

Teaching E-mail

51. Expose The Root Cause! (September 17, 2011)

Dear Friends,

Segment 32 of the Way of the Lord series is the last of our five installments on the Lordship of Jesus. In this episode we affirm your crucial role in coming alongside those close to you as His instrument to help meet their seven God-given needs. A person's first need is for dignity as someone made in God's image and loved by Him. One of the best ways you can uphold someone's dignity is to ask him/her questions about their goals, values, and methods. People wrap strong feelings around these, and by intentionally making an effort to understand, you enhance that person's dignity.

Your goals, values and methods define the "why" behind your actions. When you know someone's heart motive, you're better able to effectively support them or correct them. And knowing their goals, values and methods enables you to help them grow in Christ's character. How? People's goals, values and methods influence and even control their actions. By discovering what's behind any unChrist-like and unbiblical behaviors and attitudes, you can help them turn to Jesus in repentance, and to the power of His Spirit to enable them to change in those areas. It all starts with a simple question, "Why are you doing this?"

Goals, values and methods are at the root cause that controls and guides people's actions. Both in ourselves and in others we care about who love and serve Jesus as Lord, the root cause of what we do needs to be guided by Christ-like

character. We who follow Jesus are equipped by His Spirit and His Word to do whatever is necessary to help those we care about align their goals, values and methods with His.

In early 1977, shortly after becoming followers of Jesus, we attended a seminar that taught that behind every "surface problem" — the unChrist-like behaviors and attitudes that we or someone else has — there is a "root cause." Until the root cause is exposed and becomes something a person wants to change, the surface problem will continue.

Mike: The stronghold of rejection had influenced my Dad to regularly get drunk most of his adult life (the surface problem). When he was intoxicated, it was like "hell on earth" for our family. In December of 1977 my ship was returning to San Diego from a deployment in the Western Pacific. My Dad and his brother were going to meet the ship in Pearl Harbor and spend the five-day trip to California onboard with me. When the ship left the Philippines for Hawaii I began to fast, asking God to reveal why my Dad had been such an ugly drunk. I wanted to know the root cause.

During the voyage to San Diego I spent a lot of time with my Dad and Uncle Paul, using that opportunity to question my father about his past. He slowly let me in deeper and deeper to some very painful memories. I found out that he'd done something so shameful that his mother never forgave him, even to the day she died. To cover over the pain of that unforgiveness, my Dad began to drink a lot.

Our first morning back in San Diego my Dad and I got up very early together. He was

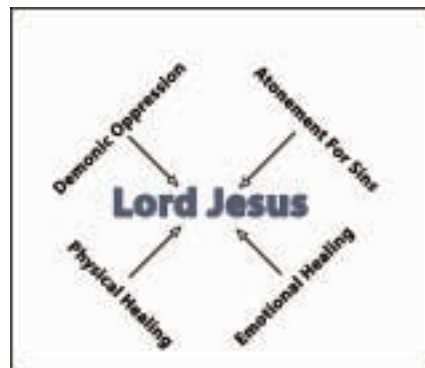
distraught over the painful things that had surfaced in our conversations. The two of us knelt down together and prayed — and I watched a miracle as Jesus changed my Dad right in front of me! From that point on he stopped getting drunk. He also wanted to reconcile with a particular individual who'd been deeply hurt by the action for which his mother had withheld forgiveness.

In 1978, I was able to talk with that person. Sadly, he was still so bitter at my Dad that he didn't have the heart to reconcile with him. Then the following year my Dad came to me and declared, "I want the same Jesus I see in you." Kneeling with him, I felt like this was the greatest honor I could give him. And as my Dad was near death in late 1982, the man who'd been imprisoned by bitterness against him finally came to Dad to reconcile.

