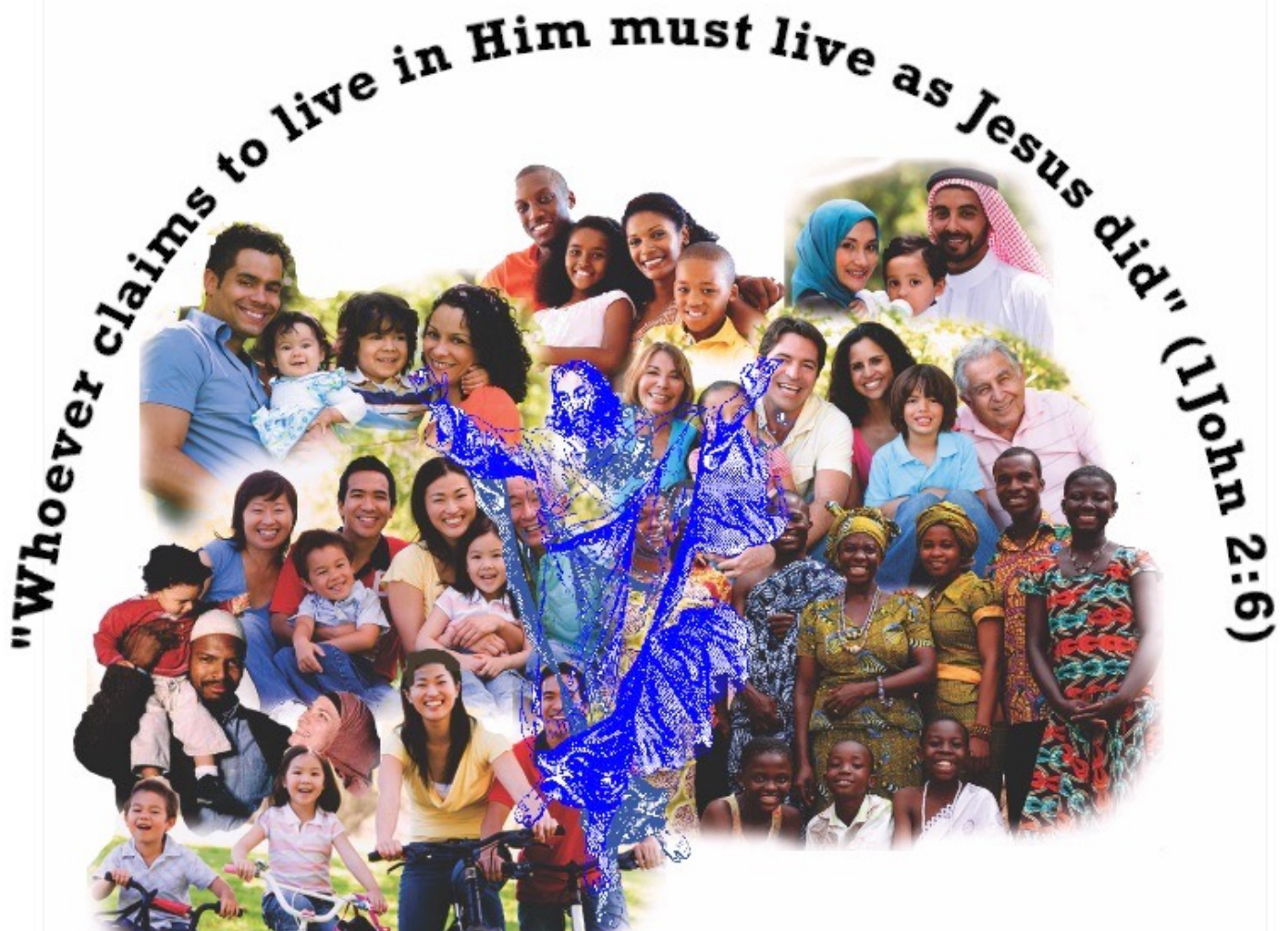


Being The Reality Of Jesus To A Wicked World

Reality 7. The Self-Sabotaging Bondage Of The Halo Effect



Pinpointing Key Facets Of The Hebraic Foundations

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Reality 7. The Self-Sabotaging Bondage Of The Halo Effect

