

GOD'S RENEWAL FOR HOUSEHOLDS

"Part XXVII: Renewing Household Families: Addressing Roadblocks - Aiding Children In At-Risk Environs"

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Many children today often live in at-risk environments:

(1) Anne Muggeridge reported in the January 21, 1997 issue of The Wall Street Journal on a book, The Divorce Culture written by Barbara Whitehead. Ms. Whitehead tells of an incident involving a nine-year-old junior-league hockey star named Anthony whose real parents are divorced. His mother has remarried, and Anthony started to wear the last name of his stepfather on his jersey until his real father sued in court that Anthony's former last name appear on his jersey.

So, to avoid being in contempt of court, little Anthony decided to tuck his jersey so far into his hockey pants that his stepfather's name didn't appear!

(2) The schools our children attend often leave them at risk:

(a) According to a Christian who teaches in an area public school, drugs, alcohol and promiscuity seem to be the norm by way of peer pressure, and teachers often are so unchristian that about the only viewpoint that is ardently opposed in class is Christianity.

(b) However, the environment can be at-risk in Christian schools as well. As a pastor, I have had to deal with more cases of attempted suicide with kids attending Christian schools than with those attending public schools. From what I have been told by sources and various teens, immorality, drugs and emotionally abusive cliques have been a problem in one area Christian school.

(3) The children perhaps most at-risk in America are the unborn infants still within their mothers' wombs. Every year, 1,600,000 American unborn infants lose their lives in abortion clinics because their mothers just don't want them! That amounts to almost one child every 20 seconds around the clock! **Besides, contrary to the claims in the '70s by abortion rights organizers that legalized abortion would end child abuse as unwanted children would be "eliminated," Dr. Phillips' Ney, Canada Journal of Psychiatry has written, "... elective abortion is an important cause of child abuse."**

How can we help such children in at-risk environs where we many times seem humanly powerless to help?!"

(We turn to the sermon's "Need" section . . .)

Need: "I know a child in a situation where circumstances in the realm are VERY counter-productive to his welfare in some way! I am limited as to what I can do to be of direct help! Any ideas?!"

- I. **If we KNOW that a child is being physically abused, the LAW, supported by Proverbs 3:27, calls us to report it to the authorities.**
- II. **However, in cases where a child is in harm's way, but where CIVIL and BIBLICAL commands do not give us the human jurisdiction to intervene, we must operate on the SPIRITUAL plane as follows:**
 - A. Paul taught that a believer's having to "**wrestle**" in a conflict involving family institutions signaled the presence of the angelic conflict.
 1. Ephesians contains references to stresses between husbands and wives (Eph. 5:18, 21-33) & parents & children (5:18, 21; 6:1-4):
 - a. By use of **present** imperatives, Paul urged believers to **start** being filled with the Holy Spirit while **ending** their being drunk with wine, UBS The Greek New Testament, p. 675 [Eph. 5:18].
 - b. This was to be followed by believers properly submitting to one another in God's orderly "chains-of-command," Eph. 5:21.
 - c. In particular, the roles of husbands and wives (Eph. 5:21-33) and that of parents and children (Eph. 6:1-4) are thus affected!
 2. The stresses are fueled by a war between demons and angels, 6:12:
 - a. Paul stated that the believers' struggle in marital and family institutions is really a wrestle against demonic forces, Eph. 6:12.
 - b. In the struggle, good angels, assigned to help believers according to Hebrews 1:13-14 vie with demonic forces who, as agents of Satan, seek to destroy people and these institutions, cf. Jn. 8:44 with Job 2:6 and 2:7-9, and with 1:12 and 1:18-19.
 - B. Thus, one must "arm" for **spiritual** war in defense of a child in harm's way that is **outside** of the caring one's **human** jurisdiction as follows:
 1. **Step One** - Be removed from Satan's domain by trusting in Christ:
 - a. Until one believes on Christ for salvation from sin, he is under the dominion of the Evil One, cf. John 8:44 and Eph. 2:1-2, 4-8.

