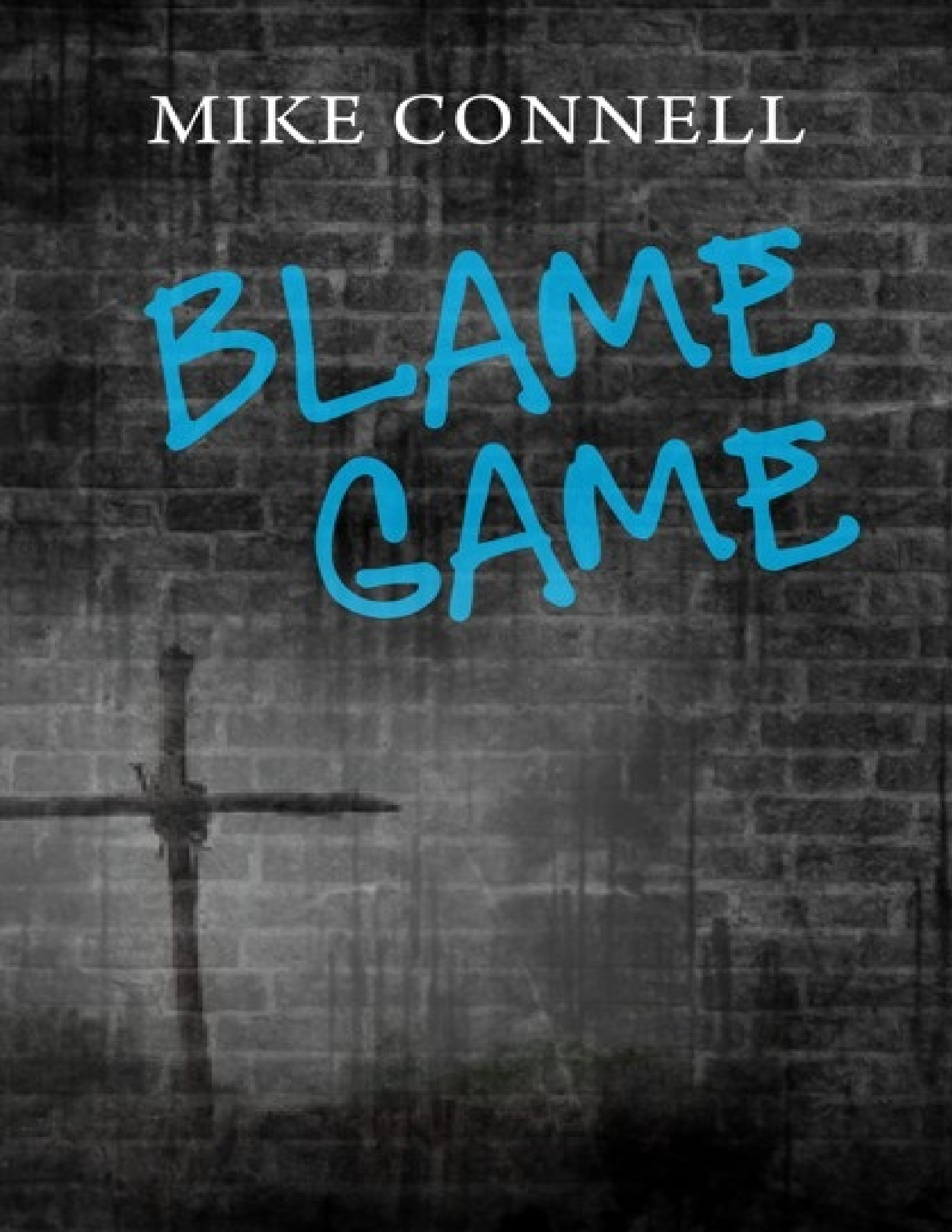

MIKE CONNELL
BLAME GAME

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Mike Connell

Audio Transcripts of Sunday Sermons

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Blame Game

If we don't relentlessly deal with the Blame Game, then we think we're trying to move in faith, but we're actually continuing old patterns of unbelief and irresponsibility. The Blame Game started in Genesis, when God talked to Adam & Eve about eating the fruit of the tree. When they started blaming, God stopped talking - they experienced the consequences of their decision.

Passing the Blame (1 of 3) "It's not my fault, you can't blame me for that". If we don't relentlessly deal with the Blame Game, then we think we're trying to move in faith, but we're actually continuing old patterns of unbelief and irresponsibility. The Blame Game started in Genesis, when God talked to Adam & Eve about eating the fruit of the tree. When they started blaming, God stopped talking - they experienced the consequences of their decision. Will you stop blaming and start to take responsibility? Find creative options. Take action. Jesus took responsibility for the sins of the world, offering hope and a different future.

You Always Have a Choice (2 of 3) God empowered man with a free will, and the ability to overcome challenges in life. Man learned to be helpless, he developed limiting beliefs about himself. Israel learned to be slaves (helpless) in Egypt. The challenges they faced in the wilderness were designed to shift their slave mentality to explore what God had for them. We have the ability to handle every challenge in life if we choose to believe & trust God. We disqualify ourselves from our destiny, purpose & blessing if we blame & make excuses. Learn how you can break free from learned helplessness. Choose to change.

Dealing with Failure (3 of 3) The origin of the Blame Game is failure. Blame places the responsibility for a failure/mistake on people or circumstances. We all fail, we need to admit that. Take responsibility and acknowledge failure so that God can lift you up, and you can change. Look at some of the glorious mistakes & failures recorded in the Bible, then discover powerful keys for handling our failures and moving on.

Audio

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- You Always Have a Choice (2 of 3).mp3

- Dealing with Failure (3 of 3).mp3

Notes

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Passing the Blame (1 of 3)

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"It's not my fault, you can't blame me for that". If we don't relentlessly deal with the Blame Game, then we think we're trying to move in faith, but we're actually continuing old patterns of unbelief and irresponsibility. The Blame Game started in Genesis, when God talked to Adam & Eve about eating the fruit of the tree. When they started blaming, God stopped talking - they experienced the consequences of their decision. Will you stop blaming and start to take responsibility? Find creative options. Take action. Jesus took responsibility for the sins of the world, offering hope and a different future.



[13:35] I want to just start on another short series. This year we're looking at what it means to be apostolic, but what I want to do at this point is I want to just address an issue, which is a big one in New Zealand, called the Blame Game, the Blame Game. I'm sure you have played it. It goes like this: it's not my fault. You can't blame me for that, it's not my fault. We have a culture you know, we live in a culture, which is a culture of blame. When you live in a culture of blame, you start to think and act and behave and do what everyone else does, so when there's a culture which one of the aspects of culture is people blame one another, we then turn to get in, buy in and do the same kind of thing. So when people blame someone else, they kind of feel a bit better; oh not my fault, it's you, it's what you did. The problem is that, when you blame someone else, you remain powerless to change your situation; and God is wanting us to become empowered as people and believers.

If you're going to be empowered as a believer, and begin to move in dimensions of faith, you have to be relentless in addressing any habits you have of passing the buck, or blaming someone else. To walk in faith will require that we take responsibility, so I want to push in on this area of the blame game, so we begin to understand what it looks like, sounds like, so that we can deal with it. There was an interesting thing in the United States recently. Two very overweight women sued McDonalds. [Laughter] They sued McDonalds, for not warning them of the dangers of their food causing them to put on weight, and creating

physically attractive and psychologically addictive food; so their condition of being overweight was McDonald's fault. Fortunately the judge saw through that, and threw the case out, but what on earth is going through people's minds, that they think you can blame someone else for their weight? It's about a way of thinking, a blaming way of thinking.

As we open this up over a couple of weeks, you're going to start to find it everywhere. It comes up in such subtle ways but the core of it is something like this; instead of taking ownership of the problem, and doing something about it; people blame someone else, or something else, see? The reason I'm not married, is there's not enough Christian men in the church. Oh, what did they just blame? Just blamed the church. Oh too bad, you'll stay single the rest of your life then, because you've assigned responsibility outside yourself. You've put the blame for your single condition outside yourself, somewhere else. Whoa, that was a bit close. I shouldn't have started that deep so quick should I aye? [Laughter] That's a bit nasty wasn't it aye? [Laughs] Oh well. Got really difficult times financially you know, the nation's going through a bad time. Blame! Is God my source or not? Where am I putting the blame? Where I put the blame, is where I put the responsibility; and when I put the responsibility out there, I'm left unable to do anything except be powerless, resentful and talk negatively about how bad it is.

So if we don't relentlessly deal with the blame game, we will find: on the one hand we think we're trying to move in faith; on the other hand we're actually continuing old patterns of unbelief and irresponsibility. It's everywhere. It is everywhere. So normally people blame - so we ask people: well what's your problem? They tell you where the problems are. Well how come they're problems? Oh well it was my father, it was my mother, she abandoned us. Yeah well heaps of mothers have done that, but it doesn't mean to say you end up with a mess. You've got to make a choice how you respond to that bad deal. You have to learn to play the cards you're dealt, not wish you got a different hand. God knows how we're going to come into this world, and knows what we're going to experience, and He's promised to help us, if we will stop blaming, and step up, and begin to think creatively what to do. If we're going to be faith people, we have to think creatively about the problems of life; and I want to get us out of blaming, and into some other kind of thing.

So people have got all kinds of reasons why they're like they are: well it was my teachers, you don't understand, that first year at school - oh well I was at high

school ... terrible! Listen, I am hearing blame. You're putting the problem on someone else. Maybe they did contribute to it, maybe they did some very bad things; but at the end, if you don't stop blaming, you remain powerless and helpless, and you remain a victim of what happened. We have to make decisions, what we'll do about the hand we've been dealt by life. Here's another one: people blame the government, or they blame the church; you don't understand, that last church I was in - well the pastor or the leader or the... I'm hearing blame, because you're ascribing the reason you are like you are, to someone else or something else. You have to recognise the reason you are the way you are, is because of the choices you've made; and if you made bad ones, you can make better ones - and even better ones, see? So we blame everyone; we blame our background. Well you don't understand my background, I never had the education - woops! Blame.

There's heaps of people succeed in life without education. Come on, you've got to think this one through, and you'd be amazed. Well I had some bad experiences, I was abused. A lot of people in life are abused, it's a terrible thing, incredibly wounding and hurtful - but that does not determine your future, how you respond does. It's not what happened to you, its how you chose to respond, is the key. My lack of opportunity, I didn't have opportunity! Listen, everyone's got opportunities; what did you do with the ones you go? So you'll find in our culture, and I want you to listen for it this week. As people talk, I want you to listen for the sound of someone who is losing, blaming someone else. They will blame a person, or they will blame circumstances. How come you were late here? Oh well you understand, the traffic. Yeah, you're blaming something else, and so it goes on. You'll find everywhere in life, people want to blame, so I want to get into this whole thing of the Blame Game.

Let's have a look first of all, see how God designed us. Genesis 1:26-28, God said: let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion. Verse 28: God blessed them, and said to them: be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, subdue it and have dominion - so we are designed for dominion. Here's one of the greatest gifts God gave you; He gave you a will, an ability to make choices. You choose what you do with your life. He gave you a free will to make choices, creative choices, so you have desires in your heart, and you will choose whether you are creative in fulfilling the desires, or not. With the capacity of free-will choice, we have consequences. God said: you can

eat all of that fruit and that'll be fine, but eat that one you've got problems; so God gave us the ability to make decisions, the ability and right to be free in choosing what we do. But consequences, we have no control over them, they're what happen after you've made your decision.

So God has given us two things; one is, He's given us a free will to make choices; two, He's given us a creative ability, He expects us to use to solve problems. Notice what He said to Adam and Eve: subdue, have dominion. That meant there were some things out there that were not right, that had to be overcome; and they had to face the problems that were outside them, and creatively think how to deal with them. That's what God expects of us, all the time. We can pray to God, and we do. We can ask God's grace and help, and we do, but there's a part He expects us to play. For example, in Genesis 2:19 God had created all the animals. That was His part, and He brought all the animals to Adam, and He said to Adam: here you go Adam, I've created you for dominion, so go give them all a name. Oh, I'll call that one an elephant - and so he went and - now that's not an easy task to think up a creative name for all the animals. Imagine if you had to go here, and give everyone here a name - but all the animals, that's a big challenge.

Now Adam could have responded one or two ways. He could have thought through, and been creative in solving the problem; or he could have said: well that's not fair, you haven't given me a list of names to choose from! How do expect - this is unreasonable, to expect me to do all of this! He could have done that. He didn't do that though, but we do that. Well that's not fair, how can you expect me to do all this? Well God's given you a free will, and an ability to be creative, He expects you to kind of generate a few ideas on the way you know; to think through what you can do, instead of blaming the culture, blaming the people, blaming the government, blaming white people, blaming black people, blaming this person, that person, age. I mean people blame, and blaming leaves you powerless. So God expects us then, to be creative in finding solutions, and He will help us be creative in finding solutions. He expects us to take action, to do some things, so faith always has got action to it. Now where did the blame game start? Well over here unfortunately it tells us how it started.

Adam and Eve were given a great opportunity, and God said: eat all of this; don't eat that one. You eat all of this, you live; you eat that one there, you die - really quite simple. Here is a way that you train children: you show them what they can

do, you show them what they can't do. If they do this, these are all the benefits; if they do that, that's the consequences. That's how you train them. Now here's the issue. When they break the laws, you've got to have consequences, because that's how people learn, it's God's way of doing it. In the pre-school, they have this thing: was that a good choice, or was that a bad choice? The little ones will say: I don't want you to ask me that, [laughter] because they're forced to decide whether their choices were good or bad, and if they were bad, then consequences will follow. Most people in the blame game want to make bad choices, but not have the consequences; so I'll make bad decisions about money, but you've got to help me out! No, no, no, you need the pain of the consequences, so you learn about managing money. When we bail everyone out all the time, what happens is, they never learn the lessons. Isn't that true?

