

Understanding The Dynamic 'What You Hate...'

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I remember decades ago hearing a political commentator make the counter-intuitive observation that whenever a harsh dictatorship is overthrown in a country, it is nearly always replaced by a worse, more repressive government. That took me completely by surprise, but he cited a few compelling examples including Iran's transition from the secular dictatorship of the Shah to the religious dictatorship of Ayatollah Khomeini, as well as Nicaragua's move from the dictatorship of the rich to the dictatorship of the poor with the Sandinistas at the head. In both examples, the revolutionaries promised reforms and more responsive government, but in many ways became very much like the group they replaced, delivering as much or more repression as responsiveness. Although the former 'in' group was replaced by the former 'out' group, the qualities and characteristics of government didn't change much.

South Africa, on the other hand, has not fallen into this pattern because they emphasized and encouraged real forgiveness of the injustices of the past, although that is apparently unraveling now as that forgiveness has not been as fully and completely extended as it needs to be to avoid the dynamics of Nicaragua and Iran. This compelling observation, that revolutionaries are often as bad or worse oppressors than the predecessors they overthrew were used to confuse me – for decades I never understood why that was, but no more.

Shortly after the new millennia began, God began to train me in Transformation Ministry – in how He works to “set the captives free and heal the brokenhearted,” Isaiah 61:1. Having worked in this ministry now for 5 years and put well over a hundred people through it, I now understand how these things can happen, as I began to see it happen over and over and over again in the lives of people I ministered to. In fact, I would say this is perhaps the #2 most powerful form of bondage I've seen in people's lives (after unforgiveness). I began to see it so often in the lives of people I ministered to that I finally began to see it in God's Word as well. It was then that God gave me an insight so powerful it literally is possible to explain large segments of people's lives just by this one phrase – I kid you not!

The classic example in the Bible I saw this dynamic at work in was Peter's life. In Matthew 26:33-35, as Jesus was explaining to His disciples that He would soon be betrayed and put to death, Peter in his pride, anger and fear makes what has come to be known as an inner vow, in fact he makes it twice. “‘Even if everyone falls away on account of You, I never will...Even if I have to die with You, I will never disown you.’ And all the other disciples *vowed* the same.” You know the rest of the story – Peter's disavowal is well known as is the other disciples' falling away from Jesus, even though they all vowed they never would. Sobering. Then the Lord brought me to Romans 7:15 where Paul wrote, “What I want to do, I do not do, but what I *hate*, I do.” There was a large clue that helped me understand the dynamics of inner vows.

Basically, there are two forces at work here, one a 'secular/psychological' one and the other a spiritual truth. The 'secular' dynamic is summed up in the simple phrase, “whatever gets your

attention, gets you.” Simple, obvious, and potentially lethal – depending on what gets your attention. In other words, what your mind and heart focus on, look at, mull over, grind your teeth over, you are going to become like yourself. It’s much like what the driving instructor says to a carload of 15-year-olds learning how to drive, “Be careful what you focus on because what you look at you will drive toward.” Whatever gets your attention gets you – eventually. That can be as lethal for the 15 year old who stares over to see who is at the McDonald’s on the side of the road and unconsciously steers into the lane next to her, as it is to the person who can’t get over the sinful injustice that happened to them years ago...or last week (and yes, they are connected – the past isn’t over yet). That is why David wrote in Psalm 1:1-2, “Blessed is the man...who delights in the law of the Lord, and on His law meditates day and night.” That’s why Paul wrote in Philippians 4:8, “Whatever is true, noble, right pure, (etc.)...think about these things.” Why? Because whatever gets your attention gets you – whether for what is good or what is evil. And I suspect that this is as true with conscious thought as it is with the unconscious grinding of one’s teeth on wounds, defeats and injustices of the past.

