

Teaching E-mail

52. Riding The Seesaw Of Apprehension (September 21, 2011)

Dear Friends,

As we hear from different people who are going through our Way of the Lord segments on passive aggression and the Lordship of Jesus, we realize that many of you may be struggling with similar issues. This has been particularly the case in confronting seams of ongoing apprehension with the goal of mutually developing character qualities of Jesus.

In our last e-mail we discussed how important it is in your close relationships to confront any **"seams of ongoing apprehension."** These ragged-edge seams are like weak points in a defensive fortification that allow the enemy to break through. In our discussion, seams of ongoing apprehension are unresolved tensions between people that demons use to undermine the relationship and rip away harmony. Whether with fortresses or relationships, when the attack comes it's generally too late to try to correct what you should have confronted and resolved much earlier.

If you belong to Jesus, it's essential that you not accept any persistent anxiety or fear in your close relationships. You need to address apprehension out of loving obedience to our Lord whenever anyone you care about is repeatedly uneasy or anxious about someone or something. Otherwise, it becomes 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 deadwood. Undealt-with apprehension only makes other interpersonal problems that much

more intense and destructive, enabling even a slight disagreement to become a blazing argument inferno.

We've written so often about the "unseen world" of demonic strongholds and their insidious influence because their primary assignment is to destroy relationships and hinder your obedient trust in our Lord Jesus. Ongoing apprehension is a sign that strongholds are operating in the mind, will and emotions of you and/or those with whom you share relational contact. (For further discussion of this, see **Teaching E-mail 10. Apprehension: The Silent Destroyer**).

As long as you have the discord of seams of ongoing apprehension with someone, you are preventing the love of Jesus from blossoming between you. But if you're patient with each other as you pursue together closing the seam of apprehension in your relationship, you may be able to expose the root cause(s) that created it in the first place.

Please pay attention to this: getting to the root cause often requires a lot more back-and-forth discussion than most people are used to or comfortable with. Many men in particular, as well as women who resist being confronted, don't permit a discussion to go on beyond one or two exchanges. They either clam up, roll their eyes and balefully sigh, or walk out, thereby ending any further disclosure. Yet, we've seldom seen the root cause exposed in anything less than six or more exchanges of input in which new elements are added by

each person for consideration and connection.

If conversations are not pursued until the root cause is exposed and remedied, the seam of ongoing apprehension will remain—only this time with added resistance to trying again to resolve it. As a result, one or both of you will go on manifesting any of the various symptoms of passive aggressive behavior we cited in segment 24 of the Way of the Lord. Apprehension will continue as a murky stream to undermine both your walk in Jesus as well as your relationship with that person.

Keep this in mind:

Passive aggression is a form of self-protection developed very early in your life to guard you from further emotional hurt. At the same time, passive aggression blinds you to the emotional hurt you cause others.

Paul could be describing passive aggression when he warns,

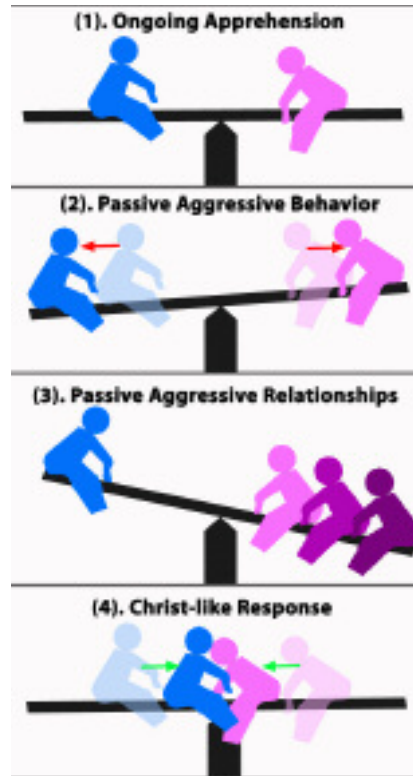
“If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other” (Galatians 5:15).

Refusal to confront apprehension in your marriage and/or in other close relationships so you can expose the root cause of the passive aggressive symptoms may tragically lead to termination of the relationship.

Take A Lesson From A Seesaw

(1) Picture ongoing apprehension with another person as if you're both facing each other on a seesaw.