How many of you have helped someone out, you help them, help them, help them; but they never change, because they're in a victim mode. The responsibility for their getting the release is put in someone else's hands, and you'll just keep helping them, and helping them, and helping them, until you get sick of helping them, because you saw no change. What you're better to do is actually initially give the help to lift the burden, but then begin to talk about being responsible. So if we have people in trouble financially, we're quite happy to help; however, it requires they submit to budget advice. Why? Because that's part of the consequences of goofing it up. You've got to then manage it better, and someone's got to help you manage it better. Does that make sense? Now this is really good stuff isn't it, because this really hits at the core of what's going on in our society.

Now notice what happened here. Adam and Eve both ate the fruit of the tree, and then this is what happened. The Lord God called to Adam and said: where are you? He said: I heard Your voice in the garden, I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself - so they both ran away. He said: who told you you were naked? Did you eat the fruit of the tree I commanded you not to eat from? Now here it is, classic, here's where the blame game started, Verse 12: And the man said: well, speak to the hand! [Laughter] Listen, whose idea was it about women anyway? And who was the one talking to the snake? Hey, it's not my problem. The woman - notice he said: the woman You gave me; so basically he's now not wanting to be responsible for his failure, and of course men have an acute vulnerability to do this. Is that right women? [Laughter] Oh they're not saying

that, because I'll get into trouble if I say that one, but it's true. So Adam blamed Eve, and then Eve said: well don't look at me, it's that blimmin' snake. If You hadn't made snakes, I mean whose idea was it to make - I don't like snakes. Why did You make snakes? You understand that here's what the problem is. They have actually made a bad choice, and now they're blaming someone else for their actions, transferring responsibility.

Imagine if they had assumed responsibility, and said: Lord, I really blew it. I got it wrong, I'm so sorry, will You forgive me? Now imagine if they'd said that? What a dilemma God would be in. He'd have to forgive them wouldn't He, give them a fresh start, because He's a forgiving God. But because they blamed, they were rendered powerless, and had to experience consequences. So notice what happens in here, they blame. So why do people blame? We want to divert the attention away from what we've done. So the heat was on Adam, he's feeling a bit embarrassed, and so what he does, he says let's get the attention away from me, onto her. So blame is about getting the attention away from me, onto someone else, because I don't want to take responsibility for my mistakes and failures, so I will blame someone else. That's what it's all about, it's diverting attention; and then what happens is, when you blame someone, it diverts attention, and you avoid your responsibility, and you become powerless, so you're going to end up with some consequences.

Now notice this, that both Adam and Eve, after God had spoken to them, when they started blaming, He stopped talking. When Adam blamed Eve and God for what he'd done, God stopped talking to him. Next time God spoke to him and said: here's the consequences, you broke the law, and this is what will happen. Didn't I tell you that? Did I tell you that, and you chose that, then when you chose that, you also unleashed a certain consequence into your life, and I'm not going to spare that for you. I will come to you in the consequence and help you, but I'm not going to spare you the consequence of the decision. That's how God operates. If you're going to help people, you have to think the same way, think the way God thinks, don't buy in to the blame game. So God held them accountable for their behaviour, so when people tend to blame someone else, so they can divert attention and not be responsible - have you ever done that? Have you ever done that? Wow, the silence says it all doesn't it? Of course we've all done it, we've all bought into it. We've found someone to blame, and this is an issue, it's a major one.

Let's have a look at another guy, and you've got to realise this: well, it's not my fault. That's kind of like in our mind, it's not my fault. Anyone said that, not my fault? Don't blame me, not my fault. Well it's not my fault. It's not my fault, it's my dad's you know, it's the pastors, it's the church, it's the government - not my fault! You just can't blame me, it's nothing to do with me! Except it's my problem, and if I don't do something, I'll never solve it. That's the dilemma with blaming. Okay, now let's have a look at another guy here, in 1 Samuel 15. This is a classic one of a guy who said: well it's not my fault, don't blame me; but like everyone else in the Bible, he received consequences of making bad choices. Now I'm wanting you as we just do this, is to just be thinking, and be reflecting, as to how often you would, in some way or another, say: well it's not my fault, or blame someone else, rather than actually face the problem, take responsibility and be creative to solve it. Remember this: every time you blame someone else, you render yourself unable to do anything. You become powerless, even if they were responsible.

So suppose for example a father was very abusive, alcoholic and there was a messy thing all through the family life. The child was beaten up, got all kinds of problems, so here he is later in life standing on all these issues now in his own marriage and all these problems in his own family. Now if he blames his father for it all, he now actually becomes the victim of what's happened. He becomes helpless and powerless, and then all he can say is: it's not my fault that I'm such a mess. Yeah, well that's why your wife left you, because you wouldn't take responsibility, and you blamed it somewhere else. Yes, there may have been an abusive background, and you may have deeply been hurt. However, this is your life, and God gave you this life. It's your responsibility to actually own your life, and be creative in making decisions how to make it succeed, not blame someone else. Oh well, we'll blame the economy - now notice what happens here. In this story in Verse 1, Samuel said to Saul: the Lord has sent me to anoint you king over His people, and over Israel. Now listen to the voice of the words of the Lord. I want to punish Amalek for what he did to Israel a long time ago, so God never forgets. He ambushed Israel on the way, he came up from Egypt.

Now this is hundreds and hundreds of years later, and God says: I'm going to settle the score now. I want you to go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, spare nothing. Okay, Verse 9: but Saul and the people spared Agag, the king, spared the best of the sheep, the best of the ox, fatlings, lambs,

everything that was good, and were unwilling - notice this - unwilling to utterly destroy them. But everything that was despised and worthless, that's what they destroyed. So you notice now, he's got a very clear mandate, and Samuel puts it to him in a certain way. He says: the Lord sent me, to anoint you. God has positioned you as a king to represent Him. Now just stop there for a moment. God had given Saul a role. God expected Saul to carry out His will. Now how many know and understand that God calls everyone of us priests and kings, and that He anoints us with His Holy Spirit. He has commissioned the church, every believer, to go into the community, to make disciples of nations. He's called every one of us to enter the community as a king, as someone authorised from heaven to represent Him, to move supernaturally in miracles, signs and wonders, and the power of God. He's called us to do that. It's not like an option.

Saul had a particular mission. He was sent, and given an assignment in the community, but God is giving assignments to every believer now. Now I want you to see what happens. Saul had a look at what he was called to do, and he made a decision: well look, I don't want to get rid of all of that stuff there. This looks good to me. I'll make some money here and there - so they just changed the plan, changed God's plan. But he's not allowed to change God's plan. He's going to have consequences for changing God's plan; and the church has been given a mandate, a plan from God, and it can't change God's plan. If the church changes the plan of God, we're in deep trouble, because we're not here for ourselves. We're here to love and worship and represent Him, and if God is saying to the church worldwide, certain things about global mission, and about reaching community, and about releasing the power of God - we can't change the plan. If we change the plan, we're like Saul: well I'll pick and choose the bits I agree with. I'll just pick the bit I like, and the bit I don't like, I'll leave that out. That's what's happening in the church in the west, picks out the bits it likes, and leaves all the other stuff out.

God's saying: I want the church to move in power, I want you to move, and pray for the sick, and cast out devils, and minister to people. I want you to witness, enter the community, and change the culture. You have to arise. There's a particular challenge is involved in this, and so Saul did this, so anyway he changed the plan, and then notice this. Samuel went to Saul, and Saul said to him: blessed are you of the Lord! I'm so glad to see you. I have done what God wanted me to do. He was so happy, like so many Christians, come to church on

Sunday, well bless the Lord! I've done what the Lord wanted. Really? And Samuel asked a very pertinent question: How come I can hear sheep bleating? [Laughter] Wait a minute, let's go back to the original plan. Wasn't the original plan, that everything was killed? Oh, ah aah... How come I hear bleating? [Baa baa baa.] I hear all the animals. He drew his attention to the fact that there's some noise there, there's some bleating going on. I wonder if Samuel was here now, whether he'd talk to many of the Christians, and say: I hear a lot of bleating. [Laughter] All the things we didn't do, they're all bleating!

Notice the first thing he said, he was in total denial: I've done what God said. Verse 20: I've obeyed the Lord, I've done what - now notice this. He's in total denial about the fact actually he didn't do what God wanted him to do; but he come along, and he said: bless the Lord, I want to praise the Lord now, I've done what God wanted me to do. This is the condition of so many Christians, he's in denial, he's not facing he didn't do what he's supposed to do. God says to the husbands: love your wives, marriage is in a problem, did you love your wife? Probably not. I hear bleating, the bleating of your wife. Why didn't you do what God said to do? Oh, not my fault, you don't understand what kind of woman she is. [Laughter] Oh really? Bleating, I hear bleating, see? So notice what he said, Verse 15, now he passes the blame, and excuses himself. Hey listen, don't talk to me. The people, they bought them from the Amalekites, it's the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen. So now he's come into ways of excusing. So first he denies that there's a problem - when faced with the issue and reality, he carries on like there was no problem whatsoever, ignores it.

Then when he says: what about the bleating of the sheep, well he then excuses it: well listen, I realise there's a problem here, there's sheep here, but don't look at me. It was the people. Hello, aren't you the leader? Oh yeah, but it was the people, they did it. See him passing the blame, excusing himself, taking no responsibility. You know what he was really saying was: well yes, but you can't blame me, because it's them. It's amazing isn't it? It's a very powerful story this one, and then he minimises it: well you know, we did actually get rid of the bad stuff. We really got rid of the bad - now listen, Samuel, don't you hit on me now. We got rid of the bad stuff. That's trying to minimise the issue. He's trying to make it smaller than it is; but he had a clear command, he just didn't do it. He just chose what bits he'd do, and the rest he didn't do. First he denies it, second he tries to minimise it, third he blames someone else, and then finally he tries to

reason - now get this, this is the best of all. He spiritualises it. [Laughter] Well, of course we bought these sheep and oxen so we could give them to the Lord. [Laughter] What a fob-off. He's trying to fob-off a prophet of God. He's trying to use every kind of defensive way possible, to do one thing: he blew it, and he wouldn't own up. That's what people do.

They blame someone else, minimise it, deny it, pretend it isn't there, try and spiritualise it, all kinds of things. They just didn't do the right thing, and they won't own it. Now here's the problem: if you don't own it, then you are in a problem. Defensiveness is a major way of avoiding responsibility, and blame shifting; and if you are a defensive kind of person, for whatever reason, when faced with failure, difficulty, challenge, set backs, if you become defensive, you are not taking responsibility. You are acting like a victim, and you're playing the blame game. We have to get out of that. We have to make decisions to get out of that, to be able to be what God called us to be. So notice this, that he experienced the consequences. The consequences were, he lost his right to rule. Now let's just stop there a moment. We're trying to get it out of the Old Testament and into today, so let's have a think about it. God calls you and me, children of the Father, we're children of God, we are kings. What does that mean? We're anointed kings. That means we have the baptism in the Holy Spirit, we have the anointing of the Holy Spirit, we are able to go into the community, and through prayer and faith, influence the outcomes of what's happening.

We're able to go into workplaces, and shift spiritual atmospheres. We're able to pray for the sick, we're able to see breakthroughs and miracles take place; and we have a mandate, a command, to go and to reach out to people, to win them to Jesus Christ. That is the plan. That is the mandate. It was not a suggestion, it is the plan, and so we have to be prepared for the plan. But part of being prepared is: I have embraced, this is the plan. Now what happens today is, if we personally will not take responsibility for our own lives, and for fulfilling the commission God gives us, we lose our ability to be able to do it. When you lose your ability to be able to do it, you become oppressed, and you become so like the culture, you can't change it, because there's no anointing, and no empowerment of God around your life anymore. Anointings are always to get the job done, so if we don't own the responsibility, and set out to do the job, we don't get the empowerment we need to do it. So we blame someone else: well you don't understand my workplace is so hard. Listen, every workplace is the

same. You've just got to make a decision.

So here it is then, so let's get out of the: it's not my fault, it's someone else's fault; and let's get into the thinking: I've got choices. You always have a choice. Now you say: well it's really hard. Yeah. My background was really bad - yeah, but what are your choices? What could you do about it? What could you do to change? God has called you to have dominion. You were dealt a bad hand. You're in a difficult place. You've got difficulties going on. What are your options? One option: don't take it, the blame game, it's not my fault. If you play that game, you are rendered impotent and powerless. It may not be your fault, but if it's a problem in your way, as soon as you open your arms and say: I embrace this, I will find some creative ways through it, you are now rising up to be what God called you to be, [applause] and that's what we have to do. That's what God is calling us to do, to put our arms around situations, even if we didn't create them, and say: yep, it's a mess. Yep, it's bad, but I believe I'm here for such a time to change it. I can do something about that.

One of my daughters, Sarah who's here, she never found any boyfriend in the church. The man she's married, she found outside the church, because she never got into the blame game: I'm single, because there's no men in the church; she just went out and got some. Everyone she went out and built a friendship with, she brought to church and got saved, because that's what she's believing for: get them saved; otherwise you're playing the blame game. You've only got to work out in a church, if there's 20 single young women, and there's three young men, some single women are going to stay single, unless there's more men. Someone has to do something - well not my fault! But you can do something. Go talk to Sarah, how'd you do it? Every one, every guy she befriended, ended up in church, and made a decision for Christ, and then she made a decision whether she wanted to marry them - bring them home to dad, what do you reckon about this one? Na. Brought another one home, what do you reckon about this one? Na. Brought Andrew home, what do you think about this one? Oh yeah! [Laughter] That one's a good one, ah he's the one! And he is, he was, he's a great young man.

Now come on now, there's no blame game here. Andrew had to deal with the blame game didn't you? [Laughs] Go on, ask him. He'll share your testimony, had to deal with the blame game, and now he's dealt with it, his whole family's changed too. Come on now, you've got to get out of the blame game.

Deuteronomy 30:19, it says: I set before you life and death, choose life. Choose life, that you and the next generation may live, so the choices you make are going to affect the next generation. Here it is in a nutshell: you always have a choice, it just may be not the one you wanted. Often the choice that's available to us that we wanted, our preferred choice, isn't going to work or isn't available - have to make another decision. You've got to learn to make different decisions, so what choices are available? We've always got a choice. Whatever I choose, there will be a consequence; so if you blame, that's a choice, you will then be a victim. We have to make choices, and expect that God will act as we will make the decisions, and be responsible.