However, it is the second dynamic that is the killer. As I thought about what happened to Iran and Nicaragua, how Peter and the other disciples failed to do what they vowed to do, and as Paul did what he hated, the Lord summed it all up for me in a powerful phrase that took me utterly by surprise. He said, “Bruce learn this, whatever you hate, you will either emulate (become like), or create (invite into your life).” Another slightly less dramatic way to state this is, “Whatever you tend to detract, you will tend to attract.” Sobering – and potentially lethal. I know of no more powerful dynamic to explain the ongoing, repeated defeats, strongholds of sin and weakness of believer’s lives than this – because in my experience, virtually everyone has made inner vows that still bind them. Over and over again when I minister to people, we look at the inner vows they’ve made along the way in their lives. Those vows have not only bound them, but irony of ironies, bound them to the very thing that they *hated*, to what drives them crazy – the exact opposite of what they made the inner vow to accomplish in the first place – which was to protect and distance themselves from ‘that pain’ or ‘those kind of people!’

Inner vows are borne out of painful, difficult situations and usually begin with the words, “I will never...” or “I promise from now on I will...”. That’s what Peter and the disciples did. Paul must have as well, as what he hated, he emulated. Do you hate inconsistent people, or gossips or judgmental, critical people? Guess what the future holds for you. Normally, I have found that there are no more judgmental people than people who hate judgmental people! Sobering isn’t it?

You will either emulate what you hate, or you will create it, inviting people ‘like them’ into your life. They will become your spouse, your boss, your best friend, your neighbor, your pastor, your co-worker, your home group leader, etc. This becomes nearly as predictable in people’s lives as gravity or the sun always rising in the east – what you hate you *will* either emulate or create! This is why some wise soul once said, “Whatever it is that drives you crazy in others, make sure you correct it in yourself.” What drives you crazy in people? Is it a certain kind of man, a certain kind of woman? Why is it that you left the last church you attended, or couldn’t get along with that former pastor, or left that job because of the boss who was so impossible? Perhaps because what was in them had become internalized in you? It may not express itself in you exactly like it did in them, but it *will* express itself in some way that you probably don’t see, don’t want to see, or rationalize away in some fashion or another.

Inner vows keep you repeating the past over and over again, wondering, “why does this *always keep happening to me?!?*” Until the content of, “What you hate you will either emulate or create” is addressed biblically, you will be literally ‘bound’ to continue to live out your history (and your misery), instead of your destiny. Only the liberated get to live out their destiny and experience the abundant life Jesus promised! I passionately hope that is you!

Oh, and if I didn’t specifically explain why the revolutionaries who overthrew dictators in Iran and Nicaragua in the ‘80’s became like the people they replaced – it’s because they hated the injustices, sins, failures and shortcomings of the people who had led the country, and because they hated them, they judged them in their flesh and most surely made inner vows repeatedly (perhaps daily!) that they would *never become like those blankety blank leaders who oppressed people all the time and lived only to feather their own nests!* And then when they came to power, lo and behold, it was their turn to do much the same things. Sobering isn’t it that whole countries repeat cycles of oppression just like individuals do.

Breaking The Cycle

The “What you hate...” dynamic has become as predictable as night following day in the lives of those who have not fully forgiven *everyone* who has ever hurt them (I suspect that has, or does describe 100% of the population of the planet).

Briefly, forgiveness is choosing to let go of unrighteous, fleshly anger and judgment against the offender, it is releasing the ‘right of revenge’ against them and choosing to love them even though they haven’t loved you. Forgiveness is giving up the chance to ‘make them pay’ for the sin and pain they caused you. Bottom line, forgiveness is giving up trying to improve the past – which is an impossibility that cannot be done!

