

Fighting for your family's faith

The Jewish people faced many obstacles as they tried to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, which had fallen into a terrible state of disrepair. Before Governor Nehemiah stepped in to lead them, the workers were disorganized. Enemies from the surrounding area ridiculed the rebuilding effort, belittled the quality of the wall, created political diversions, and threatened to harm or kill anyone who helped in the rebuilding.

Many of the workers grew discouraged and fearful. Some said, "The strength of the laborers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall" (Nehemiah 4:10).

Nehemiah, however, responded to the crisis with faith and courage, and with a battle plan for defending the city. He "stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, *posting them by families*, with their swords, spears and bows" (v. 13, emphasis mine).

Why post the guards by families? For at least two reasons: (1) Since families are a community's most basic organizational unit—a natural small group—they could prepare for battle quickly and efficiently, and (2) Since family loyalties stir the deepest passions of the human heart, parents and children would naturally take the battle seriously and fight hard to protect their loved ones.

Nehemiah recounts what happened next: "After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, 'Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and *fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes*'" (v. 14, emphasis mine).

Fight for your homes! That's a rally cry we still need to hear today, because our families have a fight on our hands, too—not to rebuild a wall, but to protect our loved ones from spiritual danger and pass along our heritage of faith.

Our families face intense spiritual

warfare. It's naïve to think otherwise. The twenty-first century spiritual environment isn't family-friendly. Our homes are Satan's targets, and for the last 40 years he's hit the mark in one family after another with deadly arrows like adultery, drug abuse, materialism, dishonesty, selfishness, and sexual abuse. The devil loves to wreck marriages, tear children and parents apart, and destroy the respect and trust that bind families together.

How can we win this battle for our homes? It's not a struggle "against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12). Therefore, "the weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds" (2 Corinthians 10:4).

A mom joins the battle when she kneels by the bedside of her young children at night, praying for their salvation.

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A dad joins the fight when he chooses not to let the demands of his career prevent him from being available when his children need him. Grandparents enter the fight when they model God's grace and love for their grandkids. Churches join the battle by choosing leaders who manage their own households well (1 Timothy 3:4, 5), and by offering family-friendly classes and programs.

The most powerful parenting technique in the world, though, is fervent prayer. Will you join the battle? After all, we're not just fighting for ourselves. Like those in Nehemiah's day, we're fighting for our brothers and sisters, our sons and daughters, our husbands and wives. That's a cause worth fighting for. ■



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