So here it is: Life isn't fair. How many have said this: it's not fair? How many still think it's not fair? Well wake up, the whole world's not fair. It's not fair. Good people get bad stuff, bad people get good stuff, that's the world. It's not fair. It's not just. Heaven's a great place. It's fair in heaven, and it's just in heaven. Here on the earth, it's not fair, face it. At some time you're going to get a bad deal, and it's not fair. However you have to stop living in a fuzzy unreality. You have to face: this is life, bad stuff happens; but God empowered me to reach into the bad stuff, and make great choices, that influenced it and made things better. That's how Jesus came, He said: listen, I didn't come here to be served. I didn't come with any expectation I'm coming into a great place. I knew I'm coming into a messed-up world, and I came here with a heart to reach into it, make great decisions, bring the power of God into it, change it. That's what He did, and that's what we're called to be like Him, not complain how bad it is, but say: boy, aren't they all glad I'm here, God is with me, I can make a difference. God, show me some creative ways of making a difference.

One of the most amazing things is this. Listen, who sinned? Was it God or man sinned? Let's get this clear. It was the man that sinned, is that right? Who took the responsibility to fix it up? God did! Jesus came into the world, to take on Himself responsibility, for the sin of every person. What an amazing thing! He came into the world, took responsibility for everyone's failure, took it to Himself, took it in His heart, and He went to the cross, and in His heart he'd embraced the failures of - they weren't His failures by the way. He embraced their failures, and said: I can do something to change it. He didn't come in, and go back to the Father, and say: Father, this plan of Me going into the earth was a bad plan. It was tough going. Right from the beginning they were trying to kill

Me, and then they were trying to kill Me all the way through My ministry. Finally they surrounded Me, took Me away, and put Me up on a cross. We need to burn this place up! [Laughter] But God doesn't think like a victim. He thinks: we, together, can make a change - and it still changes for every person who received Jesus Christ, they're able to have a changed life. Jesus took responsibility for your sins. He only requires that you acknowledge them, and come to Him, and He'll forgive them. What a wonderful thing!

Why don't we close our eyes and bow our heads. I wonder is there any person here today, and perhaps you have never experienced God's love and forgiveness. You are separated from God. You have no relationship with God. You think you're a good person, and you try to live a good life, but being a good person isn't enough. We need God to forgive our sins.

You may be here and you've come to church, or go to church regularly, but that's not enough either. We need to make a personal decision to receive Jesus Christ. He reached out to you, that you could become a Christian. He reached out to you, so you could have your sins forgiven. It just requires of you a decision. Don't blame your background, don't blame your past, don't blame someone else. Why don't you own up, and say: there's a lot of things have been wrong in my life, and I'm willing to own it, and acknowledge it. I'm willing to ask Jesus Christ to take the responsibility for that failure, and to make me clean.

I wonder how many people, just while we're sitting here, as I was speaking today, you just knew in your heart: man, I've been living this blame game. I've been blaming my husband, my wife, my kids, my dad, my mum, my background, my education or lack of it, the workplace, the boss, the country, the white people, the black people. I've been blaming. It doesn't matter what you've been blaming, just remember: when you do it, it's a choice, and you end up powerless. If you felt God speak to you today to repent of the blame game, why don't you just raise your hand and say: that's me, God's speaking to me today.

Father, I just pray that you'd give grace to every person who's responded today, to begin to make choices that are different, to break out of blame, and into taking positive action. Father, I pray that a creative anointing would be upon us all, to see ways through situations we haven't seen before, instead of waiting for someone else to do it. Father, I pray initiative would begin to come upon people in the church, in seeing problems, to begin to ask You what they could do, and

how they could work, and begin to think with You: how they could work to change this. Father, I just pray that in these days ahead, the church is going to arise out of this victim mentality, out of blame shifting, and into a place of being very, very proactive in solving problems in the community. Father, I pray for release of your anointing upon us right now. I feel the presence of God here, favour of God here.

Summary Notes

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Introduction:
· “It is not my fault!”, “Can’t blame me for that!”
· People think, act and behave as the culture around them, does as everyone else does.
· When you blame someone else you stay powerless to change your situation.
· God wants us to be empowered as believers.
· To walk in faith enquire us to take responsibility.
· Culture = the behaviors and beliefs that are characteristic of as group of people e.g. Youth Culture; Drug Culture; also Blame Culture
· Culture of Blame = people rather blame anyone or anything for their misery than to take responsibility to own the problem and make it better.
· Blame = makes people ‘feel better’
= does nothing to solve the problem
= people think, feel and act as if there is nothing they can do.
· Core = instead of taking ownership of their problem in doing something about it, blame others or something, assigned responsibility of condition outside self.
· Example: USA – 2 overweight girls blamed McDonalds for their eating habits – sued McDonalds.
· Examples: People Blame : Father / Mother / Teachers / Church / Pastors / Government/
God
Background/Experiences/Lack of Education/Lack of Opportunities
· Key issues: Will you stop blaming and start taking responsibility?
· Is God my source or not? Do we blame or excuse ourselves for what is going on inside us?
· Learn to play the cards you were dealt, stop wishing for a new hand of cards.
· To be powerless, remain victim = blame.
· You are who you are because of the choices you make.
· It’s not what happened to you, it’s how you respond to them/it.

You are Designed for Dominion:
Genesis 1:26-28 - “Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, have dominion …”
· God’s great gift to man – Free Will – ability to choose!
· You are able to desire and make choices, take responsibility for your desires and dreams.
· “Subdue’ = there are challenges, opposition, difficulties.
· Dominion = you are given freedom how you will respond, creativity
· You cannot always choose what happens to you.
· You can always choose how you will respond – choice to make!
· Man given:
1) Freedom to make creative choices

2) Responsibilities for the consequences experienced for each choice.
· Genesis 2:19 - " …God brought the animals to Adam to see what he could name them"
· God expected Adam to take responsibility - make creative choices.
· Option 1 – Make a creative choice.
Option 2 – Blame God for not supplying a list of names, expecting too much.

· We can pray to God for grace but we have a part to play in it too. Think through what you can do before you blame. Be creative in finding solutions. He will help us.
· Faith = Action
· People make bad choices not to face the consequences and expect others to come through for them = blame game.
· God expects you to use the freedom you have.
i) Take responsibility for the situation
ii) Find creative options
iii) Take action
· God allows us to experience the consequences of our choices.

3) How the Blame Game Started:
Genesis 3:1-13 - 'diverting attention by blaming'
· Adam blamed God and blamed Eve.
· Why blame others? Why blame circumstances? = divert attention
· They blame others instead of taking responsibility for their actions/decisions and didn't ask for forgiveness so that God could give them another chance.
· It is easier to divert attention by blaming than assuming responsibility. Get the attention away from me onto someone else.
· Blame diverts attention: 1) owning responsibility 2) solving the problem
· People rather blame than take responsibility and solve the problem.
· When Adam blamed Eve, God stopped talking; the next time He talked He told them their consequences.
· Think how God thinks, don't play the blame game. With choices come consequences.
· Proverbs 19:3 - 'a mans folly ruins his life yet his heart rages against God'
· God always hold us responsible and accountable for our actions.
· If blame comes, take responsibility, don't blame someone or something else, think of a creative way to fix it to succeed in life.

4) "Well, it's not my fault!"
1 Samuel 15:1-3,9 - Saul fails to fulfill God given assignment.
· We are priests and kings as believers, we are all called to enter the community to move supernaturally – there is no other option = this is an assignment to us now. We cannot change God's plan, if the church change it we are in deep trouble. If we change the plan and pick the bits we like and leave other things out. Go out and change the culture, ARISE = plan of God.
· Saul was positioned and anointed by God as a King.
· Saul was expected to fulfill God given assignments.
· Saul obeyed partially – did what he agreed with.
· Samuel confronts Saul: Defensive responses
i) Denial - when face with painful reality Saul denied it - verses 13,20
- Denial protects people from pain facing issues/ignores.
- Saul – 'bless the Lord, I have done what God wanted". Samuel heard lams bleating and asked Saul about them. Saul did have the plan God instructed to him. Does God hear bleating in the church?
ii) Minimizing – look for ways in doing damage control by making the issue smaller than it is, to avoid pain for us.

iii) Excuses/Blame - admit there is a problem but refuse any responsibility, “Yes, but …” = excuses, people wanted to take the best; it is them they didn’t want to get rid of the good stuff.
iv) Rationalise – admit there is a problem but explain it away – ‘Spin Doctor’ – Make it look good.
· He tried to fob off what God wanted him to do. He didn’t own his responsibility.
· Defensive people = not taking responsibility, act like victims and play the blame game.
· Even when made to face responsibility Saul wanted to keep us appearances to look good before people.
· Defensiveness is a major form of avoiding personal responsibility - verse 25,30.
· Saul’s consequence = he lost his right to rule.
· We are anointed as priests and kings. We are able to go and reach out to people and win them to Jesus Christ through prayer and faith action. Have you embraced this? This is God’s plan.
· If we personally don’t take responsibility of our own life, we loose our ability to do it, we become oppressed = no anointing or empowerment in our own life to fulfill Gods instructions. We make the choice and God will be with us.

5) You Always have a Choice:
Deuteronomy 30:19 - “I set before you life and death, blessing and cursing therefore choose life that both you and your seed may live”
· You always have a choice!
- It may not be the preferred one but there is always an option.
· All choices have consequences!
- Blaming is a choice! The consequence for this = helpless, resentful
- The choice you make affects the next generation. Put you arms around them even if God didn’t create them, use your creativeness to change.
· Life is Not Fair or Just – Accept that Reality!
- People wish for a world that is just and fair where people do, what people should do and good thing happen to good people.
- Stop sitting protesting, ‘Not fair” and blaming others.
- Deal with life as it is – not what it should be.
- ‘God enables me to change the bad in my life/this messed up world to make great decisions. God is with me, I can make a difference.’
- W sinned? = man. Who took the responsibility? = Jesus (for everyone’s failures). Jesus didn’t go to the Father telling Him of His bad plan. We together can make a change.
- Acknowledge sins and Jesus will forgive.
· Stop blaming – Take Responsibility – Look for Options:
- face reality as it is – own responsibility to initiate change.

E.g. Jesus: Took responsibility for the sins of the World.
Able to offer hope and a different future.

You Always Have a Choice (2 of 3)

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God empowered man with a free will, and the ability to overcome challenges in life. Man learned to be helpless, he developed limiting beliefs about himself. Israel learned to be slaves (helpless) in Egypt. The challenges they faced in the wilderness were designed to shift their slave mentality to explore what God had for them. We have the ability to handle every challenge in life if we choose to believe & trust God. We disqualify ourselves from our destiny, purpose & blessing if we blame & make excuses. Learn how you can break free from learned helplessness. Choose to change.



We looked at the Blame Game, and I want to carry on. I want to help you just to start to think about: how you think. I want to speak a message called: You Always Have a Choice. You Always Have a Choice. We'll just pick up where we were going a couple of weeks ago, Genesis 1:26-28. It says: God created Adam and Eve in His image and likeness. When He made man, He made us like Him, spirit beings. He designed us to have dominion in the earth, so it says: He blessed them; and said: be fruitful, multiply, increase, fill the earth; subdue and have dominion. So when God spoke, and it says: He blessed them, it means: He spoke words of empowerment and life into them.

In other words, He expected something to happen. He spoke words that enabled them to go out; that's why, in the heart of every man, is a need and a desire to conquer challenges. Men love challenges. Why do they love challenges? Because God called us to subdue and have dominion! And it's still inside men now. That's why men who don't rise to challenges always live a defeated life. It's something in us designed to rise and conquer, rise and face challenges. Subdue means you've got to overcome something that resists you. So from the very beginning, God's intention is that you and I would face challenges, that required us to step up, face them, overcome them, and bring them into the way God wants them. Isn't that an awesome thought, right from the very beginning. Sometimes Christians get a fuzzy-wuzzy idea that Adam and Eve lived in a perfect world, everything was just perfect, though actually it wasn't. If it was a perfect world,

why did God say they had to subdue something? Why is it that He said: you have to bring dominion into the earth, if it was all perfect?

So from the beginning God designed us to live in a world, where we are required to step up and face challenges, and overcome them. You are wired by God that way. You're designed for this. Isn't that really good? Now of course as soon as Adam and Eve sinned, then immediately when God spoke to them, and held them to be responsible for what they had done, they started the blame game. The blame game goes something like this: it's not my fault. Wasn't me, it's the woman You gave me. Don't blame me! The woman - well don't blame me, it's that serpent. Why do You make serpents? They cause so much trouble. I don't - no one likes snakes! So the blame game means we shift responsibility for outcomes away from ourselves, to somewhere else, we won't take responsibility, and the blame game has been practiced every since. We live in a culture which seems to celebrate blame, it's not my fault. It's not my fault. Now you've got to realise this, that freedom and responsibility are connected. Everyone cries freedom, but you've got to realise, it's a twin with responsibility.

You think about this. A child, because it does not take up the responsibility of feeding itself, someone's got to feed it. Because it hasn't got responsibility at bedtime, someone puts it to bed. Because it hasn't got responsibility for cleaning up its nappies, someone cleans up its nappies, so children, relatively, have little freedom. But as they grow, and are able to take on responsibility, then they can actually have more freedom; and it's true as you're an adult, you are required to be responsible. If you are irresponsible, society or government will take away your freedom. In the end they lock you up, and you don't even have freedom to turn your light on and off, or to open the door or shut the door. You're in jail because you were irresponsible; so they're linked, responsibility and freedom. If you want freedom, you must become responsible, so when people get into the blame game, they then lose freedom. The moment you blame someone else, too bad, you're powerless, you can't do anything. We should feel sorry for you, but we're not, because God never called you to be like that, He called us to change.