First, let's review the issue we are addressing. Any time you esteem another Christian as being better, holier, more saintly and/or more loved or valued in our Lord's sight, you are in bondage to the deceitful and despicable **"halo effect"**. These intimidating misperceptions that are brought about by the halo effect can keep you from **experiencing our Lord's spiritual power flowing through you** or **experiencing His divine interventions in your life**. Your own self-doubt can lead to the **self-sabotage** that our Father can ever use you!



1. **"HALO EFFECT":** Doubting That You May Be Father's Answer To Your Prayer



How often have you asked yourself, "Why isn't God answering my prayer?" Entertaining doubt that you may be Father's instrument to answer your own prayer is more common than you might think among Christians. This type of doubt is **self-sabotage**, like shooting yourself in the foot. One reason you might self-sabotage yourself in prayer is that you're habitually intimidated by the halo effect of other Christians whom you esteem more highly than yourself (see Reality

4). Self-sabotage plagues people who aren't confident of our Father's loving care for them and/or who don't grasp the divine dignity of being His child in Jesus.

Anchor this biblical reality before your next prayer: What really matters is Father's loving grace and His will for you, not what you think about yourself. Don't ever let yourself deny the reality that He may use you as the answer to your own prayer.

Prayer is a divine phenomenon which no human can fully grasp. Our heavenly Father's will, His timing of the answer and the way He answers are incomprehensible. But if you are going to pray at all expecting Him to answer, an important character quality you need is the **OBEDIENT TRUST OF ABRAHAM**. Be prepared in your heart to follow through in what He tells you to do! The assurances of our Lord Jesus are wholly trustworthy, so you don't ever want your self-sabotage to make Him out to be a liar:

"Truly I tell you, if you have trust and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done" (Matthew 21:21).

And when you have prayed, don't ever let your mind become fatalistic like most religions in the world which conclude, "Well, I prayed. Now it's up to God." God's intervention is indeed needed. But the halo effect of intimidation has induced this deceit within many who pray: **"I don't believe Father could use me to be the instrument to answering my prayer."** What mental bondage and self-sabotage this thought conveys!

Again and again we've seen Christians whom our Father was directing to be His instrument to answer their own prayer. But through feeling intimidated by the halo effect caused by other Christians, they did nothing. Often they made up excuses for their inaction. Our hearts hurt because they wouldn't face the reality that our Father was being robbed of the glory He'd get if they did take action when He wanted to use them.

Let's back up a little. Do you pray with doubt that our heavenly Father will even answer your prayers? If so, to our Father it looks like you're praying with your fingers crossed in doubt. How do you think your doubt makes your heavenly Father feel? Any vestige of doubt in you about Him will hinder you from seeing your prayers answered.



Mike: For many years I prayed for my Mom to put her trust in Jesus as Lord of her life. (My Dad did this a few years before he died.) I'd often bring up to a close friend my desire for Mom to become part of our Lord's family. One day my friend scolded me, "You see your Mom like some big mountain. And you doubt that God can reach her. I'm rebuking you because our God is greater than any mountain." I repented of my doubt, and a month later my Mom became my sister in the Lord. Please don't be a doubter like I was.

Several years ago we developed an adage which doesn't apply to every facet of the bondage we are discussing, but it's still worth considering:

"The person who brings you the problem is either the cause of the problem, the solution to the problem, or both."

We believe that there are times when our heavenly Father views someone who is praying in this same way of being the cause and/or the solution. For example, as with Mike's anecdote above, a doubter who is praying may be the problem who is keeping Father from answering. Or maybe the Holy Spirit has already shown him or her what Father wanted them to do, but they balked in disobedience. Please realize that none of us should let ourselves self-sabotage and not receive the answer to our prayers which would bring our Father glory. Don't limit how Father may choose to use you. Your-self-imposed limitations slam the door on how He could get glory from your obedient trust.

