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Beyond Blame



(This is part two of a series on forgiveness. I'm not sure how many parts there will be! Pt. 1 is The Hardest Thing You'll Ever Do).

When there is sin, there will always be the need for forgiveness. Sin doesn't exist in a bubble, and often causes collateral damage.

Adam and Eve sinned and mankind has been dealing with the effects of their sin (and our own personal sin) ever since.

Blaming is easy and can be an attempt to deal with our shame. Adam, who should have stepped in and covered his wife, blamed Eve instead of facing his shame. Eve blamed the serpent. And we still naturally default to using blame as a tactic to defer our personal guilt. We are not personally responsible in every situation, of course, but there is often a domino effect after sin occurs. You hurt me; I hurt my kid; my kid hurts the dog, etc.

Blame distracts us from the real issues and hinders our healing. When we default to blaming others, we can't really know the truth about ourselves. When Adam and Eve sinned, they hid from God, but God responded to their sin by calling them out of hiding and confronting them with the truth. He declared that sin has a penalty, an intrinsic curse, and then He spoke of how He would trump the entire situation with a plan of redemption. God offered hope. Even Adam who had been caught up blaming his wife, offered hope when he called his wife "Eve", the mother of all living. Yes, there would be life after terrible sin, failure, pain, and separation. God knew his children needed hope for without it, they would despair of their very life.

Even when we are completely innocent in a situation, we have a propensity in our sin nature to react wrongly. We can become bitter, angry, resentful, and unforgiving, and then we are no longer innocent. We all stand before God, responsible for our own words, actions, and attitudes, even when the original sin was not our fault in any way.

Blame separates us from feeling our loss. It hinders us from appropriate mourning over sin, whether ours or another's. When we choose blame, we get "caught in the swirl", which causes us to lose our objectivity.

I suppose we all could name at least one person whom we identify as someone who never takes responsibility for anything. It is always someone else's fault (and conversely, some people take the blame for things that are not their fault in any way – that is wrong, too, because it attempts to defer the blame and can, at times, hinder the person who is at blame from "stepping up to the plate"). This kind of blaming hinders personal growth.

So if blaming is not the answer, what is?

1. Take responsibility for your part. Ask others to forgive you if that is appropriate. Ask God for forgiveness for any sin on your part. (If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9) (If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all man. Romans 12:18)
2. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)

3. Depend upon the grace of God to bring healing and restoration, when possible and remember that it can be a process (Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more. Romans 5:20).
4. Resist the urge to demonize your enemies. (read *The Hardest Thing You'll Ever Have to Do*)
5. Accept God's hope and offer it to others.
6. When appropriate, cover the sins of others. (again, this is not always appropriate but most of us tend to uncover people by gossiping and blaming instead of erring on the side of covering too much. Love covers a multitude of sin. 1 Peter 4:8)
7. Understand that there is a real need to grieve your losses. Sometimes you need to do that with a friend or pastor. That is different than trying to prove that someone else was wrong.

We who are Christians begin our relationship with God through receiving His forgiveness, and we continue our relationship with Him through receiving His forgiveness and offering forgiveness to others. It's not easy, but it is God's pattern. Move beyond blame and seek to understand the deep, inner work God wants to do in your own heart.

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