

LifeGroup

resource guide

for the week of February 19

There are many recipes for the destruction of a nation. Yet each shares a single ingredient— the repudiation of the uniqueness, the authority, the supremacy, and the clarity of God’s revelation through the Scriptures. The results are the same whether this repudiation is obscured by passive indifference or blatantly promoted. The outright rejection of His Word has produced a cornucopia of wickedness that is destroying this nation from the inside out.

Now I readily admit that “wickedness” is a strong word. It assaults the sensibilities of modern tolerant minds. But it is a word that we would be well advised to rediscover. The Bible speaks of wickedness when individual sin becomes embedded in the national or cultural psyche and influences the practices of a people or nation. Thus a person in ancient Israel may, for example, sin through the worship of other gods but the nation becomes wicked only when it tolerates and promulgates the same practice on a national level. Again, there is an individual sin of lust and adultery but it becomes a matter of wickedness when that same practice is encouraged or tolerated nationwide.

The peril of wickedness is real because its nature is to maim, plunder, and destroy. It does not esteem the rich more highly than the poor. It does not favor one gender or ethnic group above another. It does not defer to the innocence of childhood or the wisdom of the mature. It does not distinguish between urban, residential, or rural. Wickedness destroys.

Wickedness is not a “contagion” that you can quarantine. Nor does it simply expire after it has run its course. There are only two ways to defeat it— destroy it and the people it has infected or overcome it through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the living hope that the Church— the people of God— is called to boldly present in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation among whom we appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life (Philippians 2.15f.).

Many are the recipes humanity has concocted for the destruction of a nation. God offers us one for its healing:

If my people, who are called by my Name, will humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. (2Chronicles 7.14)

This passage reminds us of a simple truth we would prefer to forget: God’s plan for any nation begins with the people who bear His name. Therefore…

We must humble ourselves. We must confess that we have not been singular in our devotion to God. While we are rich in silver and gold we lack the power of God that is released through humility. We hide our hesitancy to share the gospel of Jesus Christ behind such labels as “tactful,” “considerate,” and “tolerant.” We walk with Christ as peers rather than follow Him in reverent submission as His disciples. We are dismayed each time our cultural institutions eschew public prayer yet the average church in America no longer has prayer meetings. We are outraged each time the courts deny the posting of Scripture in public places and yet the average Christian posts no Scripture in the marketplace. These are not the issues of the Christian Right. These are the fundamental issues of Christian righteousness. We must relearn the heart-cry of biblical humility: “Yet not my will but Yours O God.”

We must pray and seek God’s face. Consistent and focused prayer that will persist despite time and circumstances. This is the kind of prayer that creates strategic witness and ministry, changes lives, subverts governments, and influences nations. The relationship between the duration of prayer and the answers to prayer is a mystery that cannot be systematized. Yet it is the witness of Scripture and reiterated by experience that the prayer that releases salvation and deliverance will certainly exceed the attention spans of any generation that lives for personal convenience and instant gratification.

We must turn from our wicked ways. We, the Church, are hamstrung by the very sins that jeopardize this nation: idolatry, an indifference to worship, a withholding of our tithes and offerings, greed, racism, a neglect of the poor, abortion, divorce, addiction, pornography, a partisan spirit, and enslavement to debt. It is hard to exemplify the pursuit of God when we are entangled by the very same wickedness that has overcome the world.

It is time for us to invite the Spirit of God to convict us of this simple truth: how different our lives and world will be once the household of God turns afresh towards our beautiful Savior with contrition and in humility. Enough is enough! Let us draw near for cleansing and renewal.

Enjoy your LifeGroup!



NOTE: In light of President’s day weekend I am urging LifeGroups to spend their gathering praying for our nation and her leadership in the spirit of 1 Timothy 2.1-8:

*First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. 3 This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time. 7 For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. 8 Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.*

Notice that the reason why we pray for **“kings and all who are in authority is that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.”** Why? So that we can focus on Jesus who **“desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth”**. So we **“pray without wrath and dissension.”** We discard our political judgments and differences because we do not know what God, in His sovereignty, is up to with the nations of the world but we, of all people, should know what God is up to in the person, power, promise, and presence of Jesus Christ! We receive, worship, and serve the One who is Lord OF all and Lord FOR all!