

Cyber Truths By E-mail

10. Apprehension: The Silent Destroyer (June 25, 2005)



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Dear Friends,

We just returned from a wonderful week away traveling with our "spiritual" son, Matt, who was visiting us from Jacksonville, Florida, and our friends from Lubbock, Texas, Tom and Jason.

Just before we left on our travels I'd been stumped on writing one portion of the video for Demolishing Strongholds. It had to do with the overwhelming begrudging type of bitterness we've seen in the Christian community. Many report being plagued by it, and having a difficult time finding freedom from it. Others, trying to help those consumed with begrudging, have encountered incredible denial that they even have a problem!

As we visited different people during our trip, the Holy Spirit started giving us a handle on the root to the prison the begrudging find themselves in. It is an ongoing toleration of apprehension in their significant and intimate relationships. We are putting together a complete teaching on it at this time as part of the video for Chapter 3 of Demolishing Strongholds, How Adam's Fall Into Sin Has Harmed Us.

Apprehension: The Silent Destroyer will also become a Lifebyte on our website in the near future. In this e-mail we want to share some excerpts to make you aware of a few points that may get you started on the road to freedom and forgiveness if you find yourself begrudging other people. The rest will follow in our work to come.

Apprehension: The Silent Destroyer

Apprehension is one of those all-inclusive words. To be apprehensive implies dread or fear or feelings of uncer-

tainty about a person, place, or situation. In other words, apprehension causes us to feel troubled in our emotions.

We want to encourage you that as part of His redemptive plan for you, our Lord has a positive purpose for that negative feeling. Apprehension operates like the nerve endings on the tips of your fingers. As you get close to a fire or something hot, the heat your nerve endings detect causes you to take action to avoid any more pain. But with apprehension there are two opposite responses you can take. One is God's way. He desires you to use that apprehension as a warning to rid yourself of negative feelings by seeking His way to become more Christ-like in your response toward others. As you'll see, our Lord wants you to replace apprehension with love.

The other response allows your sin nature and demonic strongholds to direct you. This path only opens the door for a whole host of sins and destroyed relationships to entangle you.

Keep this in mind: Wherever you have apprehension in any relationship, you block the love that Jesus requires you to have for that person. In other words "Apprehension is a love blocker." Any strife, worry, uncertainty, or fear keeps you from loving as you are commanded by our Lord.

Many who call themselves "Christian" are use to the inner apprehension they have toward others. That's because apprehension sets into your mental framework so early in your life that it's as familiar as your breath. Even after you become a follower of Jesus, you may not grasp the heart-felt love He desires for you to experience.

When it comes to finding out how apprehensive about others you may be, you need to test yourself. It isn't until

you stop and reflect on your relationships with others that you can get a true view of how apprehensive you are.

Spotting Sources to Apprehension

A praise song that's been around for decades declares, "They will know we are Christians by our love." The song adds, "We will guard each man's dignity." We haven't heard that song lately. Maybe many are realizing how few can say the words without feeling like hypocrites! This of course shouldn't be. The problem is that few know how insidious tolerated apprehension is as it keeps them from loving and caring for the dignity of others.

Apprehension, when not dealt with as our Lord requires, becomes the fuel on the fire of fracturing relationships. Apprehension is to relationships what dry kindling is to a forest fire. And like dry kindling, when the fire is raging, it's too late to clear away the dead wood. Undealt-with apprehension only makes other interpersonal problems that much more intense and destructive. It enables a slight disagreement to become a blazing argument inferno.

The primary purpose of demonic strongholds is to destroy relationships. Apprehension is a sign that strongholds are operating in your soul — your mind, will and emotions.

Let's look at some common situations and see how apprehension works.

Husbands & Fathers

An epidemic number of husbands are failing to exercise their God-given authority as servant leaders in their homes. Again, authority on earth is given by God for the maintenance of

peace within a home. Over our years of ministry we've seen many husbands refusing to speak up, living in apprehension over their wives and children. Keep in mind that Eve was deceived into taking the fruit, but it was Adam who remained silent about it. And then he later blamed her when confronted by God! (See Genesis 3:6.)

On the other extreme we've observed households ruled by "The Tyranny of the Monarch".

This often occurs when husbands are under no faith community authority — they act like tyrannical monarchs in their home.

Families who have fled religious establishments and remain isolated are susceptible. Many home schooling families live under this siege. Also, men who own their own business may fall into this role, as well as clergy who are trying to become successful by the world's standards.