(2) The normal reaction whenever there is a flare-up is to take an adversarial approach. Each person entrenches himself in a passive aggressive position,



emotionally distancing themselves further away from one another.

(3) If the situation remains unresolved and the root cause is not exposed and remedied, one or both parties may look for people who will take their side. They begin to bad-

mouth the opposing individual through gossip and slander to anyone who will listen in order to tip the situation to their favor.

(4) But if they're to come to godly resolution, each person must instead purpose to neither blame the other nor defend himself/herself. Each must be willing to fully hear the other person's viewpoint, especially taking into consideration their feelings. The goal of this mutual sharing is to develop Christ-like character qualities as a result of confronting the source of apprehension.

Mutually growing Christ-like character must be at the forefront whenever you seek to expose the root cause of your apprehension with one another. If you keep this as your goal rather than trying to compel someone to bend to your will, you'll be able to pursue a heart-to-heart dialogue until reconciliation and loving appreciation are restored.

***Lashon Hara*—Bad Mouthing Don't do it! Don't listen to it!**

Mike: "During my first deployment to Vietnam I asked the Executive Officer of the ship our helicopter detachment was on to assign me the collateral duty as the Morale Officer. Our ship spent long periods at sea off the coast of Vietnam, and keeping up morale was something I thought I could help with. One thing that destroyed morale was false rumors. Whenever I heard about a rumor going around the ship, I'd follow the trail back to the person who started it. Then I'd bring him before the Executive Officer to deal with the man appropriately. It didn't take long for those who started rumors to realize I'd pursue them for the well-being of all onboard. The rumors stopped and morale remained high!

Years later, when I began to read the Bible for the first time, I came across this directive, "*then you must inquire, probe and investigate it thoroughly*" (Deuteronomy 13:14). I remembered my time as Morale Officer and the compelling need that for the good of all to go to the source of a situation. It's saddened me that during my 34+ years of following Christ, I've met very few people who, when they hear something bad spoken about another person, purpose to inquire and investigate the matter thoroughly. Most listen to the bad mouthing, and may even voice agreement with the one-sided information."

Lashon hara [lah-SHONE hah-RAH], bad mouthing, literally means "tongue of evil" in Hebrew. It refers to gossip, backbiting, rumor mongering, slander, and other misuses of speech. The sin of lashon hara is weighed equally with the sins of sexual immorality and murder in many ancient Hebrew texts, and is even

listed by Jesus in that same category of evil (Matthew 15:19).

Let's clarify the difference between these practices that bring about such relational discord.

GOSSIP:

Sharing detrimental information about someone with those who are not part of the problem or the solution.

SLANDER:

Telling only part of the truth, or even error, with the intent to hurt someone.

(For further discussion of this, see our July 2000 Newsletter: **Lashon Hara—Bad Mouthing**)

God's Word has something to say about defaming someone: "*Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down... The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a person's inmost parts*" (Proverbs 26:20,22). Gossip and slander stir up your own sin nature when you voice it or listen to it, and fan the fire of other people's fleshly response as well. So heed the will of our Father: If you have ongoing tension with someone, DON'T gossip about them or slander them behind their back. And keep in mind that when you sin by listening, you help no one, but hurt everyone by removing all hope of reconciliation.

The righteous solution? Enlist the help of a third party together whom you both trust. If someone comes to you to bad-mouth another person, why don't you offer to be the peacemaker who helps the parties involved develop the character of Jesus as they resolve their situation. As the Father's child in Jesus, you have no choice but to do all you can to bring authentic peace if He is indeed your Lord (Matthew 5:9). There is great

blessing in serving as His peacemaker:
"Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness" (James 3:18).

Perhaps you realize that you do live in ongoing apprehension, and/or are causing it in others. Don't let this tension persist. Jesus wouldn't! It's robbing you of intimacy with Him and of the joy and peace that are the heritage of those who do walk in love-grounded obedient trust in Him as Lord of their lives. When you're diligent to help remove any ongoing source of apprehension in those you care about, you're serving others and Him as His heart and voice. And freedom from apprehension allows love to blossom and bear fruit!

Pressing on with you in freedom
from apprehension,
Mike & Sue