



# The Renaissance of Family

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## About The Center for Social Leadership

The Center for Social Leadership (CSL) is a think tank and action organization dedicated to building [social leaders](#) for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Humanity is experiencing dramatic changes. Traditional leadership is broken. Conventional human organization based on hierarchies and formal authority is outdated. Human consciousness is evolving. Technology has transformed the way we interact and enhanced our ability to have impact—for good or ill. The Center for Social Leadership was formed to steer these changes to improve the health of society, preserve freedom, and ensure peace and prosperity for humanity. A new vision of leadership is needed. Not the old, hierarchical, positional, authoritative, privileged-elite leadership, but a new democratic, action-determined, service-oriented leadership. Through this social leadership mankind can achieve unprecedented happiness and fulfillment.

Learn more and engage with CSL by [reading our e-book](#) and joining our mailing list at [www.TheSocialLeader.com](http://www.TheSocialLeader.com).

**“It’s not about someone doing everything. It’s about everyone doing something.”**



**W**hatever happens in Washington, Wall Street, Main Street, Hollywood or Silicon Valley in the next ten years, it will all be irrelevant if our families don't come together at a much higher level.

Without a renaissance of [family](#), no new candidate can rise to save us. No new legislation, policy or program will heal our land.

On the other hand, the buttressing and revitalization of our society at the most basic level of family, though it be quiet and virtually ignored, is the most powerful catalyst to the revitalization of our freedom and prosperity.

## **Rising Pressures on the Family**

In crisis periods of history like [the one we are now experiencing](#), virtually everything changes --in major and surprising ways.

Since few people realize that historical cycles are driving things, most are frustrated and feel vulnerable and even victimized by widespread changes.

Many turn to government to solve our most pressing problems, hoping it can work miracles. Others turn to different institutions. Still others rely on their own individual efforts.

Few, however, realize the power of families in such times. Indeed, increased financial challenges and frightening world events often amplify the pressure on marriage and family relationships.

Divorce rates increase, family dysfunction grows, and people look outside the family for more and more help--at the very time family members need each other and can help each other the most.

## **Buckle Up; The Crisis is Just Getting Started**

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"But the crisis is over," some say.

Gross Domestic Product is a preferred indicator by economists to determine growth or recession. GDP is calculated by combining several factors including private profits, capital values and government spending.

GDP has been in recession for the past year, but it showed small growth in the third quarter of 2009, causing some to think that we are in a recovery.

The fact is that this "recovery" was actually one more quarter of decreased profits and capital values--no change in the trend of economic slowing there--masked by the other factor: [government spending](#) in the form of [Cash for Clunkers](#) and other bailouts.

And since [government gets its money either by taxing the private sector or printing money](#), it can't keep spending like this and maintaining a "recovery" for long without drastically raising taxes or causing inflation.

In short, reports that a recovery is here to stay are, let us say, premature. A lasting recovery will only happen if profits and values also increase. Also, one of the better indicators of where we are is the unemployment rate, which continues to worsen.

## **As the Family Goes, So Goes the Nation**

This means that pressure on families is almost certain to increase for the months and probably years ahead.

[Crisis Periods](#) in history are preceded by Good-Times Periods, then followed by Rebuilding Periods.

If the cycles of history hold true and we face major military conflict and even the draft in the decade ahead, or even if unemployment continues to worsen, families will face even more challenges.

I am an optimist, and I'm convinced that great things are ahead for America and the world.

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But let's be clear about one thing: Our nation and our world will rise no higher than our families. If the family continues to decline, so will peace, prosperity, freedom and happiness.

The experts have studies and graphs outlining the details, but history is absolutely clear on this point: *The future of the family is the future of our world.* Higher numbers of single-adult, single-parent and other non-traditional families are included in this great opportunity.

## **A Disturbing Divergence From the Past**

In past Crisis Periods, layoffs and failed businesses have resulted in the family pulling together--planting gardens, starting businesses, chopping wood to save on fuel, and otherwise facing upheavals and trials and working to overcome them together.

In our current world, with its urbanized and technologically advanced lifestyle, we aren't following this pattern of family retrenchment. We aren't relying less on paychecks and more on the [family farm](#), or even leaving the family farm to find opportunity in places like the New World (1780s), the West (1860s), or California (1930s).