Listen! The principle of Matthew 18:15,16 applies to every child of our Father's, even to those in authority:

"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'" (Matthew 18:15,16).

Every husband and father must provide a means in which his own sins can be confronted as our Lord commands.

Every wife and child has the biblical right to confront and appeal for help.

If there is still apprehension in your household toward the husband or father who has been confronted by the family members, we suggest you make your appeal to the husband's father, the wife's

father, or to the leaders of your faith community. If you don't deal with your apprehension toward this man, you'll descend down the path of begrudging bitterness. Don't be silent in your apprehension, make the appeal.

In one congregation of faith family while my son was young, I [Mike] established an appeal process with one of the elders whom I knew well. My son and I went to that elder six times over the years. Four of these times the elder found me in error and I repented.

On another occasion during our retreat center ministry our son was asked by a group of men, "If your dad were in sin, what would you do?" Her responded, "I'd go to his best friend, Casey. If my Dad didn't repent, Casey wouldn't rest until he was removed from the retreat ministry."

[Sue] Wherever we live, Mike establishes relationships with one or more men to whom I can appeal if I need to.

Wives & Mothers

[Sue] Women, I don't care how spiritual you may consider yourselves! One of the effects of the fall on us women is the desire to rule over our husbands. This is the meaning of God's curse on Eve, "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you" (Genesis 3:16).

We can tell you from hundreds of men who came to our retreat center: Men are not internally wired to deal with a contentious or quarrelsome wife. That behavior/attitude only wears him down and causes apprehension if he doesn't confront his wife. So many men would quote to us that painful proverb, "A quarrelsome wife is like a constant dripping on a rainy day" (Proverbs 27:15).

Wives who can't tolerate their own inner apprehension when they have discord with their husbands often choose a more subtle and destructive way of getting control over him. They share gossip and slander about their husband with others.

(The symptoms we discuss below are far more common among women than men.)

Many mothers who have apprehension toward their husbands recruit not only their children but others outside the family to take up emotional burdens against their husband. The mother who does this has no idea of the doors of demonic oppression she is opening for her children and for others who listen to her complaints.

Those who take up an offense against her husband on her behalf become plagued by what is commonly called a "wounded spirit". A "wounded spirit" bears ill feelings toward someone who has done them no direct harm. You begrudge the person because of what they did to someone else, generally without ever verifying if the tales of woe are even true! That's one-sided information, and is slanderous.

Having a wounded spirit is such a painfully difficult situation to escape from. And, far too many mothers have inflicted this on their children, condemning them to years of unforgiveness by our heavenly Father because they themselves refuse to forgive.

Whether you are a child of any age, or in some other situation in which someone is trying to recruit you into taking up an offense toward another on their behalf, DON'T! Breaking free is spiritually and emotionally arduous.

When I [Mike] first began to counsel clergy back in New England, I discovered

that over half of their wives were going to professional counselors because they were so guilt-ridden. Their husbands would tell them about different people in the faith community with whom they were having trouble. Then the loving wife would take up an offense on behalf of her husband. Over time her husband would reconcile with the person, but she remained trapped. What could she do? Walk up to the person with whom her husband had reconciled and tell him what a jerk he'd been?? No, she just seethed inside, building up walls around herself.

We remember a wonderful girl in her late twenties who was part of a singles' group that met at our retreat center. When we first met her we marveled why such a wonderful person avoided men and even the possibility of marriage. As we got to know her better, she revealed that she had deep-seeded bitterness toward her Dad. It wasn't anything he'd done to her, but to her kid brother. By taking up an offense on his behalf she was trapped by a wounded spirit and fearful of committing to marriage.

We encouraged her to go to her father and confess this. She did, and a short while later a godly man came into her life and they were married.

Avoiding a Wounded Spirit

A wounded spirit almost always leads to a begrudging type of bitterness — the worst type! If you want to avoid this ugly prison, consider two biblical principles.

The first is from Proverbs 18:17, “The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and questions him.”

Too many today listen to one side of

the story and fail to hear the other side. When I [Sue] was a kindergarten teacher in a Christian school I wrote the parents,

“I won't believe everything your kids say about you, if you won't believe everything they say about me!”

Closely related to this principle of hearing both sides of the story is Matthew 7:12,

“So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”

You need to realize that you are going to encounter situations in which others share negative information about you. Do you want people you've never done anything against to take up offenses against you? Nobody does!