Over the years we've found that exposing the root cause has been a key part of our ministry. When we arrived back from Israel in 1994, our Father told us to "free the captives." We believe that helping people identify the root causes that hinder them from living with Jesus as Lord of their life each day is part of our fulfillment of this command. Over the years we've seen that many marriages and other close relationships exist with what we call "seams of ongoing apprehension." These are like openings in a defensive fortification that allow the enemy to break through. In this case seams of ongoing apprehension are unresolved tensions between people that demons use to undermine the relationship. These seams need to be confronted because they're blocking the love of Christ from blossoming. As people pursue closing the seam in their relationship, they very often expose root cause(s) that created the apprehension in the first place.

For so many centuries much of westernized Christendom has focused its effort on teaching the Bible to unbelievers. While this method of teaching about Jesus to those not born from above seems valid, the vast majority of people never encounter Jesus in His power. We grieve that so many who think they belong to Jesus because they've followed church traditions or repeated a rote prayer in the past have never experienced the freedom He came to give His own.

We'd like to suggest that Jesus followers start to minister in the manner of Jesus, Peter, John and Paul. What got their listeners' attention wasn't their preaching as much as what they did to free people from the root cause that imprisoned them. Then those who responded could experience the power of Jesus and have "ears to hear" what life in Christ encompasses. His Word took on a whole different importance in their life. The studied and applied it so that they could live a life pleasing to their Lord.



If the root cause of someone's problem was demonic oppression, Jesus freed them from that spirit's attack. In fact, freedom from demonization is the first root that Jesus sent His disciples out to deal with (Mark 6:7; Luke 10:17). If the root was physical or emotional healing,

Jesus and those who followed Him revealed His power to heal those who trusted Him to do that (Matthew 12:15; Acts 3:6; 28:8,9). If the root cause was sin, they showed people that only Jesus could be their atonement to pay the death penalty for their sins in their stead (Mark 2:17; Romans 3:25; Hebrews 2:17).

To minister the way Jesus and the first apostles did, you must be free from all root causes in your own life. If you find it hard to help others expose their root causes so they can turn to Jesus for what only He can do on their behalf, you may have a root cause of your own that's hindering you. Ask those who care for you to help you expose that root.

When you're free in Jesus, you're able to FULLY TRUST in the Spirit of Jesus within you for the power people need in order to encounter (1 Corinthians 2:4). If you're to wholly rely on the Spirit of our Lord Jesus, you must be free from the influence of demonic strongholds yourself. That means being freed as well from the symptoms of passive aggression and toxic memories that might be holding you back from obedient trust. A sign that you're fully free will be your willingness out of love to gently probe for and expose the root cause in people you care about without being concerned about safeguarding your own feelings.

If you desire to authentically represent Jesus to others as His chosen instrument, you need to be like a doctor diagnosing an illness. You first discover the root cause, then present the appropriate remedy. Using another analogy, be like a dentist making sure the entire cavity has been cleaned out before putting in a filling. Expose the root cause, and then help the person repent and be healed, or delivered, as needed.

You'll find you're far more fruitful in our Lord when you see people as prisoners to root causes that keep them from trusting Him. To compensate for their pain, they'll probably experience or cite to you a variety of surface problems. Don't get stuck on these. Rather, help them experience the power of Jesus, just as Mike's Dad did. First, make it your own heart motive to reflect the character and love of Jesus in your words and actions. Then, rely on His power to go forth in His love, being sure you give Him the credit.

You may currently be outside the organized religious system; but don't sit back complacent and self-satisfied. If you're not living as Jesus' ambassador to free people from the root causes that bind them, then you're not letting Him be Lord of your life. Many we've encountered want to teach the Bible at others, but are unwilling to both reflect and represent Jesus in the fulness of His righteous love — a love which came to free people to know and serve Him! The freedom we have in Christ comes with this warning to live righteously, since we are representing a holy God: "Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as cover-up for evil; live as slaves [Greek - douloi] of God" (1 Peter 2:16).

Eager to see the captives freed in Jesus,

Mike & Sue