So I want to just share a little thing that happens, it happened in my life. It happens in the lives of many people, and I want you to be able to tune in and pick it up, if it's happening in you. In Proverbs 23:7, it says: as a man thinks in his heart, so he is. So if you believe it, it's true. That's how it'll work out for you. If you believe it, then that's how it's going to work out for you - as a man thinks

in his heart that's how he is, that's how his life goes. People learn to be helpless or powerless. People learn to be helpless or powerless. It's a phenomena they call 'learned helplessness'. Now let me just explain it, and then I'm going to just give you a few examples of it, and I want you to hear some of these ones which abound everywhere there are Christians. If you don't recognise it, you'll never change it; and I want to show you how God works to change our lives, so we move from being powerless, and being in bondage, and how we come to a place of being faced with Him, commissioning us to go into the world and change it. God wants to shift us from a life in bondage to sin and all kinds of things, into a life which is fully empowered and has victory - but there's a transition point between living in bondage, and beginning to explore all that God has got for you. I want to show you exactly how God takes us through a process to get us there.

If you don't understand the process, you're going to be blaming God, blaming the church, blaming pastors, blaming leaders, blaming your work. You're going to live in the blame game. You'll never be the person God wants you to be, and it won't be His fault; it'll be because you either didn't know what was going on, or you just made bad choices. You've always got a choice, doesn't matter what life dishes up. You've always got a choice. No matter how bad a hand you've got, you've got to choose how you'll play it, instead of looking back and blaming the past. So what they did is, they did an experiment with animals, and what they did was, they set the experiment up so no matter what the animal did, it could never have a good outcome. It didn't matter what it did, it could never have a good outcome, and the animals learned after a little while, you can never win. No matter what you do, you can never win, no matter what you do, it never turns out good. So once they got them so they were thinking that way, then they provided many opportunities for them to be able to escape, or get out, or get out of the situation, and even though it was obvious, they still never took it up, because they had learned: you can never win. No matter what you do, it'll never work. You know what I'm talking about?

Now people have similar things happen to them as well, and so past experiences shape how we believe; so before you come to Christ, you have many beliefs inside you, and they're not necessarily the truth, they're just what you believe. If you believe them, they're going to work out for you, just like you believe. If you believe: life is bad, man, it's really bad - did you notice? If you believe: life is

good, man, did you notice how good it is? You get what you believe. Belief or faith, whatever you've got believing in your heart has a magnetic power, it pulls in around you exactly what you believe. If you're pessimistic, isn't it amazing how bad things are, how many negative things are going round. People who are positive, notice how many good things seem to come into their life - it's amazing. You seem to get what you believe for, so now what happens is, past experiences form belief systems, which can limit us. They can limit us, and those things don't necessarily change because you become a Christian. You have to make them change. They limit us.

They limit the way we look at life, and they limit what we can do; so for example, one of the things that I learnt when I was quite young was this. No matter what I do, no matter how hard I work, it's never good enough. There's a lot of pain behind that belief, and there's a lot of repeated experiences, that no matter how hard I work, hours and hours and hours worked hard, in fact every school I ever went to I got a diligence prize. I worked hard, yet no matter how hard I worked, there were never words of approval or commendation. There was always pointing out where I'd fallen short and could do better: you could do better. You could have done this, you could have done that. Now that shaped how I saw life. It doesn't matter what I do, how hard I work, how much I try, it's never good enough. Now you can imagine, even becoming a Christian, that doesn't necessarily change. Now it just transfers to God: no matter how much I do, how hard I try, I'm still never good enough - except now I've got all these other things you've got to learn to do, that you didn't have to do when you weren't a Christian. Know what I'm saying? You're getting quiet now, so I know this is probably echoing something in your own heart.

No matter what I did, I could never please dad, it was as simple as that. Didn't matter how hard I tried, didn't matter what I did, someone was still always angry, and with that there's all the pain that goes with it. No matter what I did, I could still never get approval. No matter what I did, it was always criticised, so what did I learn from those experiences? Apart from all the grief and loneliness that came with it, I learned lots of things. I learned no matter how hard I try, people are still going to get angry, they get mad at me, I never get approved of, and I'll never be good enough, and whatever. I learned all those things growing up. When I became a Christian, they didn't change. When I became a pastor, they didn't change - except now there's more people finding fault. [Laughter] Not

only in my own church! [Laughs] There's more - so the world was full of what I believed it to be full of: disapproval. So of course if you're a good Christian, then you take on a persecution complex, being persecuted for walking with God. That's a load of rubbish. It's just you got what you're believing, and it happens over and over and over again. I know we're all quiet now, because it's getting a little close to you - so what you learn to do is, you learn one of two things. You learn either: to strive and compete and drive; or you learn: what's the use? When you learn what's the use, there's a lot of grief in the heart, there's pain, there's loneliness, and there's despair. I would find myself saying: oh it's hopeless; come into a situation: it's hopeless, can't change it.

I would be resigned to being powerless to change some things in life. Know what I'm talking about here? [Laughs] No one's admitting anything now, okay. So what happens is, you become a Christian, and then in the short term, there's an immediate joy of engaging God, you feel loved - I'm so blessed. Then I found I was crying a lot - started off really happy, and filled with the Holy Ghost, and praying; then there was a lot of crying. I realised I had a lot of grief, all those years of not being loved, to come in where God just loves me, oh! I had to make changes in how I believed. Now what I found of course is people carry - you have a whole lot of new experiences, and your old beliefs surface. Of course what happens is, is that we have developed this kind of way of thinking now, that actually kind of puts us still as a victim, and I want to shift you out of that. I'll show you how God shifts you out of it, and what your part in it is, so you can make the shift.

So you hear things: well I prayed and nothing happened. Heard that one? I prayed and nothing happened, limiting thinking, so you feel helpless. I prayed - well the pastor told me to pray, and I prayed, and nothing happened. The old feelings of helplessness come up again, so what happens is, you have a whole lot of new experiences, and the new experiences just surface your old junk, so God can help you deal with it. So you've got to have some new experiences, so you get people, and you hear statements like this. I wonder if you've heard any statements like this, and I want you to listen within the statement, what the person is saying, because you've probably heard someone say something like this: no one told me. Oh I tried to talk to my husband, but he wouldn't listen. I tried counselling, that didn't work. I'm just having a bad day. What's the person saying? They're saying: I refuse to be responsible for my negative attitudes, and

my bad emotions. I'm blaming it on: the bad day, and you can't hold me responsible for a bad day. When I got up, I thought it'd be a good day, turned out it was a bad day, and so that's why I'm like I am. I'm having a bad day!

Have you heard that? It's called being irresponsible. That's what it really is. I hear Christians do that. It's just actually not owning responsibility for your emotions and your behaviours. How can you have a victory, how can you walk in dominion, if you won't take ownership? You always have a choice what you do, in a bad day. I mean we all talk about our bad days. How about this one: I talked to him, he wouldn't listen. So what's the thing: [groan], what can I do? I talked to my husband, he wouldn't listen, what can I do? You know - I tried counselling, it didn't work, what can I do? Can you feel the helplessness that comes up, and then: it's not my fault, someone else has got to fix it. Here's another good one: I tried to get a date, but there's no good ones out there. [Laughter] You've heard that one? I'd like to get married, but there's no good men in the church. [Laughter] Now can you hear what the person's saying? Where is the responsibility for their not being married? Where does it lie? Well it's the church, obviously hasn't got good men in it. [Laughter] I can't do anything about that, it's Pastor Mike's problem, he should solve that one. [Laughter] Or, we're in a country area, so there's no good men around here. So now where's the responsibility? Well it's out there, it's a country area. Well shift to the city - shift to the city. Wasn't it amazing, I didn't get anyone there either.

Because what happens is, people put responsibility for their problems, their dilemmas, their situations, outside themselves. They blame the circumstances - it was a bad day, or they blame people - oh it was my father, my mother, the Pakeha, it was my background, it was someone abused me, someone blah blah blah blah blah blah blah and it was someone else. Therefore it's not my fault, and I can be helpless. Please feel sorry for me, and I think I'll come up at the end, and you can pray for me. [Laughter] Come on. Sometimes the church plays into the game - oh well, we'll just pray for you. Now where's the responsibility lie there? I've got to pray prayers, to get your problem solved? [Laughs] I don't think so. [Laughter] You've got the problem. It'll always be your problem. You've got to take responsibility, and grow up, and face it. Isn't that what happens? You've all got so quiet today.

How about this one here, you've probably heard this one. I wrote it down because I thought this one: I prayed, and I'm waiting for God to provide. Well

bully for you! [Laughter] But what are you going to do in the meantime? Aye? You going to go out and get a job? No, I've prayed, I'm waiting for God to provide. Or I'm trusting the script - the Lord says: He'll provide, so I'm waiting for the Lord to provide. So yeah, what are you doing? Well I'm sitting by the phone every day waiting for the phone to ring, someone will come, someone will ring me. No, no, no, you're just being stupid and irresponsible. Actually totally irresponsible, and what you're doing is: covering irresponsibility, with some super-spirituality. It's not actually getting ownership. Have a think about the person who says: I can't get any dates, can't get a man, because there's no good men in the church; what they're saying is: I've got no power over that. I have no choice, it's outside my power, I'm helpless. Got the idea? But what choices would such a person have? Well they could ask: do I have some glitches in my personality, that turn people off, I need some honest feedback? Am I meeting people? Am I putting myself into places where I'll meet people? Have I limited my selection of people, and I'm waiting for just Jesus to return? Well some people are, they're just waiting for Jesus. They've got no idea men actually aren't like Jesus, they're very like you, very full of sin and issues and problems, and they need to be journeyed into growth, just like everyone else. You don't find the perfect man - like they said in that TV ad: good on ya mate, she's a hard road to find the perfect woman. [Laughter]

Well there's no perfect men, and there's no perfect women, and if you sit around waiting, you'll be single all your life. [Laughter] You can make better choices than that, you understand? But it's like people cloak their helplessness with certain words that sound right, but their mindsets and limiting beliefs that stop them actually engaging God, and changing their life. It goes on all the time, I hear it all the time. If we're going to arise, and be all God intended, one of the things we have to do, is make the decision to become an empowered person, to take responsibility for my life, and work with who I am, and what I have, and believe God to do unusual things through my life. That sound okay? So if you blame people and circumstances, you feel helpless. Of course you're helpless, because you've put the blame out there, blame out there, they're responsible. Now it may well be that other people are responsible for stuff, but you're the one who's still got the problem. If you won't own: I've got an issue - I want to get married! What are you doing to prepare yourself and position yourself? Simple as that. Well I prayed about it, I'm waiting for God to provide. Well isn't that wonderful? We'll see you single for a long time. Come on, think about it. You've

got to get out of this sort of thinking.

I've had a bad day - well get out of that bad thinking. What you have - let me just rephrase it. The day has turned up some troubles you didn't expect, and you haven't assumed responsibility to manage your emotions, and do the best with the way the day turned up for you. So what you've done, being irresponsible, is you just have: I've got a bad day, and you let your stuff hang out. You actually sow a bad future. You don't build good relationships by letting everything hang out, you have to actually take ownership, and I found for years, I lived with resentment and anger and self pity and depression, because I felt helpless. The only way to get out of it, was to break the limiting belief: I'm not helpless. I may have been back then, but I'm not now, I'm joined to Jesus. The Bible says in Philippians 4:13, it's very, very clear. It says: I can, I can, I can, yes I can do all things through Christ who indunamo, who empowers me to live a great life! Yes, I can! That's a great scripture. Through Christ, whatever God calls me to do, I'm up for it, because He will empower me to do it - but I've got to make a decision to give it a go, got to own the challenge. Is that right?

So how does God change us? How does God make the change take place? Well let's go and look in 1 Corinthians 10, and I want to show you the process, how God changes us. See God had two million people to change, and a lot of them didn't make it. Of course it's God's fault, He should never have taken them such a hard way. [Laughter] 1 Corinthians, Chapter 10:6, it's talking about Israel. Israel is a picture of the church. Israel was in bondage in Egypt; we were in bondage in the world, in sin. God miraculously delivered them. Jesus supernaturally saves us, so there's the parallel. Now Israel continued to limit God. God had this in mind: not just to get them saved, God had a great destiny for them. But how does He get them into the great destiny? He's got to grow them, and change them. How does He get you into a great destiny? Well you can sing 'I've Got a Destiny' as much as you like, but it doesn't mean you're going to get anywhere near it. I'm sure that they sang 'We've Got a Destiny' all the way from Egypt, all through the Promised Land - and they all died there. I want to know what God was trying to do, and why they failed to make it, and who got there and why. Good questions to ask aren't they?

Now in 1 Corinthians 10, here's the lessons that God wanted them to learnm because it says in Verse 6, everything that happened to Israel is an example. It's an example, so what happened to these people is a lesson to learn, so here's what

I can guarantee. You're either going to figure out what happened to them, and learn the lesson; or you repeat the lesson. Over the years of being a Christian, I have seen many repeat the lesson, and fall in the wilderness, fail to walk on with God through the challenges of life, and produce fruit that brings glory to God over their life. You probably know many like that - started well, now where are they? Somehow they fell, and there must have been a reason they fell, so what is it God wanted them to learn? It's found in 1 Corinthians 10:13. Now no temptation has overtaken you, such which is common to man; but God is faithful - underline that one. He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but will, with the temptation, make a way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. Now that word 'temptation' is not necessarily just a temptation to sin. It's that and a lot more. It means literally: testings, trials, the challenges of life.

So you notice there are several things God wants you to learn, you just take a note of these. Number one, problems are common to everyone. It says: there's nothing that's happening to you, that someone else hasn't gone through - oh but pastor, you don't understand, it's such a special problem, because I'm a special person, and my problems are just so special, you wouldn't understand. Now listen, the Bible says clearly, they're common to everyone. There's nothing happening to you that didn't happen to someone else, and someone here's going through the same thing right now - different package, same problem see? So problems are common. Everyone has problems. Anyone that doesn't, well what dreamland are you in? [Laughter] Someone else is probably fixing up all your stuff.