That's why you must first stop the person who is sharing the negative information about someone else with you. All you need to do is say, “Please stop! It's wrong for me to listen to this.”

Next ask them if they can find it in their heart to forgive the other person. This question is partly a test of their love for the supposed offender. Peter tells us a wonderful truth: “Love covers over a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8b).

If they can't forgive, then you're now obligated to bring both parties together so that you can justly hear both sides of the story at the same time. Our entire justice system is based on the concept of an impartial jury hearing both sides at the same time. We encourage you to be a just person yourself.

If you only hear one side of the issue, you will sin by being a recipient of slander and gossip. And you'll need to go to the accused person and ask their forgiveness for listening. Take our advice: Don't walk in unrighteousness and possibly end up with a wounded spirit yourself!

Parents & Children

Too many Christian parents today are failing to both establish and lovingly enforce biblical boundaries for their home. One secular newspaper reported that the US has now moved from being a child-centered society to a child-dominated society.

Peers now have more control over households than parents do. We realize how much more difficult it is for parents to instill Christ-likeness in their children.

The pressure to be accepted is a strong human urge. Sadly, too many teens are "selling their soul" to be accepted by their peers.

Parents, God hasn't set His Word aside so your children can become like this heathen culture. Daniel, Shedrach, Meshach and Abednego are just a few examples of children raised in a godless society. But look what God did to raise them up in character!

We mentioned that the begrudging form of bitterness is the worst of all. The most common source for the apprehension of begrudging bitterness is when children fail to speak up when their feelings are hurt by their parents. A child's ongoing apprehension slowly leads to begrudging bitterness toward one or both of the parents, hindering all concerned from the warmth and harmony each one so desperately needs.

Faith communities

The most common form of apprehension in faith communities comes when leaders fail to uphold communal righteousness. Just as in the family, tolerated sin not only keeps people from fellowship with our Lord, it also slowly erodes mutual commitment until slander and gossip prevail. People find they

are often forced into taking sides on issues, which produces apprehension and every other ugly consequence that follows. This is why Paul was so emphatic in writing to the Galatians, "If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other" (Galatians 5:15).

Women's Prayer Groups

Over the years we have noticed how prayer groups in different faith communities have become one of the most insidious forms of creating apprehension among God's people. I [Mike] was an elder in a congregation. Over time I watched men who once were very close drifting apart. I began to investigate what was going on and was led to investigate the Wednesday morning women's prayer group.

Under the guise of needing prayer, women who were apprehensive about their husbands used the gathering as a forum for slandering them.

It would go something like, "Oh, would you all pray for my husband. He's been yelling at the kids a lot lately."

The other women went home and told their husbands that one-sided piece of information. In their apprehension about that guy, they began to avoid him.

What they didn't realize is that with each prayer gathering, almost all of them were being slandered by their wives through a supposed prayer need. The insidious and unintentional fruit of that prayer group was the men drifting apart. We as leaders stopped the group from meeting together because they realized they were sinning in their complaints and discontent.

Asking for prayer as a means to discredit husbands and other family members is far more the rule than the excep-

tion today. I [Sue] frequently get this type of request in e-mail from women I've never met. The internet has opened a whole new responsibility for Mike: to guard our home from slanderous e-mail by women who are filled with apprehension and use slander to vent their issues. If this is happening to us, we know it's happening in a host of different homes!

Workplace

In this culture, including the Christian religious scene, people fail to separate the position of authority from the personality of those over them on the job. Romans 13 warns all of us that every authority has been established by God. If you have trouble with those in authority, you have trouble with God. Now that can cause you BIG apprehension!

God wants leaders to be protected from the mouth of those under them. He commanded the Israelites, "Do not blaspheme God or curse the ruler of your people" (Exodus 22:28).

Paul cited this passage of Scripture after he was rebuked for calling the high priest a "white-washed wall."

We can tell you from testimony by others that slander against superiors in the workplace only reaps apprehension at home. You can restore peace in your home by keeping your mouth shut about your boss at work! We hope these few excerpts will spur your focus to scrutinize your own life. If there are people close to you who inspire apprehension in you, then there is no way you can love them as our Lord Jesus calls for. You will vent your apprehension through slander and gossip, defiling other people with bitterness. This is not God's way. In the end, "If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other."

Be looking for the Lifebyte on apprehension and the Demolishing Strongholds video. We continue to solicit your prayers. They result in the Spirit's revelation to us, and His power and encouragement to keep us pressing on!

Thank you....

Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz