

Identity Wars Study 6 – Hell on Earth

Have you ever been in a situation where a very dear friend all of a sudden starts to act strangely towards you?

You believe reason will prevail. Resolution will be quick, surely? Your years of friendship will stand as a guard against the gossip, innuendo, and misunderstanding that is being spread about you. Right??

You are Accused of a cover-up! Hiding the truth!

At this point what kind of emotions may well up inside of you?

- Confusion, hurt, pain, anger, frustration or even devastation that your dear friend has heard something which has changed their opinion of you.
- Why didn't he or she first come and talk to about what they heard? Why didn't he stand up and defend you?
- If you defend yourself, you are condemned, and if you are silent, it proves you must be hiding something. You must have said or done something wrong. Right?

If something like this has happened to you, then the memories are probably painful.

This situation has repeated itself constantly since the dawn of time. Why?

- Why is it so difficult for people to accept positive truth in the face of negative assumptions and innuendo? It leaves us scarred mentally, spiritually and socially. Imagine being separated from someone you truly love and respect because somebody else has sewn seeds of distrust about you. How can the words of a stranger separate the best of friends?

Adam and Eve separated from God. Imagine God observing the scene. There He watches His daughter engaged in dialogue with the 'stranger' (The Serpent).

- What were the evidences of her Father's love towards her up until that point?
- Did she have any reason to doubt His love, care and provision for her and her husband?
- Why didn't God step in, speak up, and put an end to the discussion that was heading in the wrong direction? Why didn't He send an angel to set things straight before it all went wrong?

The fundamental answer is love. What gifts does love bestow upon us?

1. Freedom of choice.

2. Freedom to choose without the fear of reprisal (an act of retaliation).

3. Even if it means someone will get hurt, the freedom to choose is never removed by love. Even if it is Love itself that gets hurt.

What is the problem with intervening every time we see somebody about to make a decision we don't agree with?

- The answer is: Freedom becomes the first victim, Love is compromised, and trust is strangled.
- You begin to feel and act like you have chains around your hands and feet, your mouth is gagged, and your brain has been put into slavery.
- So we can see that taking away the freedom to choose, no matter the consequences, is fraught with danger.

So when is the time to talk? Proverbs 22:6 – "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" – tells us that we should discuss before the crunch (Crisis) time comes.

- If there is a potential problem, talk about it, discuss it and warn the one you love before the event; and when the situation arises where the one you poured your love into is tempted to do

wrong, you must give them room to move, to think for themselves, and to make their own choices no matter the consequences.

- This will establish the fact that your love is for real. You cared enough to share your concerns and warnings in advance and you also care enough to give the person space to live. To stop a person from thinking and choosing for themselves is to remove the true sense and value of life.

If, after all our instruction and directions and warnings, our children still choose against us, do we forbid them to save ourselves the pain of rejection? Or do we remain silent and allow them the choice to reject us? It's a tough choice for anyone!

God watches his daughter fall to the tempter and then become the tool in the deceiver's hand to destroy His beloved son Adam.

- Do you think there was any pain involved for God in watching these events take place; knowing what the outcome would be?
- How would you have felt? What would you have done if you were God? Intervene? Slap the devil down? Grab Eve by the arm and take her away from the situation? What is true freedom?

Divine love grieves deeply and waits in silence. What does this prove? What kind of love was in that silence? Jer 33:3; Isa 63:9;

In the light of the preceding verses, can you answer the age old question so many people ask, "Where was God when 'such and such' happened?"

How did Adam and Eve feel in themselves after they had eaten the forbidden fruit?
How do we feel when we do something we know we shouldn't have?
How did they feel towards God?

Once we are enticed into sin by Satan's promise of enhanced or exalted experience, what does he then do to us? The devil starts poking us with the finger of condemnation and guilt; and he doesn't stop!

Revelation 12:10 – Satan is the accuser of our brethren.

What methods does Satan use to keep us from turning to God?

- He portrays God as unfair, unjust, and judgmental. This put doubt and fear into our hearts and drives us away from God. Genesis 3.
- He also tells lies about us: that we can't be forgiven and we are worthless. Gen 4 Cain. ("My sin is greater than can be forgiven" is the alternate reading of Genesis 4:13)

Story of the father coming home from work – the child has been told lies about his dad by someone. Now he no longer trusts his dad. The child must be careful with his dad – he seems loving, but he isn't.

- Anything the father says is interpreted as a cover up or a lie to defend himself. What can he possibly do to turn things around? Will it be a quick process of reconciliation?

The story of Genesis 3. What were the methods of temptation? What were the outcomes at each point in the story? What were the emotions that were driving Adam's actions and words after he'd eaten the forbidden fruit?

Adam had cut himself off from the source of wisdom, peace and love. How could he reason clearly?

- Anything God says to him is taken as a personal attack. Insecurity has dulled his reasoning. Fear of death controls his decision making and his outburst of blame.

When we misunderstand God and ourselves we put ourselves almost beyond help. I say almost!

God has a plan to save us but it costs Him everything He has to get our attention and trust.

- The first thing God needs to do is to get us to see our true condition. Why?

Romans 8:7 – “The sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God’s laws, and it never will.”

Romans. 3:10, 11 – “No one is righteous – not even one. No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God.”

Jeremiah 17:9 – “The heart is deceitful above all things and incurable. Who can know it?”

Why is it important to understand these truths about ourselves: even as Christians?
What are the advantages and disadvantages of coming face to face with these truths?

Disadvantages:

1. It is very confronting to realise that we are in a hopeless position in and of ourselves.
2. It is humiliating to know we have no wisdom nor strength to battle our way out of our condition.
3. It is frustrating to think we have no ability to change our ways or thoughts.
4. It is sobering to realise we have no answers or solutions to our dilemma.

Advantages:

1. There is immense freedom in realising the answer to your problem must come from a greater power.
2. There is relief to know we don’t need to beat ourselves up every time we make a mistake.
3. It is also comforting to know that God knows what we are like and doesn’t blame us for it.

What other advantages can you think of?

What would be required to recover us from our hopeless state separated from God and establish us with hope and purpose back close to His side?

1. A means of giving the human race the wisdom to recognise their desperate situation, along with a way for them to be influenced in the right direction without violating their freedom of choice.
 2. A way of showing them that they had a wrong perception of God’s character and kingdom, and to somehow show them that He really loves them and what he is really like.
 3. A way to remove their guilt and insecurity and to restore their true identity and value as children of God.
 4. A way to reclaim their sense of purpose, their reason for their existence or their destiny.
- All of the above needed time. Adam and Eve had chosen a path that would spin out of control very quickly, so they needed a life support system to give them time to choose and decide.
 - While doing all this God must maintain a sense of justice. He can’t ignore their rebellion and say it’s ok. While God, in His mercy, does not allow the full consequences of their choice to fall upon them, Adam and Eve must comprehend the result of their choice in order for them to begin to appreciate the error of what they did.

Remember, God was not caught by surprise. The Father and His Son had already determined what they would do if they came to this point. The plan was already in place – a plan that was comprehensive enough to meet this desperate situation.

Next week we will study – Heaven’s Lifeline.