In our times, no geographical Promised Land has arisen to deliver us.

At the same time, the modern world keeps us busy and separated from each other--kids at school, youth with groups of friends, mom and dad holding down multiple jobs or seeking employment, etc.

Even where both adults in some homes are unemployed, they don't necessarily spend more time together, but rather cope with their stresses and seek solutions independently.

Diminished finances for vacations, no time off at a new job, productivity-related compensation and workplace competitiveness all bring pressure to emphasize less family time and more work time.

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And the [technologies that used to be tools to help connect us have turned on their masters](#). No longer luxuries, they have gone from being pervasive to invasive to divisive; each family member has his own unique and virtual social life, and family life suffers as a result.

The average American couple in 2009 spends only 16 minutes a day talking with each other, according to a report in *Men's Health*. Half of that time is spent discussing things like household chores and finances, leaving very little time to build relationships.

The same article reported that "lack of quality time" is the number one cause of tension in couples' relationships in 2009--more than finances, work issues or other challenges.

Unlike past Crisis Periods, we are spending less time together just talking and having fun as couples and families than we did even in the past two decades. Rather than refocusing on our marriage and family relationships during Crisis, we are pulling even further apart.

## **The Potential Tragedy of Lost Opportunities**

The simplistic reason that Good-Time Periods turn into Crisis Periods is that families turn away from each other to serve the agendas of corporations, marketing firms, schools and others.

Crisis Periods are all about recapturing the most important things--especially happy and successful families. If families don't come together, strengthen communities, build new entrepreneurial enterprises and begin to rebuild society, we won't see the benefits of a great Rebuilding Period ahead.

This is a potential tragedy of Dark Ages proportions. Just consider Rome in the first century, France in the late Seventeenth Century, the South after the Civil War, or modern Cambodia, Bosnia or Rwanda.

A society has no destiny that is not tied to the strength of its families. Without a family renaissance, *no* society rebounds from crisis.

## The Good News

The good news in all this is that the bad news is good news: If the biggest challenge in our families is lack of quality time and taking the time to really talk, then the solutions are simple.

What if you spent a lot more time with your spouse talking about less urgent, more important, more fun things and enjoying each other? What if you did the same with each of your children, siblings and/or parents?

Not everyone has all these options, but clearly not enough of those who do have families are giving them enough attention and effort.

What if families spent two or three evenings a week and half a day each weekend doing fun things, entrepreneurial ventures and/or service projects together?

***Together*** is the key word here. This is truly the way that Crisis Periods in history are solved at the grassroots level.

Usually economic or political realities force family unity and mutual cooperation in surviving and making a living. In our day it is still as vital to ending the attitudes, behaviors and habits that brought on Crisis; these same elements will keep the Cultural Renaissance progressing until things change.

Of course, this only works where families both bond within and connect without--not isolating themselves but strengthening their relationships with each other and the rest of the community.

And it works most effectively where families reject the temptation to draw factional, us/them lines, and instead reach out and build new relationships.

## The Little Things That Make a Huge Difference

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Here is the pattern: improve marriages, strengthen family relationships, make new friends, and build stronger connections with friends and community.

This naturally overcomes Crisis, and without it Crisis Periods persist and worsen.

Ironically, it is the little things that will most likely win (or lose) this battle. In the next decade, improving your marriage one hour a day (at least) may be the most important thing you can do for society. Same with many hours a week spent actively talking with and doing activities together with children and grandchildren.

*Seldom has so much depended on such little things!*

Will we follow the course of societies past that have lost their way and crumbled under the devastating forces of economic upheaval, war and other crises? Or we pull together as families and communities to create a brighter future?

If we get it right, we'll also see a renaissance of America and, hopefully, watch it spread to the world. No matter what experts may say or what historians may someday write about our times, it will certainly be defined by either the Demise or the Renaissance of the Family.

## **Recommended Reading:**

- [\*Our Home\*](#) (2 Volumes) by C. E. Sargent
- [\*Leadership Education\*](#) by Oliver & Rachel DeMille
- [\*The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families\*](#) by Stephen R. Covey
- [\*Laddie\*](#) by Gene Stratton Porter
- [\*Little Britches\*](#) by Ralph Moody
- [\*The Grapes of Wrath\*](#) by John Steinbeck