

GOD'S END-TIME MESSAGE FOR UNITY IN THE HOME

# *Lord, Save My Family*

BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE



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# CHAPTER 1

## It's Never Too Late

“The difference between a house and a home is this: A house may fall down, but a home is broken up.”—Elbert Hubbard (1856–1915)

I was sitting on the platform. It was nearly time for me to preach. We'd sung the hymns and given our offering, and now someone was telling the children's story. As I looked across the congregation, I realized that what we refer to as the church family is simply the sum of the individual families that comprise the church. In that moment, the thought flashed into my mind that the renewal, reformation, and revival that the church needs can happen only when these changes occur in our individual homes. How can the spiritual vitality of the church amount to more than what its members bring to it? And how can members bring more spiritual vitality to a church than they have at home?

When God finished creating the world and all that was in it, He established two institutions, the Sabbath and marriage. He blessed and sanctified them. The one would unite us to Him, and the other would be the very foundation of all that makes up communities, cities, and nations—the family. No wonder the enemy has made it his priority to destroy both institutions. As far as he is concerned, obscuring and even nearly obliterating the Sabbath was relatively easy. Destroying the home would prove to be more difficult. As his satanic majesty begins his final moves just before the return of our Lord in glory, his nefarious, two-pronged strategy is coming together.

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The devil's attempt to establish a false Sabbath we expected; but the success of his attack on the institution of marriage we couldn't have imagined in our worst nightmare. However, during the past few decades we have watched as the most sacred and holy of human relationships has been first trivialized and then corrupted. As it was in the days of Noah, when every thought was only evil continually, and as it was with the city of Sodom, so it is in these final days. Surely "it is time for Thee, Lord, to work: for they have made void thy law" (Psalm 119:126).

Throughout the history of this planet, just before each earth-shaking crisis that arose, God always sent a warning message to those who would hear. To us living at the end of the age, He has done the same. While in his final attack the devil aims to destroy the sacred institutions of the Sabbath and the home as God ordained them, we have the assurance that, as darkness shall cover the earth and gross darkness the people, the Lord shall arise upon us, and His glory shall be seen upon us (Isaiah 60:2). And though the enemy should come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him (Isaiah 59:19).

I am fascinated by the implications of Jesus' description of the last days, especially His words, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Matthew 24:12). I have concluded that when love waxes cold, the family is affected first. This book stands in defense of the family. The promise and warning found in Malachi 4:5, 6 comprises its theme: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

We see nations at war with one another, and we remark how much they need the gospel. Stories of looting and car bombs move us to give to missions so the gospel can change hearts and minds. So, yes, we know that the gospel changes lives. Then why do we seem to lock the gospel out of our homes? Where did we get the idea that Jesus' words "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute

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you” (Matthew 5:44) apply to our treatment of everyone except our spouse?

Jesus commanded us to forgive not seven times but seventy times seven (see Matthew 18:22). We seem to have no problem with this as long as it does not refer to our attitude toward our parents. In short, we apply the command that we love our enemies to everyone except members of our own family. Experience has demonstrated that the most difficult place to be a Christian is at home. However, if we can't implement the principles of the gospel in our homes, we must question our ability to implement them anywhere.

On January 30, 2003, the space shuttle Columbia broke up on reentry into the earth's atmosphere. NASA's reaction was amazing. The administrators immediately suspended the space program. They directed a search that covered thousands of square miles and yielded more than eight thousand pieces of the broken spacecraft, which were then painstakingly reassembled. They pledged not to fly the shuttle again until they could ascertain exactly what happened that fateful day and take steps to prevent it from happening again. Homes throughout our society are crashing and burning. The marriage institution itself is at risk. Should we be any less diligent to discover causes and seek solutions?

In spite of the fact that the atmosphere of modern society is increasingly hostile to marriage and the family, there is hope for our families. But they will not survive by default. We must intentionally install a life-support system that will sustain us in the dark days before the dawn. That life-support system is the gospel as lived and taught by the Son of God Himself. If our families are to survive in these last days, we must allow the life of Jesus to come into our personal lives and from there to permeate the entire household.