The main problem with what you hate (whether you’re a saved or an unsaved person) is that ‘the hating’ is rarely a godly attitude inside you that reacts righteously against sin (which would be the fruit of spiritual maturity and dying to self), instead, it’s usually a selfish fleshliness that hates those who hurt you in some way – those who embarrassed you, overlooked you, rejected you, put you down, scorned you or belittled you. It is the kind of fleshly anger that remains a grudge that the flesh will not forgive and let go of. While true godliness forgives without excuse (as Jesus did from the cross and Stephen did while being stoned to death), fleshliness never really forgives – it can’t for the same reason that polluted streams can’t produce pure water. A carnal or immature believer who is stuck in pride, fearful self-protection and unforgiveness may pretend like he forgives, he may ‘project’ that he forgives others, he may really try to forgive, but at base he doesn’t, hasn’t or won’t, whether he knows it or not – and often he doesn’t!

That’s why the carnal or immature believer never ends up with the fruit of inner peace that true forgiveness produces – rather the believer who does not forgive produces a continual ‘rushing to judgment(s)’ and finger pointing at the clay feet (how *unfair* it was, how *could* he do or say that?!) of people or institutions who have hurt him. The deep inner peace that the fruit of the Spirit produces is never achieved because the unforgiving believer is unwilling to “bless those who cursed you (and) pray for those who mistreated (insulted, accused, threatened or abused) you,” (Luke 6:28). Instead, the hatred of those pains produce an inner grinding of the teeth toward the perpetrators of your pain, (as well as people or institutions ‘like them’) and usually a stream of gossip directed against them as you invite others to join you in your unforgiven misery.

So, how does one break the potent spiritual dynamic summed up in the word, “Whatever you hate, you will either emulate or create” that keeps you spiritually ‘stuck’ and defeated at some level? You forgive your brother from the heart like Jesus and Stephen did, and you bless them in prayer (and/or action) as Jesus commanded in Luke 6:28. Only that will short circuit the dynamic of reproducing in your own life over and over again what you hate and judge in others. You forgive seventy times seven (Matthew 18:22) – or said in today’s words – you forgive 24/7 – no matter what the offence is or who the offender was. For many, that is easier said than done.

Before I give you two compelling truths which should make it much easier for you to learn to forgive *everyone* who has ever hurt or sinned against you (though they are not synonymous), first let me issue a warning. If understanding these and other truths and growing toward spiritual maturity does not produce a ready heart of forgiveness in you, it is likely that you have an ‘stronghold’ of unforgiveness inside you that is likely demonically charged. Demonic spirits of unforgiveness (which I’ve found to be very common in people) will keep your heart ‘hard’ against ‘those people,’ etc. until your unforgiveness is renounced, repented of and the demons thrown out. Unforgiveness will always produce a ‘hardness/brittleness/bitterness’ of heart toward people or institutions, instead of a ‘soft’ and loving heart toward those who fail and sin – because “love covers a multitude of sins,” 1 Peter 4:8.

Now, let me share with you the two powerful truths about forgiveness God showed me that should make it much easier for you to forgive those who have unrighteously accused, insulted or abused you before in some way.

Now, this paragraph is where the discussion gets briefly rated PG-13. My apology if this offends you (please forgive me!) – but a couple of years ago God showed me, graphically, what *unforgiveness* is like. Ready? Unforgiveness is like continually going to the bathroom without ever flushing. I know that’s not a pretty picture, but it’s true. Have you ever wondered why some people’s lives (not their bodies) just ‘stink?’ Yeah, you got it, they don’t practice proper spiritual hygiene – they never flush – or don’t flush often enough! Sin and pain are somewhat analogous to the ‘poop of life,’ if you will. Just as flushing releases you from your ‘waste material,’ so forgiving others releases you from the poison (and stench) of the spiritual waste material that unforgiveness produces – bitterness, brittleness, judgmentalness and hardness of heart. That *graphic* is enough in itself to help some people begin to start flushing and forgiving others of their ‘poop.’

