

“Mending Fences ~ Beware of Dog” [2.17.08]

Ever needed one of these Mouse trap some things you just don't mention in public ☺

In Nashville we lived in the church parsonage that literally stood for 150 yrs.

- How do I say this - the house had issues...
 - The most troublesome ~ we were not the only tenants!
- One Christmas season, Becky was pulling a wreath out from storage...
 - She noticed the bow was a bit tattered & for good reason ~ mice had nested there for some time.
 - When she pulled the wreath out; immediately a dozen or so mice exploded from the wreath!
 - I know because of the high shrieking sound my wife made

I wish mice had been the only problem ☺

- One summer evening Becky met me @ the door & said these words, “...how you handled this will determine how I handle this.”
 - There is a snake under the stove ☺
 - Immediately, being the experienced outdoorsman I walked to our junk drawer and pulled out two leather gloves that covered my forearms!
 - I then instructed Becky to get my garden hoe [my 2nd weapon of choice] we were ready for battle!

You might be interested to know that ~ we never found the snake; but be assured it was very present in our minds everyday until the mover's came!

Sometimes, traps are necessary!

Today, we are going to talk about a different kind of trap - - it's one of the enemies most deadly & deceptive traps!

It imprisons countless Christians - - severs long lasting relationships & destroys unity among good people ☹

It's the TRAP of OFFENSE!

The Greek word for “offend” comes from the original word ~ skandalon.

- The word originally referred to the part of the trap to which the bait was attached; for this reason the word signifies laying a trap in someone's way!
- In the New Testament, the word “offense” often describes an entrapment, a common tool of the enemy to bring people into captivity.
 - (R) II Timothy 2: 23 – 26 or p. 915 in pew Bible
- Pay close attention
 - Those of us who are in quarrels or opposition fall into a trap & are held prisoner to do the devil's will; even more alarming, they are unaware of their captivity!

- When we allow our disappointment - - our disagreements to go attended, to not be addressed; we fall dead center into the devil's trap!
- Before we know it, we are spewing out bitter venom in our offended state!
- Unaware of our captivity ~ believing we are right even though our actions go against every instruction in the Bible; a horrible trap!

Often, good people that offended don't even realize that they are trapped; they are oblivious to their condition because they are so focused on the wrong that was done to them ~ they live in denial ☹

All of us are susceptible ~ offense itself is not deadly; If we don't handle offense correctly ~ offended people produce...

Much fruit such as, anger - - outrage - - jealousy - - resentment - - strife- - bitterness- - envy & eventually hatred ☹

Consequences of picking up an offense are deep wounds - - division - - separation, Broken relationships - - betrayal - - & often alienation from God ☹

Next few weeks I'm asking you to prayerfully seek God on exposing any hidden areas of your HEART that still carries a painful offense!

[CHURCH]

The most effective way for the enemy to blind us is to cause us to focus our attention on ourselves!

Let's PRAY

Holy Spirit please expose any hidden areas of our heart that have hindered us from knowing God better and serving Him most effectively!

Here are some common blind spots that keep the offense hidden...

I. Beware of Blind-spots = Beware of Dog sign

A. 1st Blind-spot is PRIDE!

- Pride will keep you from dealing with truth!
 - [insert] ill. of Bill McCartney
- Pride will damage the best of relationships ☹
 - Ever notice who agitates you the most - - discount elections for a moment!
 - It's our loved ones – often fellow believers
 - (R) Psalm 55: 12 – 14 or 438 in pew Bible

[Maybe it's true]

Only those you care about can hurt you! Those we...

- Grow up with, confide in, & sometimes sleep next to; the closer the relationship ~ often the more severe the offense!
 - Greatest bitterness you will find are among people who were once close ☹
 - Attorneys will tell you the most vicious cases are in the divorce courts!

- SADLY the home which was meant to be a shelter of protection - - provision, and growth where we learned to give and receive love, is often the very root of our pain ☹ History shows that the bloodiest wars are civil in nature!

Hebrews 12: 15 cautions,

“Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many.”

B. Another Blind-spot is Withdrawing / Turning inward!

- Proverbs 18:19 explains, “An offended friend is harder to win back than a fortified city. Arguments separate friends like a gate locked with bars.”
 - In antiquity ~ strong cities had walls around them to assure protection from unwanted - - outside forces!
- Just like us, we construct walls when we are hurt to safeguard our hearts and prevent any future wounds; we become selective - - denying entry to all we fear will hurt us; without realizing it ~ we divide the world into Allies & Adversaries ☹
- The focus of offended Christians is inward & introspective!
 - Our energy is consumed with protecting ourselves from further injury and living life behind our self-imposed ~ the wall or PRISON of offense ☹

The New Testament describes these walls as STRONGHOLDS!

(R) II Corinthians 10: 3 – 5 or p. 887 in pew Bible

[DANGER] when you choose to live in the state of perpetual offense you never risk rescuing others who live daily w/out Jesus ☹

C. One final Blind-spot is Amassing Information!

- Apostle Paul prophetically describes this blind-spot in II Tim 3: 7!
“...always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth!”
- If Paul were alive today he would grieve to see what he foretold...
 - Multitudes of men & women attending conferences + multiple church services; listening to sermons on their i-pods & MP3 players
 - He would see us amassing knowledge of the Scriptures; diligently hunting for “new revelation” in order to live more productively!
- It doesn't matter how up to date you are in new revelations from the conferences & sermons you listen to; how many books you've read or how many hours you have spent in prayer and study ☹

If you are offended & living in unforgiveness & refuse to repent of this sin;
You have not come to the knowledge of the truth!

You are deceived ~ & you confuse others w/your hypocritical lifestyle!
No matter what the revelation ~ your fruit tells another story!

We don't have to live with Blind-spots; God has a different plan for us!

(R) Revelation 3: 18 or last book in N.T.

"Anoint your eyes with eye salve that you may see" - SEE WHAT = true condition

A medical school was located in Laodicea which offered a special salve to heal
common eye troubles of the Middle East.

What they needed was not this medicine but spiritual sight!
Spiritual eyes to identify Blind-spots!

In closing, when we blame others & defend our own position; We remain blind! We struggle to
remove the speck out of our brother's eye while there is a log in ours!

Next few weeks is not about anyone else but you; you will be tempted to think about others as
God's word is shared [fight this temptation]!

I CHALLENGE YOU, When the Spirit of God shows you a blind-spot [area of sin] don't resist the
Spirit's promptings; These promptings are intended to bring conviction not condemnation!

Unresolved offenses eventually destroy us ~ zap our joy!
Ask God to reveal any unattended offenses & to release you from this burden!

Don't let pride keep you from seeing & repenting in these next few weeks!