

How Do We Respond to a Broken Nation?

By Bill Elliff

It is a tragic thing to watch a nation digress. We live in the midst of such vile immorality today that the current generations cannot possibly remember anything different.

But I can. And so can millions of people over 60 years of age. Before you scoff, don't discount the reality. I remember a nation where:

- Every day in the public school, we began with prayer, asking for God's help and protection on our day. You may laugh at this, but your very laughter indicates you cannot envision the possibility or the blessing that comes when whole segments of society see prayer as an essential function.
- Television had no profanity (none), no sexual perversion, no nakedness, and what was promoted was wholesome. The daily fare was *Father Knows Best*, *Gunsmoke*, *Red Skelton*, and *I Love Lucy*.
- Political leaders disagreed, but they disagreed agreeably. There was a level of civility that is now a distant memory.
- Church activities and special events were reported, even on the front page of the newspaper.
- The Church had great respect from all levels of society and was making rapid advances.
- The things of God were not scoffed at or ridiculed.
- A child could ride his or her bike almost anywhere with safety.
- The basest kinds of immorality, normalized today, were unheard of.

- Abortion did not exist except in dark alleys.

I'm not saying these days were perfect or that our nation was living in revival. And I'm not praying for a return to "Americanism" or mere moralism. We need spiritual revival and a great awakening that will manifest itself in vastly different ways. But it was a very different moral culture in the 1950s, which has eroded dramatically over the last 50 years.

Response to Digression

Nehemiah watched a similar digression. His people had disobeyed God, and God had given them up to their enemies so they would come to desperation and return to Him. Nehemiah saw the low point come in a conversation with his brother, who had returned to Babylon from their hometown of Jerusalem.

In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem. They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire." When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven (Neh. 1:1-4).

You can formulate four responses to the moral and spiritual digression of a nation:

1. **Gradual Assimilation.** This will happen without knowing it is occurring. Like the frog in the kettle, you can gradually adjust your morals so that godlessness is a part of your lifestyle and doesn't really disturb you anymore.
2. **Hopeless Resignation.** You can be so defeated and

disturbed that you throw up your hands and offer no resistance—even though, if you are a believer, you are an ambassador of the King of kings and “the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

3. **Frantic Humanism.** You can rush around, vainly trying every human option to stem the tide of the enemy’s assault. This can make a big noise but produce little substantive change in the end.
4. **Spiritual Repentance and Fervent Prayer.** Nehemiah chose this response. His appeal was to the God who is above the nations and rules over all. He fasted and prayed and immediately obeyed the Holy Spirit’s promptings and directives of His Word. In the end, it led to one of the most significant nationwide revivals in the history of the world (see Nehemiah, chapters 8–9).

Only God

Nehemiah knew that only God could stem the tide and reverse the decay. Only God could mercifully forgive and return His glory to the land. Only God could move the hearts of government leaders. Only God could revive a sleeping Church and awaken a lost society. Only God . . . *Only God.*

As you survey our land today, what will history record as your response?

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