Okay, second thing is: God is faithful. Here's the second thing: God is faithful, so problems are going to come, so just because you get saved doesn't mean you don't have problems. Problems come, but here's the thing that's different; God is faithful. You can depend on Him. He'll help you. God will help you. He's not only faithful, He's powerful. If He got them out of Egypt with great miracles, surely He can get you where He wants you to get! God who started this work in you, sure He can finish the work. Oh you don't understand how hard this problem is. What nonsense! God is a big God, and if He can get someone saved, He can also get them right through to where He wants them to go. So the first thing is: problems - everyone has them, but God - you can trust Him, rely on Him. He will get you through.

Here's the next thing. The next thing it says: He'll not allow you to be tempted

above what you're able, so that means you have the ability to handle everything that comes your way. God will make sure it's never too much. You can handle it. You can cope - oh, I'm not coping. Listen, you're thinking wrong. You're believing wrong. You're not dealing with life. You can handle whatever God sends your way. Whatever comes your way, you're more than able, and here's another way. He says: here with the temptation, we'll make a way of escape, that you can bear it. So notice He'll always make a way through it. What a wonderful thing. I can rest today certain of these things; no matter what comes up today, well someone else has faced the same challenge, God's faithful, God's powerful, God's with me. There's always a way through this thing, there's an answer to it. I've just got to look for it. It may not be the answer I want, but I've got to look for it, see? He'll find a way - notice it says: He'll find a way, that you may be able to bear it; so God's way is never to take you into the next town. It's not to get you on a plane and fly you somewhere. God's way is you walk through the problem, face it honestly, walk your way, and it's a learning experience. You grow. So how does God shift you out of this whole place of being helpless and powerless and resentful and blah blah blah blah blah, all this stuff you've gone through? Very simple; He gives you some wonderfully new experiences, that put you under a bit of heat and pressure, and it's designed not to crush you, because God will never let it be more than you need.

Now notice this. The people of God started in Egypt. They were in a place of slavery. They were in bondage. Did they have any choices? No, they had to do what they were told, or they were whipped for it. So they were in a place of slavery, a place of no choices, a place of loneliness and isolation, grief, resentment, bitterness, all kinds of stuff. God saved them and got them out. Now what God had in mind, was a people that would become a great nation, that would impact the world; but to get them like that, He had to get them to change how they were thinking. They had lived all their lives knowing nothing except: I'm in bondage, I'm helpless, I can't get out of it. Now He got them out of it, but they still thought the same way; so what God did in the season called 'the wilderness' is, He allowed them to experience a few challenges. Every challenge was designed to surface in them, the pain of their bondage, the wrong believing they had; and to give them a chance to choose to believe and trust God.

Every time you face a challenge, a problem, a pressure and you feel powerless, helpless, resentful, angry, blah blah, all the old stuff, you have an opportunity to

think, and respond, differently as a believer: God is faithful. God is powerful. God is with me. There is a way through it, I've just got to find what it is. You getting the idea? And so Canaan was a land of huge opportunity. Canaan was a land where God expected initiative. When they were in the wilderness, God wanted them to learn how to depend on Him, rely on His word, lean on His word, trust in Him, so whatever came, when the time came, they could go in and take initiative. The people God is building in this hour, an apostolic people going into the world, are a people of initiative, a new generation that trusts God, and actually take initiatives to make things happen. But to get like that, you have to change out of the old slavery, bondage, victim, blame, helpless mentality that you had when you were before Christ. So to get you there, He's got to send you a few challenges. How about that?

The challenges are to get you to stop blaming or excusing and living powerless, and to take responsibility, and to look in faith to God. Isn't that wonderful? Isn't that wonderful. Learn God is powerful. Before I was powerless. Now I'm discovering: God is powerful! When I've discovered God is with me, and God is powerful, I can go and face a whole hostile world, and I am powerful, because God is with me, and nothing can stop me! Now you see the problem was, that every time Israel faced a new challenge, a new problem, a new difficulty, a new pressure, they always responded the same way. They felt powerless, got resentful and angry, and complained and blamed: oh blame Moses - you got us out here! Blame someone you can see. Blame the church, blame the government, blame your father, blame anyone except: face the challenge. See, now that's what God allowed them to go through. Now every time they faced a challenge, they complained bitterly; and so every experience God designed to prepare them to go in and occupy a land, and have all of these things, by the time they got there, they had no faith built in their life. So when they saw the problems, they said: we can't do it. He said: you're right, you won't.

I wonder what dreams and destinations God has prepared for us as a body of people, and has prepared for you individually, and on the journey of preparation, as God is giving experiences for you and I to grow in faith, we complain and blame and act like a victim, act in bondage. We are slowly and steadily disqualifying ourselves, because we won't grow forward in faith. That's a challenge isn't it aye? Think about that one. How much better if we be like Joshua and Caleb! Now you see Joshua and Caleb, when the time came for them

to enter the Promised Land, to take initiative, to go and conquer, to advance, to see victories, to see breakthroughs, to see things happen, they said: we can do it, we're well able! But the others said: we can't do it. They're infected with unbelief and negativity and pessimism. That was the problem. They are still acting like a slave. If you think like a slave, and you speak like a slave, and act like a slave, you will be in slavery all your life, even if you're a free man; and what Jesus says is: He set us free, but now we have to change the way we think and respond, so we don't think and respond like a person in bondage. We begin to think and respond like a person who's free, and who's joined to almighty powerful God, who promised us: there's nothing you're going to face today that's too much for you.

Well what about the financial thing? Listen, people have been through that. Others are going through that. Whatever happens it's not the end of the world for you - may be the end of some parts of your world, it's not the end of the world altogether. Come on now aye? Now you can be free, see? In Romans 15:13 it says this: Now the God of all hope, fill you with joy and peace through believing, that you may abound in hope. In other words, God of hope, God of hope fills us with joy. Joy is one of the characteristics of freedom in the Lord - and how does it happen? Because I believe God is powerful! God is with me! Nothing's too much for me, I can do it! And I've got to change how I think. Now the problem is, people get stuck in a rut, and they think that only - well I spoke to my husband, he wouldn't listen. So what you're implying is: it's all his fault, and you're now a poor victim, we should feel sorry for you, poor you. You haven't got anything else you can do, except roll over. Well that's nonsense. You've got lots of other choices, except the choice you wanted, you didn't get. He didn't listen the first time round, but you're not limited to that. There's lots of things you can do. You can learn new ways of dealing with people. You can learn different strategies, you can try different things. There's a whole range of different things you could do. You just haven't seen them yet, that's all, just got to think about them, and ask the Lord to help you.

So how am I going to get out of this learned helplessness? Let me give you it in two steps. The first part is, you've got to deal with the roots. You've got to deal with the roots, and maybe there's some people today, and you're living with despair, hopelessness, there's a pressure lives around your life. The one thing we can do today is we can pray and break the power of the thing over your life, but

that does not keep you free of it. To keep free of it, you've got to change how you live life, how you do life. So the first thing is, you've got to ask the Holy Spirit to uncover any roots in your life where you've become resentful or angry or grief stricken because you were powerless. You were held down, and you had no choice. All of us have had experiences like that, whether its sin that we're in bondage to, some kind of family situation, some circumstances in life and you were powerless, and you were hurt and wounded, and you were broken, became angry, and you learnt that you couldn't do anything.

Now you've got to admit that and bring that out to the Lord, because usually when people find they get like that, they become bitter, and they have a bitter expectation which defiles everything. They kind of expect: hey, this is how life's going to work for me. Oh well, you know, this is how it'll be. I just wonder what today will turn up. You can feel the bitterness, and the expectation, drawing all kinds of negatives in; and if that's in your life, you've got to repent of it. You've got to break your agreement with it, got to decide to leave the pain of Egypt behind, not carry the pain and grief of Egypt with you, so you can't enter into the things that God has for you, because to enter those we've got to change. So if God has been taking you through some painful experiences, and you've had all these old ways and thinking coming up - it's time to learn something and change. It's time to bring the grief and the pain out to the Lord, and to grieve over it, to repent of bitterness, to repent of making judgements against people, to repent even of just that whole thing of bitterly expecting: nothing's going to work for me.

I've had to repent of this stuff, and had to stay out of agreement with it, because it comes around you so easily. So number one, you've got to deal with the roots; number two, you've got to just embrace challenges differently. We have to embrace the challenges of life differently, because there's going to be someone - God's got someone just who knows how to get up your nose. [Laughter] He has got someone designed to just really push your buttons, and whatever's inside you that's unhealed, broken, wounded, in secrecy, hidden; God's got someone can come along who can just push that button and fire it up. You'll pray all your life for God to remove them, change them, deal to them, call fire from heaven upon them. Nothing of it ever works, have you noticed? You have to change, and you can choose to change, so this is what happens. Normally when we have a problem we feel pain and feel helpless: I don't know what to do. We go back into

old ways of thinking: I'm powerless, I can't do anything. Well it's not my fault anyway. Then we begin to blame and excuse ourselves, won't take responsibility, and then we reap what we have sown.

So that's the old way. The old way, something comes up, a problem comes in front of me, I feel negative. I remember those feelings, I go back into the old ways of thinking, powerless, helpless, can't do anything. I agree with all of those thoughts again, now become resentful and whatever, start to blame and excuse myself: I'm powerless. I'm actually going to end up in a mess. There's no way to change your life when you act like that. I've got to handle it different, because the problem comes. Now no use praying God, don't bring any problems into my life. God told me off for praying that way one time. [Laughter] I just want a blessed life! He said: I'm committed to your character, not your comfort. I'll bring a few things into your life. [Laughter] NOT THAT! God knows how to put just enough pain to melt you, that's all, get you to fall apart. He's a refiner of gold, He can make the gold fall apart. When it falls apart, you see the junk that's inside. [Laughter] It does surface when you get melted.

Okay, so number one, when the problems come, try to just identify what you're feeling. Name it. Identify the feelings; feeling helpless, feeling down, feeling angry, feeling resentful, feeling bitter, feeling like withdrawing, feeling this, feeling that. Try to get names on the feelings; now what am I thinking? I'm thinking: I'm powerless. You challenge that assumption. You've got to change that thinking. You've got to change, you've got to break your agreement with that thinking, say: I believe 1 Corinthians 10:13, there's no temptation, no problem that's overtaken me, that's not common to man. God is faithful. God is faithful. God is faithful - He will, with it, make a way of escape. Now I wonder what God's way is through this? I need to enquire: what is the way of behaving I've never seen before? How could I deal with this, in a way I've never done before? God, show me what my options are. There's always options, but sometimes we just don't know. We sometimes need to ask some people to help us, then take action and persist, and you will reap a different future. You'll reap a different future. Seems too simple, doesn't it?

See the problem is, we've lived our life, most of the time, conscious we're alone and powerless, and we don't like it, and we're resentful about it. But if we spend time with God meditating in scriptures like this one here, that the God who created the whole world is with me, He's a powerful God, He's with me and He's

helping me, and every time something comes, I can come near to him, and I can begin to face how to handle it - instead of: the first time your emotions come up, you just nut off and do what you've always done. You'll get what you always got. See, we must be responsible to change the way we do things. We are not victims! Whatever God calls us to do, we can do it through Jesus Christ, who empowers us to win in life! No more complaining. No more moaning. No more self pity. No more caves of depression. How many know those ones? People won't admit anything. I've been in those caves of depression for days on end, two little eyes at the back of the cave [laughter] looking out. No one will come in. Who would? Pair of fierce, angry eyes at the end of a cave - who's going to go in there? [Laughter]

The pastor didn't visit me! No, he doesn't like those eyes at the end of the cave either. [Laughter] No one does mate. It's time you came out of your - even when Elijah got like that, God said: what the heck are you doing here in the back of the cave Elijah? Come on out. Get out here. Get out here! He came out, you know what he did? He wrapped his mantel around him. God said: be quiet Elijah, I've got a mission for you. Break out of those old ways, and fulfil the mission I've got for you. See, that's what God's saying to you. Whenever these things come, don't roll over, don't just fall on the ground and roll over like a dead dog. Nothing is overtaking you! That's not common, there's someone else rolling over in the back there, but God is faithful. God is faithful.

Come on, let's just close our eyes right now. Father, we thank You right now in Jesus' name, we break our agreements with negativity, complaining, with despair and helplessness. We break our agreements with resentments and unbelief. Lord, we thank You, You are with us. You are with us, powerfully with us, to make us an overcoming people. Lord, give us grace to change, and Lord, keep those challenges rolling in. Keep them rolling in, so we can grow up and be bigger and stronger and more capable than we've ever been before, more persistent than we've ever been before, more fruitful than we've ever been before.

Listen, there may be someone here, and you're sitting here today, and you're not a Christian yet, you haven't given your life to Jesus Christ. Man, you're living in victim land really. It's a difficult life without God, all on your own, having to try and walk through life, not sure of what's in store, not sure of how you're going to get through, not sure of eternity and where you'll spend it. But friend, one decision, and one moment of time, to respond to Jesus Christ - He's your friend,

came into this world to die on the cross for your sin - one decision starts you on a journey of walking with God, a totally different journey than the one you've ever experienced before.

People in this church have already made that decision. They're on the journey, they're a little ahead of you, but friend, you start out that journey. Don't sit on your hands, don't hold back. Make the decision: I'll come to Jesus Christ. I'll begin to walk with God, have a different life than the one I've had, much different life, free of sin, free of accusation, able to walk with God. That'd be a great thing to do.

I wonder how many others, today as I was speaking, you realised you are in an agreement with helplessness, in some area of your life. You're in agreement with that whole thing that causes you to think: you have no power; and today you say: I need to break my agreement with that. Why don't you just raise your hand right now and say that's me, that's me. I've been behaving that way so often. When I'm in pressure, I kind of go into myself, and go into that cave, and feel bad and don't come out. Is that you? Is that you? Raise your hand quickly right now. We want to pray with you today, want to stand and agree: if you will make a decision to rebel against that thing, and begin to process what's happened in your life, and begin to choose differently, we want to stand in agreement today, that God will break the power of it.