- b. Thus, to help others in spiritual conflict, we must be translated by faith in Christ's Gospel into His reign, Col. 1:12-14; Jn. 3:16.
- 2. Step Two - Be equipped with God's spiritual resources for conflict.
 - a. If we harbor sin, Satan hinders us from effective service by accusing us before the Father, cf. Zech. 3:1-3 with Rev. 12:10b.
 - b. Yet, Christ stands as our Advocate, ready to purify us so we can avoid the blocking accusations of Satan, Zec. 3:4; 1 Jn. 2:1b.
 - c. If the believer confesses his sin, God forgives him, putting him in a position of power again as Satan is powerless to resist the Holy Spirit's effectiveness through him, 1 Jn. 1:9; Zec. 3:1.
 - d. Then, rely upon the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-23) for the motivation to obey Scripture for life and service (1 Jn. 2:3-6) to avoid **SIN!**
- 3. Step Three - Thus equipped, engage in spiritual warfare as follows:
 - a. Pray for divine intervention in the child's behalf, Eph. 6:18.
 - b. In doing so, expect Satanic tests to get us to *sin* to negate this intercession, and counter it as follows: (1) avoid the lure to "fudge" on telling the truth, Eph. 6:14a; (2) avoid trying to push our own uprightness instead of hiding in Christ's substitutionary righteousness, Eph. 6:14b; (3) be ready to give the Gospel as angelic attacks often can precede or follow effective witnessing opportunities, Eph. 6:15; (4) above all, trust God's written Word for all moves or thoughts, Eph. 6:16; (5) rest in our positional relationship to Christ via His salvation for attacks on our salvation assurance, Eph. 6:17a; (6) avoid Satan's lure to flee or attack, getting us out of our spiritual jurisdiction where we can be defeated. God wants us only to "wait until the ball is hit into our court" before we act, Eph. 6:13c; (7) do not rely on or defend our human weaknesses, but operate via the spiritual gifting and calling assigned to us under Biblical authority, cf. Eph. 4:7-13 for gifting & 1 Cor. 12:4-7 for service assignments; (8) if the attack is against our interpretation of Scripture, stay with the interpretation God let us be convinced was true before the attack began (2 Tim. 3:14a,b) and that which was given us by credible Bible teachers before the attack, 3:14c with 3:10-12; (9) wait in this stance and the human agent used by Satan to attack will openly disqualify himself, 3:8-9. (10) Stay confident in God's provisions throughout the battle, 1 Cor. 10:13.

Application: To help a child in at-risk environs, besides appealing to civil authorities re: actual physical abuse, we must resort to spiritual warfare. That takes (1) believing on Christ to become a member of God's kingdom, John 3:16; Col. 1:12-14, and (2) being equipped to do battle accordingly, 1 Jn. 1:9-2:1; Gal. 5:16-22 and Eph. 6:12-18. (3) In this position, always PRAY, Eph. 6:18.

Lesson: The protection and preservation of children in at-risk environs over whom we have no human jurisdiction takes success in the angelic conflict. Our part is to realize as much and adjust to be of any real help.

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

While growing up in the spiritist and animist region of Southern Nigeria, my mother one day gave me a very disturbing bit of information along with an order.

She said that an African child in the village had been kidnapped by an elderly woman belonging to a spiritist cult, and that this woman was known to participate in child sacrifice to the spirits. Accordingly, as the whole village was upset and worried about their own children, I was also supposed to play very close to the house. Any person who came by who was a stranger I was to flee from and run indoors immediately!

To a nine-year-old, this was very unsettling, and I can remember my Mom's warning today like it was last week! I felt horrible for the little African boy who had been kidnapped. I had heard how those in this society would bury the boy up to his neck down by the river somewhere until he was partially starved and too weak to fight back. They would proceed with the building of an altar and sacrifice the boy on him much like Abraham was about to do to his son, Isaac before God stopped him.

That Old Testament account suddenly became very real, very traumatically important to me!

Thankfully, due to the prayers of the African Church and the missionaries, the little boy was found alive and released from his bondage in the sandbar before he was sacrificed. The missionaries had him under their care in the town dispensary where he was recuperating.

It took much prayer for this little child in a severely at-risk environment to be salvaged!

By the same token, the multitudes of unborn children at-risk in America, or the many who are being emotionally and mentally abused in their environs can be helped by believers in Christ involving themselves as righteous saints in prayer!

We need to pray, and stay right with the Lord!