



Clarion Review

Religion

Restoring America One Family at a Time

Karen Smith

Lee Smith

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Four Stars (out of Five)

A self-help guide for Christian families, *Restoring America One Family at a Time* provides four basic building blocks upon which to create a stable, God-honoring family.

A husband and wife writing team raising three children, Lee and Karen Smith offer a book that most Christian couples will feel comfortable with from the very first page. Though the husband is the primary writer, both of the Smiths are engaging and competent. Experience with numerous church-related ministries equips the authors to support their parenting and relationship theories with appropriate passages from scripture. And neither of them are shy about using examples of choices—both good and bad—they made in their own lives, in order to illustrate the joys and challenges of maintaining a God-centered family.

Pushing back against a materialistic culture they claim deliberately undermines efforts to stay focused on the “eternal consequences of any situation,” the authors could have adopted both the tone and terminology associated with doing battle. Despite a title that hints at a political agenda to restore America, the Smiths focus almost entirely on individual families and leave national politics out of the picture.

Well-intentioned and gentle as their writing is, however, the Smiths do not offer a brand of guidance that addresses the needs of a family undergoing a significant crisis. The sweeping nature of their advice—to build a four-walled family fortress by relating to your spouse, managing your finances, managing your daily activities, and being involved with your children—is better suited to a couple or a family that has yet to experience the kind of familial hardships that can strain the foundation of even the strongest relationships..

Unfortunately, the Smiths’ book remains based on broad generalities. Toward the end of the book, the paucity of their specific, concrete advice becomes glaringly obvious when readers

facing especially difficult situations are repeatedly referred to the Smiths' website. Christian parents who pick up the Smiths' book because they are confronted with a difficult child should not have to wait until page 124 to be told that if they "have questions or would like examples of God-honoring discipline" they are encouraged to go online.

Perhaps a useful primer for new couples and young families before they encounter difficult times, *Restoring America One Family at a Time* is not effective for those currently in crisis.

Diane Taylor