Summary Notes

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‘The Blame Game – Part 2’
15 March 2009

Introduction:
· Genesis 1:26-28 - “God blessed them … subdue and have dominion…”
· Man loves challenges it is part of who we are, inside us. Man without challenges lives in defeat. We have the will o face, step up and act on them, to subdue things and to bring dominion.
· From the beginning we were made to step up and subdue. Adam and Eve started the blame game = shifts the responsibility to someone else.
· Blessed = 1288 = to speak words dull of life and empowerment into people.
· God empowered man with free will and the ability to overcome challenges in life.
· Subdue = 3533 = to conquer, overcome = there are challenges, opposition, difficulties.
· Dominion = 7278 = to prevail, reign over = you have freedom and creativity in extending God’s rule.
· After the fall – A culture of blame = making excuses and shifting the responsibility – “It’s not my fault”.
· Freedom and Responsibility work together – if you want Freedom, you must be Responsible.

E.g. child: as a child takes responsibility, so it will get freedom.
· God gives us Freedom to make choices. Requires Responsibility for those choices.
· As an adult it is your responsibility to freedom, you cannot do what you want and not get snared in it.

How People Learn to be 'Helpless':
Proverbs 23:7 - "As he thinks in his heart so is he". If you belief it, it is true.
· God wants to shift us from living in bandage and to explore what He has for you.
· Learned Helplessness/Powerless: Experiment by scientists with animals in situations of no choice = outcome was good.
- Animals leaned to think – not matter what it did – no good will come of it. They learn they can never win.
- Give up, quit trying, endured helpless/powerless condition even when opportunity provides it.
- They learn to be helpless – resigned "nothing I do will make any difference".
· Past Experiences can form Limiting Beliefs (beliefs that can limit us, have looked at life, what can I do? You get what you belief for) – limiting ways of thinking.
· E.g. "No matter what I do" - 'Can never please dad'
- 'Someone still gets angry'
- 'Never get approval'
- 'Always criticized'
· Result: People stop trying- they bury their emotion of resentment, anger, bitterness, hate
· People develop beliefs about themselves – 'I can't'. 'I am not good enough'.
· New Experiences surface Old Beliefs – limited thinking, feel helpless, no choice.
· E.g. 'No one told me'
'I talked to him – wouldn't listen'
'I tried talking to the husband, he wouldn't listen'
'I tried to talk to mum, she just got angry'
'I tried counseling, it didn't help me'
'I tried to get a date, no good ones out there'
'I am waiting for God to provide' 'I prayed and nothing happened'
· NB Note: in each situation: The person blames circumstances/people – they feel they have no choice! The feel helpless. They learn to strive, compete, drive or give up. They grieve and live in despair, loneliness and powerless.
· If you blame others it is not God's fault, you still have a choice. Your problem is your problem; no one can pray it away for you. Some people cover it with super religious thinking. You always have a choice! It may not be the one you prefer! May be it is a choice you have not thought of yet.
· New experiences bring junk to the surface so that you can deal with it on the inside.
· You choose what you do on a bad day, your emotions and your beliefs.
· Do you except honest feedback from other people on how you act/behave, on who you are? Do you go out and meet others?
· Some people cloak themselves with helplessness and God can not move in their lives.
· A day has turned out troublesome from what you expect. Take responsibility and ownership, break limiting beliefs and break out of it.
· Philippians 4:13 – "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me". You make a decision to give it a go.
· Strengthen = 1743 = endunamoo = to clothe with supernatural ability

3) God's Process of Change:
· Israel learned to be helpless (slaves) in Egypt. Israel = Church now. God delivered them. Jesus saved us. God have a great destiny. We need to grow and be wiling to accept it.
· Israel continued to limit God because they would not change – Psalm 78:41
· 1 Corinthians 10:6 - Israel is a lesson to learn or to repeat from – an example for US to learn from.

· What lessons did God want them to learn? 1 Corinthians 10:13
· Problems are common to every person, every one has problems.
· God is faithful, He will help you – You can rely on His Word and change. God started the work; surely He will finish the work. You can trust and rely on Him.
· You have the ability to handle every challenge of life.
· God always makes a way trough for us; you have to look for it. Walk through the problem, God will help you through it. New experiences comes you way to change you.
· An Overview of Change:
Exodus 6:6-8 - Changed them, the way they were thinking. He allowed them to experience challenges to choose to belief and trust God.
The same with us – we have an opportunity to think/belief and act differently. God wanted them to learn how to trust Him. We have the initiative to make things happen, to change out of the old will get you there. The challenge is to stop excuses and blaming, stop to be powerless and trust and belief in God.
· Stop blame = except facing the challenges and change. We disqualify ourselves from out destiny, purpose and blessing if we blame and make excuses.
EGYPT -> WILDERNESS -> CANAAN
Place of slavery Place of training/preparation Place of opportunity/conquest
Loneliness/Isolation Connection to the Lord Intimacy – walk in spirit
Powerless God is Powerful/Faithfull God is in me – Powerful
No choice Learn to choose to belief Walk by faith, daily choice
Blame/excuses Learn responsibility Take initiative- –subdue
(Unsaved) (Growing Believer) (Apostolic Believer)
· How did God work to change Israel?
- He created new experiences of difficulty – opportunity to make new choices.
- Deuteronomy 8:2-3 - "… the He might make you know that man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God".
- Israel's constant response: - think and act like slave
- Complain and blame – Exodus 16:2, 7-8
- We are not able – we can't – Numbers 13:30-32
- If you think, act and behave like a slave, you will be a slave even if you are free.
- If you think, act and behave to be free, hopeful in God, joy and faith in God, He is powerful and with me – I can do it.

4) How you can break Free of Learned Helplessness:
Romans 5:13 - "Now! May the God of all hope fill you with joy and peace in believing that you might abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit".
- God will provide the new experiences and help you grow through them.
Your responsibility:
1) Resolve Bitter Roots – change how you live your live. Admit this – leave pain, grieve and resentment behind, cannot move into the things that God has for you – give it to the Lord. :
· Hebrews 12:15 - "... looking carefully lest any of you should fall short of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble and by this many become defeated".
· Ask the Holy Spirit to uncover any hidden roots from experiences of being powerless.
- anger - resentment - self pity - grief - unbelief - hopelessness
- Bitter expectations (belief) = "nothing I can do ….", 'Hopeless"
· Repent from it and release it to the Lord.

2) Embrace New Challenges in a Different Way (Process):
· You have to change, you choose to change.

· We reap what we have sown = agree with old thoughts, powerless and then end up in a mess.
· God is committed to character not your comfort. He will bring things to melt you to bring out the bad so that you can choose to change the thinking.
· How can I deal with this if I have never seen it before? You will reap different future. Spent time with God, meditate on scripture, get near Him and hear how you can change.
· We are not victim; whatever we have to do we can do it through God with Faith. He is Mighty and Powerful.

OLD WAY:
Problem -> Feeling (Helpless) -> Think Powerless = Blame/excuse => Recap Consequences
NEW WAY:
Problem -> Identify feelings -> Challenge thinking = Assume responsibility => Recap Benefits

Mark 9:23 - “If you can believe … all things are possible to him that believes”.

* Ask the Lord for Wisdom * Look for Opportunities * Take action and Persist

Dealing with Failure (3 of 3)

Sun 22 Mar 2009 AM « Back to Top

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The origin of the Blame Game is failure. Blame places the responsibility for a failure/mistake on people or circumstances. We all fail, we need to admit that. Take responsibility and acknowledge failure so that God can lift you up, and you can change. Look at some of the glorious mistakes & failures recorded in the Bible, then discover powerful keys for handling our failures and moving on.



I want to just conclude this series I've been doing on the Blame Game. How many are much more aware of people blaming? [Laughter] Man, isn't it everywhere! It's not my fault. It's not my fault, and someone else did it, it's someone else is responsible to fix it, it's always out there, someone else's fault. It's the people, it's the circumstances, it's where I've come from, it's my family, it's the government, it's New Zealand, it's the world. Whatever it is, it's always out there. If it's out there, you can't do anything, but if you actually own up, you can actually do something, if you take ownership. In this next season in the year, we're going to be looking at what it means to be apostolic people, and you'll find to be an apostolic person means you have taken a hold in your heart, that you have an assignment from God, and you will assume responsibility to fulfil your assignment in the community. So if you buy in to the blame game, you can never be what God called you to be. You have to recognise that buying into the blame game - by that I mean that we're blaming someone else for problems, and believing someone else is going to have to fix it up. When you buy into that, you remain a victim, you remain powerless, you cannot be part of the answer that God wants us to be. We have to absolutely reject the blame game, in every form, and say: I am going to be part of the answer, I'm going to be part of the solution.

So what I want to do today is, I want to share another aspect of the blame game. I'm going to go back to where it started, and isn't it amazing, it started when someone failed. The blame game, passing the buck. That's what it's called here, pass the buck you know? I liked it with Barack Obama. I liked it when he said: well the buck stops here! [Yeah.] I like that. That's good leadership, and that's the indications of a man who's going to do something about things. I like that.

He said: something went wrong. He said: it's my responsibility, I'll work on it to make it right. That's good stuff. That's a man who's not playing the victim. It's a man who stood up and said he's going to be part of the solution. You want to see these kinds of things. It's like a new thing happening, instead of blaming everyone else for the problems. So we're going to look at the blame game, and what I want to look at today is: dealing with failure. Is there anyone here who hasn't failed? I'd just like to meet them and shake their hand, it'd be quite nice actually. [Laughter] Sort of was hoping I might find someone here. Often in churches there's sort of this thing that you can't fail, because you're a Christian or something. Where did they get that idea? I just asked: who didn't fail; everyone here failed see, including me. See, everyone failed. Everyone makes mistakes. The Bible says: the steps of a good man - and we're good men and women, because God has made us good. Our goodness is because God has put goodness in us, He's in us. So the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, though he fall, though he fall. Well he won't stay down, he'll get up, because the Lord lifts him up. I like that.

So it doesn't matter how much you fall, if you reach out to God, He'll get you back up again. So failure for a Christian, well that's just a temporary inconvenience, and a great opportunity to learn. There's one thing sure, you can rely on God to get you back up again see? Says the righteous man, though he falls seven times - in other words, he keeps falling over - God will lift him up again. God always loves to lift people up again, and it's interesting that when you get into a church environment, there's this whole fear of failing seems to come round people. Not only that, there's with it a religious Pharisaic spirit, that judges people for failing, as though we hadn't failed. I don't know, but when we just took communion there, my understanding of communion is ain't no way to get into heaven, until you bow the knee and admit you've failed. The rich man, the poor man, the wealthy man, it won't matter who they are, we all come into heaven the same way. You bow the knee to Jesus Christ, and you admit: I failed. [Laughs] Yes, you're going to have to admit something, got to own up, and that someone took responsibility for the failure. When you acknowledge your failure, and reach out and take responsibility to believe, then what will happen is, God can lift you up and make you change, so that's a great thing to know.

Always need to be reminded in church, everyone here makes mistakes, fails, does things wrong and imperfectly, every day. Well that's not something to be

worried about is it? We do a lot of good things as well. Anyway let's go into this. I want to show something. What I love about the Bible is it's full of glorious mistakes and failures, absolute major mistakes. Look at this in Genesis 3:7-13. Let's see where the blame game started, and you notice in verses 7-13: the eyes of them both were opened. They knew they were naked. They sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves coverings. That's Adam and Eve. They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden, so they hid themselves. Isn't it interesting, when you know something's wrong, you want to avoid church, avoid fellowship, avoid meetings, anything to avoid feeling uncomfortable, and being reminded you've got something bad going on in your life?

People think: well the only way I can come to God, is if I get my life right. Well that's ridiculous. You come to God because your life isn't right. He accepts you like you are, and says: I'll help you change. You've got to get a handle on this kind of stuff. So notice here: they went and they hid; so hiding, when people are hiding, it means they've got something to be hiding about. They're guilty, and they've failed. It says: they heard the sound of the Lord God, and they hid themselves; and the Lord called to Adam and said: hey, where are you? I like this. God talks real simple. Notice what He says: Where are you? Who told you? Did you eat the fruit of the tree? He just nailed him with three questions. God asked questions, meaning He knows the answers, He's about to nail you, and so what did God say? He said hey, where are you? He said: well I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, I hid myself. Who told you you were naked? Did you eat the fruit of the tree? Now look at this, this is classic. You've got to get this line here. [Laughter] And this is what the man said - I love this line: The woman! [Laughter] See, passed the blame immediately. Now I love this line, the first is the woman. The woman, who You gave to be with me! None of my idea, it's all Your idea You know. You gave her to me to be with me, now what a nuisance that's turned out to be! [Laughter]

He's conveniently overlooked all the wonderful evenings they had together. [Laughter] Forgotten all about that - no, no, no. You, Your idea. I never thought a woman. I named animals, but I didn't think of women. You thought up women. [Laughter] It's all Your fault. Now the problem is, of course, in doing that, he missed his opportunity to have a massive learning experience and grow, and we've all suffered because he did that. You want to really take a note, that the moment you start blaming, you are disempowered, and you reap consequences,

and you don't learn a thing. You're going to have to repeat the same thing again. The moment you start blaming, you then - notice when he blamed, God stopped talking. The moment you blame, you have absolved yourself from responsibilities, there's nothing left, than you bear the pain. You face the consequences, so blame game's not a good thing. But notice that the blame thing emerged whenever there was failure.

They say death and taxes are certain in life aren't they? Yeah, absolutely certain you'll die, and you're also certain there's taxes, but also certain there's failure. Failure is inevitable. Failure comes to us day by day. We have mistakes, things go wrong, things don't work out, things we try didn't work out, and we have some measures of success, and we also have failures. It's just part of being in this world, things don't always work out. Notice what it says in 1 John 1:10; If we say we haven't sinned, if we say we have no failures - then we're lying. So when we cannot admit to ourself, that actually we do make mistakes, we do things wrong, and we do it regularly; if we can't say that, then the one that's being deceived, is ourselves. No one else is being deceived by that, so you notice if we say that, then what we're doing is making God a liar, because He says: everyone has sinned. So we have to realise that everyone fails sometime, but what you do from it can be a learning experience, or you can just keep repeating the same failure.

