

RECLAIMING OUR FAMILIES

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Nehemiah 1:11

It is Black History month; and during this time we celebrate the heritage we have as African Americans. We have a rich and royal legacy. Have you ever considered tracing your heritage to determine the African tribe to which you are connected? Our rich heritage has been torn from us through slavery, segregation, and racism. Some of us would say that we have made such great strides in America that there is no need to bring awareness to our history any longer. They think we have arrived and we are just Americans now. They argue that our history should be a part of the American history; and it should be mainstreamed. The truth of the matter is it is not. We have not arrived. We have to continue to tell our story so that our children will know we are a great, rich, and royal people. We need to go back for certain parts of our heritage that has been taken from us. We need to know the positive aspects of African American history and not just the negative. Healthy families usually produce healthy people.

A healthy family provides stability. It is in the family unit where people are supposed to be loved unconditionally and given the necessary skills to become successful in life. It is in our family life that we gain our values and morals. The African family system was characterized as strong and unshakable. Then we were torn apart, stripped, and shipped to America. They made every attempt to strip us of our identity. Now we don't want to bear the names or wear the clothes of our African heritage because we don't want to remember where we came from. During slavery times, children were sold from their families but yet we survived. During the Jim Crow era, America became two Americans; black and white. We've been through racism, marching, Civil Rights, wars, the Depression, being hosed, and being jailed. Yet we survived. It was in the black church where we prayed ourselves out of pain and sorrow. We've been through difficult times; yet we survived. We've been through migration, urbanization, and segregation that was meant to humiliate us; yet we survived.

It seems that now we are at a time where our pillar of strength is cracking. Our cornerstone, our families are failing. Our children are failing in schools. How can they thrive when their family life is failing? Middle class status has caused parents to work all day and night to provide things but not enough time. Children are out of control and parents are fighting one another. It seems that people are just trying to survive. There are not enough men leading households. Not enough men claiming their children and/or providing child support. Too many people are trying to handle unreal expectations and struggling. Why are married couples arguing about who makes the most money? It doesn't matter if it is all going into the same pot. Young people are fighting one another. Maybe you don't know what's going on in these schools. We don't take our families seriously. However, the absence of strong families could bring us to extinction. You need that family next door to add

stability to your community. We might end up like Esther who refused to get involved in the plight of the Jews. We cannot continue to remain silent or our households will fail. Nehemiah heard the Word and became personally involved because he saw himself as the keeper of his brother and sister.

What do we do to reclaim our strong families?

- **The first thing we need to do is pray. 2 Chronicles 7:14** Too many of us neglect the power of prayer and try to do it on our own. Then you become frustrated with how it is turning out. Prayer changes things. It puts food on the table, puts clothes on your back, mends your broken heart, reconciles your marriage, puts gas in your car, brings peace in your home, brings peace on your job, and brings peace to your community. **Mark 11:24** You have to learn how to pray in faith. Put God to the test. Tell Him all about it, get up, and believe it is already done in Jesus' name. When you pray, God will answer. He will do what He says He will do. As families, you have to have dedicated prayer time. Spend some time with yourself, each other, and God.

You have to learn how to pray with authority. Learn how to plead the blood of Jesus over your situation. Your grandmother did more with less and you are just doing less. Pray and keep on praying. **Ephesians 6:18** Too many of you are sleeping on the job. How did drug houses open in your community? Why are our children carrying guns and knives to school? Why are our daughters looking like the girls on the music videos? Why are our sons walking the streets with their pants hanging down? They are taking our children to jail because we won't parent them. We have to pray.

- **The second thing we have to do is purge our communities.** First Nehemiah prayed but then he confessed the sins of the people. We want to blame the government and slavery. We should blame ourselves. Actions like adultery, incest, fighting, and shacking up, are destroying our families and our communities. Brotha's need to take care of their children. We have to pray, purge, and partner.
- **The third thing we have to do is partner.** That means get together. Get on the same page. We shouldn't expect the men to do it all. Women were made to help the men. You don't have to be married to work together. Respect, love, and honor one another. Nehemiah prayed, believed, and acted but he didn't do it all by himself. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wasn't meant to do it alone. President Obama can't do it all alone. We all have a part. It is like potluck; everybody brings something to the meal. How are we going to have hungry people sitting in our church, on our jobs, and in our communities? How are we going to have children flunking out of school? Do you care? We have to pray, believe, and act. **Acts 2:44** There is someone sitting around you now that has a need. The African family is based on the help and support of the extended family. Ask someone, "What can I do for you today?" We need to start a revolution of loving and caring.

Peace

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