

He and His Daughters

By Ken Gurley

He had it made—a posh job in the palace. He wanted for nothing! He was the cat’s meow, the envy of all the rest.

Yet when news came that Jerusalem’s walls were torn down and the city lay in ruins, Nehemiah’s heart was broken. “How can I be happy,” he asked of the king, “when my city lies in ruins?” (Nehemiah 2:3).

With authorization from the king, Nehemiah took a trip to Jerusalem. He toured the city by night and noticed the missing gates and the breached walls. Anyone could come in and go out.

Nehemiah began the rebuilding process. Workers were not assigned in a random, haphazard manner. With a divine stroke of inspiration, this godly leader outlined the method to be employed in rebuilding the wall. Each father was to build a portion of the wall next to his own house.

Throughout the third chapter of Nehemiah we read that men were assigned to build the wall opposite their own houses.

- Jedaiah repaired the wall opposite his house (v. 10).
- Benjamin and Hasshub repaired the wall opposite their house (v. 23).
- Priests made repairs in front of their houses (v. 28).
- Zadok made repairs in front of his house (v. 29).
- Meshullam made repairs in front of his house (v. 30).

It was Nehemiah’s goal to have a strong wall. His strategy was to place men who had a vested interest to work in a part of the wall that meant something to them.

Shallum was one of the men working on the wall. He was ruler of half the city of Jerusalem. He and his daughters worked rebuilding the wall, presumably opposite their ownhouse.

A Father’s Three Roles

Jerusalem, the “mother of us all” has been compared to the church of the living God (Galatians 4:26). The church is called a “heavenly Jerusalem” (Hebrews 12:22-23). When it comes time to build a strong church, however, it takes strong men who want to build strong families.

Nehemiah chose fathers to step forward and build those walls. Shallum indicates the three roles of a father:

First, the father is a builder. A strong church is made up of strong families. Strong families are normally led by strong fathers.

Nehemiah was ashamed and heartsick over a weak Jerusalem. Where the walls once stood tall and strong, it was now humbled and weak. Where once massive gates graced the walls, they were now burned and destroyed. Any marauding skunk, any plundering thief, could come and go from the city. Nehemiah's answer was to get men involved.

Each Christian home should have walls of Christian discipline, teachings, and attitudes. The father is not only a provider, the father is also a builder of such spiritual walls.

In the wilderness journey, the tabernacle with its glory cloud formed the center of the encampment. All of the tribes, clans, and families were camped in order about the tabernacle. God's presence was the focal point of their lives.

To have a family living in divine order, God must be the hub. All else must spoke and build from that priority.

When traveling in the wilderness, the church went first. The priests bearing the Ark of the Covenant went up first and all the tribes followed. It is the spiritual responsibility of each father to make absolutely certain that church is a priority in his family's lives. He is a builder of these things.

Next, the father is a watchman. Later in the rebuilding process of the city, Nehemiah carried the responsibility of fatherhood a step farther. After the walls had been built, Nehemiah set up watchmen. Again, watchmen were placed opposite their own houses.

Each man watched over the wall his hands had built. Each man watched over the wall protecting his family (Nehemiah 7:3).

Not only are walls to be built by godly fathers, they are to be watched and maintained. Regardless of the home's occupants, regardless of their age and status in life, the home is to be protected by the father. He is the builder and he is the watchman.

Some enjoy watching other peoples' homes. They like to point out what is wrong in their neighbor's house. They want to criticize a fellow believer's house. But Nehemiah commanded men to watch the wall over their own house.

Children can learn much in Sunday school. But, father, it is your responsibility to teach them. What they learn from you is often more powerful and lasting than anything they learn in church.

*If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn.
If a child lives with hostility, he learns to fight.
If a child lives with ridicule, he learns to be shy.
If a child lives with shame, he learns to feel guilty.
If a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient.
If a child lives with encouragement, he learns confidence.
If a child lives with praise, he learns to appreciate.
If a child lives with fairness, he learns justice.*

*If a child lives with security, he learns to have faith.
If a child lives with approval, he learns to like himself.
If a child lives with acceptance and friendship, He learns to find love in the world.*

—Author unknown

You are defending the home by providing a positive example. Let your children see you care. Let them see your concern.

Finally, the father is a priest. Earlier in the process of rebuilding Jerusalem, Ezra the priest taught the Law before the men of Israel (Ezra 9). It was anticipated that what was taught the men would impact the families.

The father is to be the spiritual head of the home. He is, in a sense, a priest. On that original Passover, it was the father's job to make certain the lamb was within the home and the blood was applied to the doorposts.

A pastor friend of mine asks this question of youth across the nation, "Who is dominant in your home? Your mother or your father?" He says 95 percent of the time the answer is the mom.

How does that happen? A woman sees her husband is not fulfilling his role as spiritual leader of the home. She steps in the gap because a father refuses to occupy the role.

God seeks a man to step into the gap (Ezekiel 22:30). He looks for a father who is willing to intercede for his family.

Shallum was busy, but not too busy for his daughters. Shallum had an important job, but it didn't detract him from his mission as a father.

He walked the short distance to his assigned duty. He lifted one stone after another. He had not worked long before he heard the tinkling laughter and footfalls of his daughters.

"Dad, what are you doing?" They may have asked.

"I'm building this wall to protect our house," Shallum replied.

"But don't you have something more important to do, Dad?" The girls asked.

Shallum stopped and smiled at the girls, "Nothing is more important to me than you girls being safe."

The girls giggled and ran to their father. Sweaty and grimy though he was, they embraced him and then they surprised him.

"Can we help you, Dad? Please?"

“Sure, girls. I could use your help.

And so we find in the Bible “Shallum and his daughters” helped to build the wall.

We often speak of the special relationship of a father and a son. But there is a special relationship between a father and his daughter.

I recently listened to Charles Stanley, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, on a Focus on the Family program. One thing kept surfacing in the conversation: the importance of a father in his daughter’s life.

A father’s love protects his daughter from so much hurt. Some teen girls seek affection from others because they were denied the father’s assuring role in their lives.

A daughter should respect her father, not resent him. A daughter should love her father, not hate him. A daughter should be proud of her father, not pity him.

Men, fulfill the roles God placed in your lives. Be a builder, a watchman, and a priest.