### **Heart problems**

The chapters that follow give a pastoral rather than a clinical perspective on the problems discussed and the solutions offered. Although I present some “how to's,” the readers who will derive the greatest benefit are those who are willing to give their heart and life to Jesus and His Word. The problems that face us as individuals and

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as families are fundamentally heart problems that only being born again and accepting Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord will alleviate. You will notice the first chapters address issues that are not so much family issues as personal issues. Change in the family comes only one heart at a time.

Perhaps you tend to think that what you are reading applies to everyone else in the family except yourself. The principles enunciated in this book are no respecter of persons. They are for everyone in the family, including the reader.

Perhaps you haven't had a good track record in family relationships. You may be dealing with divorce and alienation. If this is your situation, you need not be disheartened. Although we cannot live our lives over again, by God's grace we can always get a new start. A recurring theme throughout the pages of this book is that, no matter where we come from or where we are now, the gospel of Jesus Christ will help us experience a new beginning.

Perhaps members of your family make no profession of religion and even act with a studied hostility to spiritual values. Don't worry; this book is for you as well. It will challenge you to consider the possibility that Jesus may use your changed heart to reach the hearts of your family.

The quality of intelligence gathered may determine whether a war is won or lost. Such was the case before the invasion of Normandy, which was the turning point in World War II. The Allies put together an elaborate plan to attack the Axis powers with what history would record as the largest invasion fleet ever assembled. There would be five thousand ships, eleven thousand planes, and 150,000 troops. The code name for the plan was Operation Overlord.

The victory won that day on the beaches of France was due to the valor of those who landed on those beaches, on the blood shed by the thousands who were killed and wounded. But the enemy could have repulsed the attack and prolonged the war had it not been for an elaborate lie.

To deceive the enemy and divert attention away from the actual invasion, the Allies formulated a deception with the code name Fortitude. The idea was to make it appear as though they were planning to

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focus the invasion on the Point de'Calais. To accomplish this, they established a paper army (the "First United States Army Group") that supposedly was comprised of a million men and was under the command of General George S. Patton. Its armor included fake tanks and trucks made of plywood and inflatable rubber, which, when seen by the enemy from the air, appeared to be the real thing. The enemy fell for the ruse, and what resulted on June 6, 1944, is a matter of history. The army of the Allies breached the enemy's heavily fortified defenses, and on May 7, 1945, Germany surrendered.

The devil also has a program of misinformation as he seeks to invade our souls and our families. During those critical days of World War II, Winston Churchill said that truth is so precious that it must be accompanied by a bodyguard of lies. It occurs to me that our enemy has given that saying a twist. He wraps his deceptions in a thin skin of truth. He knocks on the doors of our homes, misrepresenting himself as a friend of the family and as a bearer of gifts.

It is my prayer that this book will help to expose some of the misinformation that seems to be entering like a flood. Let's stop doing business as usual and put some of the pieces together. Using Bible principles, let's try to discover what is going wrong and how it can be fixed. Who knows but that this book may serve as a catalyst to bring revival, renewal, and reformation to your family—beginning with you.

As you read, when ideas pop into your mind as to how to make the gospel real in your home, I hope you will jot them down. Financial counselors suggest that when people have incurred a number of debts, they should begin the process of paying them off by paying first the ones with the lower balances. Similarly, I suggest that you start implementing at once those suggestions that are the most obvious and over which you have the most influence. Remember, it has taken time to get into the problems we have; getting out will take time too.

Each subsequent chapter ends with Points to Ponder. These points sum up the main thrust of the chapter. Each chapter also contains a Homework Assignment. You don't have to do exactly what is being suggested, but do something!

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### **A Prayer for God's Blessing**

Dear Heavenly Father,

You are the Father of all the families on earth. You established marriage and gave the first couple the ability to procreate, and You encouraged them to do so. Now, at the end of the age, the devil seems to have completely surrounded us. In many instances, he has overrun our defenses. Thank You, Lord, that in this dark time You have promised to save our homes with a special message that would turn our hearts to You and to each other.

May the Holy Spirit use this book to bring revival, renewal, and reformation into my home. And Father, give me the strength and patience to cooperate with You as You do this.

Amen.