way!”

In Exodus 9:16, God tells His people,

“But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.”

I believe, as God’s people respond to this invitation, it will usher in an unprecedented move of the Holy Spirit, igniting households with healing, restoration, and a renewed love for God and one another as it moves outward from our homes to our neighborhoods, communities, nation—and the world.

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