Secondly, God showed me what *forgiveness is*. I used to think (as a Christian and a preacher) that forgiveness was a good idea, a noble act, an admirable activity. I am no longer so deluded. Forgiveness is in reality the weapon that you use to get (and keep) *yourself* free from the work of the devil! Ephesians 4:26-27 (NLT) says, “And don’t sin by letting anger gain control of you. Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a mighty foothold to the devil.” When the Lord showed me that forgiveness is the weapon that gets *me* free from the devil’s work, I realized for the first time that forgiveness is the smartest thing a person can do – it’s not a noble thing, it’s a genius thing! On the other hand, unforgiveness is both ‘a stench’ as well as stupidity itself in action because who wants to release the powers of Satan against *themselves* – *only the foolish!*

I now view forgiveness as a weapon – a sword if you will (the sword of the Spirit?), that I use to cut off the devil from gaining a foothold in me – because a foothold is the quickest way for

him to eventually establish a stronghold in me (2 Corinthians 10:4). And once he establishes a stronghold by my sin, unrighteous judgment and unforgiveness, I've opened doors to demonic spirits of those and other things. His foothold becomes a stronghold that he is then able to pour his soldiers (demons) into within your soul. This I believe is why Jesus warned us in Matthew 18:34 that He would turn the unforgiving servant over to the "tormenters" until all was forgiven. Although the tormenters in context referred to physical jailers (police), I believe Jesus meant that the tormenters/jailers were the torments of an ill-at-ease conscience coupled with a stronghold of unforgiveness that became infested with demonic spirits of torment that afflict the unforgiver.

In fact just yesterday as I was ministering to a lady, the Lord showed me that the physical torment in her body she had been experiencing was because she had opened the door to tormenting spirits earlier in her life by not forgiving those who had hurt her. While she has since forgiven those people from her heart (during ministry sessions), those spirits were still there until they were detected and thrown out, and as we took authority over them, she felt them go.

How do you destroy the reproducing spiritual dynamic of "what you hate, you will either emulate or create?" You forgive from your heart, you pray for and bless those who curse and abuse you. And now you have two powerful reasons to do it – so your life won't 'stink' and so you can become a spiritual genius(!), because unforgiveness is just stupid from every point of view!

Now, I want to close with another revelation God recently showed me. As I was worshipping, the Lord brought to mind Ephesians 4:26 about not letting the sun go down on your anger. Then He said, "That refers to people's anger toward Me as well." I was completely taken aback! I had always viewed that verse as people forgiving other people – not God. But we need to 'forgive' (release our anger and judgments against) God, not because He has sinned against us, but because He has disappointed us, hurt our flesh and pride (in an attempt to *kill* them!), and allowed all manner of hardship into our lives that we hated, likely judged Him for and held anger against Him about. It's certainly true from reading the Psalms that no less a man than King David 'had issues' with God and was angry with Him at times. Centuries later, Martin Luther the leader of the Protestant Reformation confessed that he himself "hated God." I believe most people carry unforgiveness in their spirits against God (its right there sitting next to your disappointment and depression), though it is probably mostly unconscious and repressed. It hides in our denial, because who wants to believe deep down that they're mad as a wet hen at God?

Biblically, it is far better to confess and acknowledge 'unforgiven' anger and judgments against God and verbally express them in prayer as King David did over and over again in the Psalms. Then we choose to release God from our unrighteous anger and judgments – the charges of incompetence we've leveled at Him in the running of our lives (though the truth is that it was *we* who were incompetent). Don't let the sun go down on your anger against people or God – because it allows the devil a mighty foothold in your life that he will gladly use *against you!*

Use the weapon, the sword of forgiveness, to get and keep *yourself* free from the footholds and strongholds of the devil inside your soul. Become a spiritual genius – forgive seventy times seven (24/7)! Do it today, and do it by faith, not by feeling like it. Without forgiveness, whatever it is you hate, you will continue to reproduce, either by emulating it (or them) or creating it (opening doors to your life for more of it). And you'll always wonder, "Why does this or that, that always drives me nuts, keep happening to me all the time?!"