If you keep repeating the same failure, inevitably you weren't learning, and you were blaming, and so we've got to not get into the blame game, so we can actually deal with our mistakes honestly, because they are going to come. The Bible abounds in them. I love this. I like to look in the Bible, and the Bible's glorious, and it doesn't just tell you all the good things God did, and the people He used. It tells you the terrible things that people did. It just gets all their mistakes out. Imagine being one of these great men in the Bible, and not only did the Bible record all your good stuff, it also records your absolutely magnificent failures - for thousands upon thousands of people, in every generation, to read about, so they could learn not to do what you did. Isn't that glorious? In 1 Corinthians 10, of the people of Israel it said: everything that was written - Verse 6 - was written for our warning. In other words, two million people made about 10 mistakes, and it was written down what happened to them, so we didn't do the same thing. So mistakes are great opportunities to learn, and they're inevitable.

So Abraham - Abraham's a wonderful man. Abraham lied about his wife, said: oh, it's my sister. He weaselled out, and in the end he got into a whole heap of trouble. Isaac lied about his wife too. We have Jacob, well he deceived his father. When his father was old and blind, you know what Jacob did? He put on an animal skin, and he came near him, and pretended to be his brother, so he could get the blessing. He deceived his father - poor blind old dad, about to pass out of this life, and he goes up and deceives him, gets him to put his hand on the skin that's on him, so he gets fooled into thinking that this must be Esau, the hairy one [laughter], instead of the lovely, sweet boy that was mummy's boy you know, soft hands and all that kind of stuff see? What a thing to do, deceive his dad. What about Moses? Moses was a great man with plenty of things going for him and a great call of God, and he murdered someone, then got chased out of town, and there was a reward poster put on him, capture him dead or alive. He's a murderer. That's not a really good way to start your ministry, is it?

And what about Rahab? Well Rahab, she was a prostitute. Just think about that for a little bit - not too long, but just [laughter] think about that a little bit. [Laughter] It's not a good way to start in the things of God, is it? Rahab had a call of God on her life, but she had a - not a very nice start. I wonder if we'd make her even welcome here? Well Jesus made her welcome, Bible makes her welcome. Think about this. Gideon, well Gideon was full of fear. When God starts talking to him, he argues and argues and argues, so full of fear and hiding, and he has to get over and over these kinds of signs and things. What about Barak? There's a guy there called Barak in the Bible, and he was so lacking in courage, he asked a woman to give him direction what to do. It's true, and she said: okay, I will. [Laughter] Okay, I will, and you won't get the glory and the honour, because you didn't have the courage to stand up and lead properly. That's what the Bible says. It's written down too, isn't that nice aye? We can talk about it today, about that wimpy man [laughs] who didn't get the honour. It went to someone else see. Think about that.

What about Samson? When you think about Samson, you always think about Delilah, isn't that right? [Yeah.] We think about what Samson did. Now what an amazing failure - goes there and stays a night with a prostitute, and then the enemy try to get him. He tears the gates of the city off, and then he doesn't learn his lesson. He goes out and gets involved with this woman there, and ends up getting a hair cut, an expensive hair cut, and his eyes put out - I mean what

amazing failure. There you are, and you're just like a donkey, just driving the grain out you know? This is a major failure. This is really messing your life up. Interesting isn't it, all these people. Here's another one, Jephthah. Well Jephthah had a great start didn't he? His father went off and had sexual relationships with a prostitute, and that's how he started off, so his whole life was a mistake starting off. No one wanted him, everyone hated him, drove him out of town as a reject, and he didn't exactly do too well himself. He made some foolish rash vows.

It's all written in the Bible, all these people that made these glorious mistakes, magnificent failures. Most churches would write them off, say: well we couldn't do anything with that person. Interesting though, that the Bible lists each of those people I named as a man or woman of faith, and does not record their failure in the New Testament at all. It just says: by faith, these people did great things. Now did God overlook their failure? No, He didn't overlook their failure, but He looked above their failure, and beyond their failure, to what they were destined to be, and His focus was on their destiny, not their failures. There's no mention of Delilah in the New Testament, yet when you think Samson, you always think Delilah, but the Holy Spirit ignores here completely, doesn't even mention her in the chapter on faith. It doesn't mention any of these errors, these glaring errors. It doesn't mention them. Why? Because they're under the grace of God; each of these people have found forgiveness, each of these people have walked into the destiny, and God says: I really like these people, because in their day, yeah, they had mistakes, yeah, they made failures, and they were costly failures - but they're men and women of faith. That's a Biblical perspective you see, so failures are never fatal for us.

We've got to see that God doesn't overlook our failures. In fact actually your failures have huge consequences, for example Samson's failure, he lost his eyesight, and then he ended up in chains, lost his anointing, his eyesight and his ministry, ended up just grinding out like a donkey. But when he repented, God restored to him, not his eyesight, but restored to him his strength, and he was able to do one last great feat. So failure, if we handle it right, is never the end for us. It's just the beginning of a new season in our life, and if we don't get a grip on that, the problem is, that within a church environment, people feel they can't fail, and can't make mistakes. I hate being in an environment where I can't make mistakes, like I've got to be perfect or something. Perfectionism is an unrealistic expectation that everything will be perfect, or there'll be no mistakes, and

everything will be done just right.

Perfectionism is rooted in the fear of failure, and in pride, and we don't need perfectionism. We want to do things well, but not perfectionism. Perfectionism is intolerant of people making mistakes, as though we didn't make them ourselves. That's very hurtful, because it judges, and makes it very difficult for anyone to rise up, and move on, and the church is called to be an environment where everyone is encouraged to take risks. With risks, there's going to be failures. God calls us, as a people of faith, to take some risks, and so when we take a risk, there's going to be some things go wrong, that's for sure. The best way to fall out of your destiny, is to just not take any risks at all, play it safe - and you have a boring life, a religious life, and you cannot fulfil your destiny, because your destiny requires faith. Without faith, you cannot please God, and faith is going to take some risks. Sometimes people really blew it on the way to taking risks, and you've got to learn how to deal with it. Isn't that true?

So we don't want to be perfectionists, nor do we want to have a spirit of perfectionism, a critical spirit, that the moment people have made a mistake, they seize on it, pounce on it, and implicit in it is a judgement against the person: YOU are unacceptable, because you failed. That implies: I don't fail. The reality is: all fail, it's just their one was visible, and we all saw it, yours wasn't - but God saw it, and it's still very real. So when we learn how to handle failure properly, we can come into a place of understanding the grace of God. The grace of God abounds where there's failure. Where sin abounds, failure abounds, grace even more abounds. So one thing's absolutely certain, if I find someone in a huge mess, and there's huge failures all round their life, the grace of God is far more abundant, and it's able to come in and shift them out of it, but they've got to handle the failure right. You and I can help people handle their failures, or we can actually keep them locked in their failure. We can take the side of Jesus Christ, who came to provide an answer for failures; or we can take the side of the devil, and be his advocate, and speak accusations against failures. There's no middle ground.

You are either joined to the Saviour, who came to save people out of their failures; or you're joined to the devil, who accuses people of their failures. There's no middle ground anywhere, and I want to always be connected to Jesus, giving hope that in the midst of failure, there's always grace, there's always a hope, there's always a future. You can always get up and get going again. Isn't

that true? The church is to be a community of grace. The Bible says: the law came by Moses; in other words, there's laws: do this, or you didn't do it, ooh! See, judgement came by the law; but it says: grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. So it doesn't mean that we're to overlook failures and mistakes; truth means we face them, but grace means there's an empowerment to get up out of it again. You've got to hold the two together. You and I can be a great ministry of blessing, to help people out of their failures; or we can actually hold them in them, and as a church community we have to, if we're going to grow in our influence in the community, we have to step up in being able to handle our own personal failures, and the failures of others around us, and the failures of people in the community.

Most times, the churches can do nothing else except criticise and complain what's going wrong. There is no solution in that. We need to actually understand that the answer is, not to overlook it, but to come with a hope, and with a message, and with faith, and will the possibility that something better could happen - people of vision and faith. So we have to learn to deal with failure. How are we going to deal with failure? So let's have a look at one classic one. I love this glorious one of David's. Now how many know King David was a man after the heart of God? You know David was a man after the heart of God, a great man; so Jesus was called the Son of David. So Jesus didn't mind being connected to David, the one who committed murder and adultery and blah blah blah, because David was a man who sought the heart of God, and got a vision for what he could become; but David made heaps of mistakes on the way, many mistakes, and the mistakes weren't little ones. When he made a mistake, thousands of people died. How do you live with that at night time? That's a big mistake.

When he counted all the numbers of Israel, and broke the law in doing so, then there was judgement came on Israel, and there were thousands died because he counted the soldiers. No wonder he had a heart that was very repentant, very soft, very open to the Lord. In 1 Chronicles 13, the Bible tells us, this a glorious, spectacular failure. This is where he really wanted to do something public, and something great, and something - you know, be really just a significant key note of his being made the king; because under Saul's reign, the ark of God, there was no presence of God, there was no ark of God. So what happened was, under Saul's reign, there was no move of God; so his desire was to bring back the ark

of God. So he got the whole country together, he got the trumpeters, he got the musicians, he got everything all out, and they put the cart on an ox. They put the ark on a cart drawn by oxen, and they went down the road and everyone was out - talk about public. This failure was not a hidden failure, and they're going there down the road, the trumpets are playing and everything. David's dancing and shouting, and this is all a new thing.

In the middle of it, the oxen stumbled, someone touches it, and the guy is smitten dead, just like that. I don't know, I'd love to see what happened, whether a bolt of lightning came down and fried him on the spot! Whoa! Everyone, look at that thing. Now who's going to get the blame for messing this up? David! Now how do you overcome that? It says: David was very angry. He's looked forward to this. He's organised the whole nation to do this public thing, and bringing the ark back, and then God smites the man down right in the middle of it, and ruins the whole parade. Everyone goes skulking back to their home, and instead of it being a great thing, the ark didn't even quite make it to Jerusalem. It's now stuck in someone's house - a total, major, public spectacle failure. So what did David do? Well, you couldn't hide it, because it was all public, but he wasn't going to be deterred by it. What he did was he went and he sought the Lord, and it tells us in 1 Chronicles 15, that God showed him where he went wrong, and he re-went and reset the whole thing up again.

Now you can imagine the anticipation of that day. He's got the trumpeters there, he's got everyone out, got everything going again, and there it is - but he said this: We made a mistake, we didn't do it God's way last time. We were trying our best, and we meant well, but we just didn't do it right. He said: God showed me what to do. This time it was a success, so he learned from his failure, but what a glorious failure. What a glorious failure, total failure in front of the whole country. Don't you just love that? Not a little quiet one somewhere, that you can hide you know? If at first you don't succeed, destroy all evidence you tried, you know? He learnt from his experience. So how are we going to deal with failure? So failures are either a stepping stone to grow, or they're going to really wound you, and then it'll make you more and more reluctant to step out, so here's a few simple keys for doing. Number one, you need to own the failure. If you've made a mistake, had a failure in your life, something's gone wrong, you just have to take ownership of it. That's completely opposite of blame shifting; blaming, you're trying to find someone else to blame for our mistake.

The Bible says: if we cover our sin or mistakes or failures, we will not prosper. Now what's going on in many lives here, is that there's a covering of things that are wrong. When you cover things that are wrong, notice you can't progress. You can't advance, you can't go forward. If you confess them, and then turn away from them, you always experience mercy, and the grace of God to get you growing; but the first step is to stop covering, and stop concealing, and actually face it. So we've got to call it what it is. You've got to say: I failed. I messed up, really I messed up. That's a hard thing to say. You know what, it's hard for men to say. They have a choking fit when they try and say it: I was wrong. I was wrong. It's very hard for a man to say that. You just wait and see if you next hear a man say: I was wrong, very hard to say it. It's pride of course, but you have to admit it. I was wrong, I made a mistake, I got it wrong, I failed. I did it wrong. If you just own up - once you've said: I made a mistake, you've got ownership. Now you can do something to fix it up.

Notice that when Saul makes a mistake, twice he does the same thing: Ooh, aah, well, the circumstances, all these Philistines were gathered against me, and the people were all leaving, and you didn't come in the time. Notice, no responsibility for doing something wrong, and the prophet said: you've really done foolishly. You read it in 1 Samuel 13 and he says: you could have been the king, but now you're going to lose your kingdom, because you can't handle being responsible. Next time he did something silly he got another chance, he got a second chance. Next time he did the same thing, still did it wrong, but blamed everyone else, and then when it came to actually saying: I've sinned, and made a mistake, he wasn't very sincere. He just said: aah listen, by the way can you just stand with me when we're doing the offering, so everyone sees everything's okay between us? His whole manner about it is: I just want to look good. There was no ownership of the failure; whereas David always owned his failures, just came straight up and said: man, I really blew it. I'm sorry.

So the thing is, humility means you're just actually willing to own up: I made the mistake, it was wrong. I did wrong, I spoke wrong, and I'm going to own it. Now if I own it, I've got the power to change it, and the power to learn from it. If I blame, I can't do anything. The second thing, you need to evaluate your failure, need to have a look at it. What actually did I do wrong? Where did it go wrong? Usually one of the things I look at it is how I feel. Sometimes you feel really ashamed, sometimes you feel really guilty, sometimes you really feel like

discouraged and disheartened. Sometimes you feel like you're very lacking in skill and ability. You have all kinds of feelings go on when you fail, but if you identify the feelings, you can often understand what you really believe about failure in your heart. So while we all will accept in a church meeting that God forgives sin, actually we wrestle with our personal struggles, because we believe something else; and so it helps just to identify what you feel when you fail: What's going on in my heart? And then how do I respond normally, when my failure is obvious? How do I respond? Now this is an interesting one when you ask.

So when you look at it, you see Adam just covered it up. Usiah, he made a mistake. He just got angry and bullied everyone. Elijah, well Elijah just withdrew, got depressed, withdrew and hid in a cave. Moses, he just ran away, all kinds of things that people did. Peter, Peter wept bitterly, just had a great howly-bag. He went out and cried, see? It's interesting in the Bible, it tells you what they did when they failed; and then of course there's Judas who went out and hanged himself. You're not encouraged to repeat his failure [laughter] by any means. [Laughs] Bit permanent wasn't it - but what do you do? What do you do when you've made a mistake, or done something wrong? Do you cover it and conceal it, try and hide it, minimise it, blame, shift, deny - what do you do when something's gone wrong? Well we're just honest and say: oh, I really messed that up. That's so hard for Christians to say: I really messed that up, but you know, if we could just say: I really messed that up, then you know the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, though he fall, the Lord will uphold him.

So now I've owned up, at least now I've got God on my side to help me - but if I won't own up, then God's not on my side to help me. He's just going to let me experience some bad consequences now, and get very embarrassed. So what is it you do? What do you do when something goes wrong? When someone points it out, do you get really defensive and angry and react, and try and shut it down, or blame and minimise? What do you do? Well it tells you something about yourself, so just have a think what you do next time someone points out something wrong; evaluate what you felt and what you did. Then you'll see what's going on in your life, whether you are growing, and able to take on greater challenges of faith. If we won't take ownership of where we did go wrong, we fail to learn, and learning is God's goal for us. He has got the remarkable ability to take any situation we've been through, and use it to get us

where He wants us to get.

That's the amazing thing about God. It doesn't matter how you blew it, doesn't matter what went wrong, God can take your mistake and failure. Yes, you may have pain, and some inconvenience, and some discomfort, and some reaping for many, many years, but He can still turn it around, and use it to get you where He always wanted you to go. That's the one wonderful thing about Him; but He can only do it if you'll come clean, admit it and bring it out in the open, and we have to do that. So what do you do? Then the thing is, you've got to learn from your failure; what can I learn about myself? What can I learn? Where did I go wrong? What did I do right? What did I do wrong? What can I learn from it? What can I do better? Where have I messed up? I wonder why I messed up? Why did I do that? Do I do that all the time? You just have to start to ask some things about what can I learn, and you'll be surprised what you can learn, if you think about where you went wrong - and surprised the things you can learn.

The Bible's very clear, Proverbs 24 it tells us, this man looked, and he saw this guy who'd made mistakes. He said: I looked, and I observed, and I learnt, so we can learn from other's failures, we can learn from our own. The Bible for example is full of people who failed; why don't you go find out how and why they failed, so you don't make the same mistakes, learn from them. Another thing we need to do if we fail is, we need to actually receive forgiveness. Proverbs 28 again it tells us in Verse 18: if we confess and forsake, then we shall find or receive mercy; so we need to learn to receive forgiveness. Now the problem to receive forgiveness, it starts off you've got to actually come up front, and talk about your problem to God. You've got to talk to Him. Most people, about the best they come up with is: I'm sorry God. Well that's a start, but you know, it's helpful if you actually talk about what you're sorry about. Most people when they say: I'm sorry, what they really mean is: blow, I got caught out. [Laughter] I'm sorry! That's all they mean. I'm sorry. That's why they weep. I'm sorry. Yeah, we're all sorry too, but it doesn't mean to say that there's going to be a change.

So really it is: I've really done wrong, this is what I did wrong, and this is how grieved You must be, and I so grieve that I have injured our relationship by what I did. Now that's more like it, because true sorrow not only takes responsibility for the event, or the thing that happened. It acknowledges the grief and damage to the relationship, and as soon as you acknowledge damage to the relationship,

you're positioned then, for forgiveness to come. The Bible says: don't grieve the Holy Spirit. Oh, that means I can grieve Him. Did you ever think when you sinned, instead of just saying: sorry God; actually starting to also take time to think: Holy Spirit, I took You to things I never really wanted You to go to. I've taken You places which have grieved and wounded You. Forgive me for grieving You. Holy Spirit, arise within me and fill me again with all Your goodness and holiness. Become conscious of the spirit of God, and what we've done. He is grieved by some things. And of course we have to talk to other people. Now this is the hardest thing, is how to make a good apology.

Most people say: oh sorry; and implied in that is: you've got to forgive me now. I don't think I will, I don't feel you're sorry. You see, true sorrow has repentance, and it actually acknowledges the relationship was damaged. If you don't acknowledge the relationship was damaged, you can never get proper forgiveness and release to take place. Suppose you did something, you damaged someone's property, or suppose you stole something from someone, then you come and admit you stole it, and return it. Now you actually haven't got back to where you were before, because the person now doesn't trust you; because they haven't heard in that apology, what they were looking for. You hurt me. I trusted you, and you let down my trust. You understand that a real good apology will always acknowledge how the person has been affected, and be open for the person to be able to even share how it's affected them.

I've found often in Christians, we want to apologise and smooth everything over, without actually understanding how the person was hurt; so sometimes in working it out with someone, you've got to stop and listen, find out how do they feel, how did this affect them. We don't want to do that, but when you do it, the person feels like: now you've understood me. Then you now are apologising, not for just the action, but for taking the relationship for granted, and wounding the person, and you can learn from that. Boy, you can really learn from that. It's looking good, isn't it aye? Well you're getting all quiet now.

Well anyway the last one is very simple, we need to move on, please move on. [Laughter] Forget the failures, we're going to move on; and the moving on, you actually have to just progress with your life; and there's two ways you progress with your life of course, if you've learnt from it. One is sometimes, you've just got to keep trying, and persevere until we do get the breakthrough; and the second thing, sometimes we need to do is admit: well actually, that's the end of

it. So if you've blown up a relationship, and the relationship is over, well it's over. Just grieve, and have a funeral, and grieve over it and goodbye, you know? We've got to get over it. See sometimes you actually have to acknowledge that it'll never be the same again, and you have to let go, and that's like having a funeral. There's something died, so I grieve over it, weep over it but I can't do anything about it, now I do move on with my life, after I've grieved. So failures in life, some are little, some are big, but they all have the same possibility of teaching us something. It's better if we learn from our little failures, than have massive ones, and our life's in turmoil for a long time.

How am I going to learn? First of all just acknowledge it's there, take ownership of the thing, how does it affect me, how I feel, how am I responding in this thing, what do I need to learn from God in this matter? What do I have to put right, and now: how can I move on? It's really quite simple, and you know, that's the heart of the gospel, that everyone is messed up, and someone did something to get it right. His name is Jesus Christ. He died on the cross. He suffered immensely, because the innocent always suffer, when someone else sins. And so He suffered, He took the pain on the cross, so you and I, if we would repent and have a heart towards God to trust Him, then He says: I've dismissed the matter, you've got a fresh start. What a great thing.

There may be some of you here need a fresh start in your life. Maybe you need a fresh start in your life. The first step to getting a fresh start in your life is to admit the failure, and the mistakes you've made, and to bring them to the Lord, and say: Lord, will You forgive me? I really have done so many things that have messed up my life and others. Lord, I thank You on the cross You died. I receive Your forgiveness today, and receive Your love and grace, and I think You're going to help me learn from this.

Summary Notes

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Introduction:
· What it means to be an Apostolic people is to recognize the assignment God has.
· Reject the blame game in full and change knowing that you can do something in life.
· In the church the idea was created that Christians cannot fail.
· The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. Every time he fails God gets him back up again.
· God always lifts people up again.

· We all fail, we need to admit that. Take responsibility and acknowledge failure so that God can lift you up and you can change.
· The Bible is full of glorious mistakes and failures.

The Origin of the Blame Game = Failure:
· You need to come to God because your life isn't right.
· God called Adam and asked 3 questions: 'Where are you?', "Who told you that you were naked?', 'Did you eat of the fruit of the tree?'
· Genesis 3:7-13 - "The woman who you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I ate".
· Blame = to place the responsibility for a failure, mistake on people or circumstances.
· Adam - refused to assume responsibility for his failure.
- He blamed Eve and he blamed God.
- He missed an experience/opportunity to grow.
- When he blamed, God stopped talking.
- He didn't take responsibility and had to face the consequenses.
· When Adam refused to take responsibility for his failure he experienced full consequences of it.
· Blaming may make you feel better (not responsible) but it does not solve the problem.
· We live in a blame Culture – people fail to assume responsibility.
· The path to empowerment = take responsibility to make things better.

Failures and Mistakes are Certain:
· 1 John 1:10 - "If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His trust is not in us".
· Two things are certain in life – death and failure/mistakes.
· What ever you are good at now you probably failed the 1st time you tried it.
· Every person fails at some time – you must learn to benefit from mistakes and failures.
· The Bible abounds in Failures of People, e.g.:
· Abraham lied about his wife
· Isaac lied about his wife
· Jacob deceived his father
· Moses murdered a man
· Rahab was a prostitute
· Gidean was full of fear
· Barak lacked courage
· Samson got involved with Delilah
· Jepthah – his mother was a prostitute and he made a foolish vow.
· Yet, in spite of the mistakes the Holy Spirit calls them "Men of Faith" – Hebrews 11
· God sees people not in the light of their mistakes but in the light of their destiny and their response.
· He does not overlook failures but He does not focus on them – He imparts Grace.
· What matters is how people respond! What do you do with your failures?
· We deceive ourselves if we think we cannot fail, we'll say that God is a liar.
· Deal with mistakes honestly.
· There are magnificent failures and glorious mistake all through the Bible.
· God looked above their failures and each of these people was men and woman of faith and they owned their mistakes.
· Failure = if we handle it right it is a start of a new opportunity.
· With risks will be failure, something could go wrong. We cannot fulfill our destiny if we don't take any risks.
· Destiny requires faith, and faith requires taking risks.
· Many people think – "you are unacceptable because you have failed".
· Grace abounds with failure – Handle failure right. We can either help people with a failure mentality in

this or we can keep them in their failure by accusations.
· We can either connect to them with Jesus Christ or we can accuse them like Satan.
· Grace = empowerment to get out. Step up and own failures. Come with a massage of hope, faith and that something positive can happen.

Key to Dealing with Failures:
a) Example – David: 1 Chronicles 13:1-14
· David's failure was a public spectacle – seen by the whole nation.
· He made many mistakes, sometimes thousands died.
· God showed him where he went wrong, but David acknowledged his mistakes and learned from his failures.
· Note: David's responses:
(1) Anger - 1 Chronicles 13:11
(2) Learned from his experiences – 1 Chronicles 15:11-13
· David did not allow his failures to hold him back from his dream.
· He learned from his failure and became successful.
· All failures/mistakes can be stepping stones to growth if we respond well!

b) Keys to Dealing with Failures:
(1) Own Your Failures – Proverbs 28:18
· Put your arms around it, take it home and become responsible for it.
· If we cover our failures/mistakes we cannot progress or move forward.
· Call it what it is: 'I failed', 'I made a mistake', 'I was wrong', 'I messed up' – own your mistakes.
· Pride = I just want to look good.
· Genesis 3:11 - "Adam blamed Eve and God.
· 1 Samuel 13:11-12 - Saul blamed people, circumstances and God. He just wanted to look good.
· 2 Samuel 12:13 - David: 'I have sinned against the Lord'.
· Don't hide from failure – embrace it and learn from it.
· Humility – seeing life from Gods point of view.
· Perfectionism – controlling alert for failures, weaknesses, imperfections – unacceptable.
Image conscious – wants to look good at all costs e.g. Saul – 1 Samuel 15:24-25
· Perfectionism = birthed out of failure and pride, and is intolerant of people making mistakes.
· People who own their mistakes are much easier people to relate to.

(2) Evaluate Your Failures – Proverbs 2:2
a) Your Feelings?
· Disappointment? Discouragement? Loss of Hope? Shame? Guilt? Inferior? Ashamed? Disheartened?
· What is going on in your heart?
b) Your Responses?
· How do you respond when you fail? What pattern?
· Bible examples:
- Adam = covered and blamed – Genesis 3:7-11
- Uzziah = got angry, bullied – 2 Chronicles 26:19
- Elijah = depressed, withdraw – 1 Kings 19:4-9
- Moses = ran away – Exodus 3:15
- Peter = wept – Luke 22:62
- Judas = hanged himself – Matthew 27:5
· What do you do? = angry? Blame self? Blame others? Give up? Distract? Deny? Make excuses? Avoid it? Try to compensate by pointing out an area of strength.

· It is hard for Christians to own up to their mistakes. What do you do? Are you growing and taking on new challenges in faith?
· God can take a mistake/failure to turn you around to get you to your destiny and purpose.

(3) Learn from Your Failures – Proverbs 24:30-34
· Use your failure to learn and gain wisdom.
· Questions that could be asked to improve or prevent failure!
What did I do wrong? What did I do right?
What have I missed? What choices did I have?
What weaknesses? What can I learn?
What new skills? What support have I got?

(4) Receive Forgiveness – Proverbs 28:18
· The devil is an accuser – constantly eroding confidence by accusing – Revelation 12:10
· Whatever is condemned/judged gets worse.
· Forgiveness and grace release you to start again.
· To Receive Forgiveness: You must talk to God – honesty – ask forgiveness
You must talk to people – open up – apologize
- no accusations
- seek forgiveness
· Talk to God about your problem, just to say 'I'm sorry' is not good enough.
· Just 'I'm sorry" = 'blow, I got caught out'.
· Tell Him about it and how grieved you are about injuring the relationship. The Holy Spirit was grieved too - damage to the relationship. 'Forgive me for grieving the Holy Spirit'.
· People = 'I am sorry' is not always good enough. Acknowledge how the relationship was damaged.
· A good meaningful apology acknowledges and understands how a person was hurt.

(5) Move on – Hebrews 10:35-36
a) Go again:
· All great accomplishments require persistence e.g. Moses kept confronting Pharaoh until he got a breakthrough.

b) Have a Funeral – something died, grieve over it, let it go.
· Sometimes you have to admit that something has ended e.g. relationship.
· Genesis 19:26 - Lots wife kept looking back and turned to salt.
· Failure or loss must be grieved over like burying a body.
· God is able to bring good out of all things - Romans 8:28
· Trust Him; Take the first step to a fresh start.
· It is better to learn from little failures by dealing with them, by the time we need to deal with big failures we would know how to.

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