2. THE "HALO EFFECT": The Self-Sabotaging Bondage Of Social Media

So far we've been discussing Christians under bondage to the halo effects they've acquired through their own self-limiting perceptions in the context of prayer. But an even more pervasive form of self-sabotage is occurring in Christians who allow themselves to be either enamored or intimidated by someone else's acclaim, fame, looks, money, home or whatever. Dependence on texting and social media as their chief form of communication and self-appraisal has invaded all areas of daily life. Many people, Christians included, live vicariously through the fame or acclaim or accomplishments of others. A "vicarious experience" refers to you watching, listening to or reading about other people who are doing something rather than you doing it yourself.

In our early years of following our Lord Jesus we were disciplined into living with the obedient trust of Abraham. In 1983, six years after being born again, we were asked to administrate and teach at a retreat center. After we'd served there a while we asked our prophetic friend Karl to review everything we were doing and the biblical practices we'd established for ourselves at the center. Having spent three days with us, Karl commended our trust in our Lord and the biblical principles we established to guide us. But he also had a warning which the Holy Spirit had given him for us: ***"Don't ever let anyone live vicariously through your trust in our Lord Jesus."***

Soon afterwards we began to recognize that after we would tell someone about our Lord's divine empowerments and interventions we experienced at the retreat center, they would pass these accounts on to others as if these miraculous doings in our lives were theirs! Our trust in our Lord Who was at work so mightily around us was being vicariously expressed by many as their own experience — even when they personally had little or no trust in Him themselves. Their vicarious recounting was hindering them from developing their own walk of obedient trust.

How this applies to our discussion.

The increasing dependence on social media and the compulsion to text has had an unexpected consequence: recounting or forwarding what others have done or achieved has promoted an addiction to vicariousness that's now a way of life in this society. Through the internet, individuals who may not even know the originating person, can forward or give a 👍 which makes them feel good and recognized by others. But the forwarder doesn't experience the reality of the original person. It's just a vicarious action that makes them feel good about themselves — especially if they gain “friends” or “likes”!



Remember the effects of humanism which we've discussed previously, especially the fact that humanism places the person, not God, at the center of everything. The centerpiece of public education and society at large is a **person's happiness**, with **no moral boundaries** and **limited relational responsibilities**. We are now a society which heralds individual rights unencumbered by interpersonal responsibilities or accountability. Studies reveal that social media now provides the near perfect platform for individuals to project their own halo effect and/or in self-sabotage, to allow themselves to be intimidated by the halo of others.

Why are humanist-influenced, partially accurate projections of yourself sinful if you claim to be Christian? When you contrive and project a halo about yourself through social media, you self-sabotage into believing the image you project. As a result, when you are confronted face-to-face by someone who really knows you, you adamantly resist any form of correction or admonition they offer you that's contrary to the image you've projected of yourself. You refuse to hear them out even if their counsel is wise and beneficial.



We wrote in our previous Reality that the human sin nature is a powerful force that disdains being corrected. So beware! Unless the standard is Jesus and His righteous commands that lead to becoming more like Him, a slow but steady self-sabotage occurs until it's too late to turn (see Proverbs 29:1). No longer do you evaluate your thoughts and actions by what our Lord or His Word requires. Instead you challenge any attempt at correction with **“What's wrong with it?”**

Multiple studies have found a strong link between heavy social media use and an increased risk for **depression, anxiety, loneliness, self-harm** and even **suicidal thoughts**. If you are intimidated by the halo effect of other people, social media ignites and agitates negative feelings such as inadequacy about yourself: you're not as good looking or as popular or as well-off or as smart as someone else. This is self-sabotaging, making worldly standards of comparison which have nothing to do with our Lord's righteous standards. DON'T DO IT!



Addiction to texting can also promote anxiety in people: “Why didn’t they answer my text?” “Oh no! My phone batteries are low. I’ll miss something!” You may not know that frequent texting as well as heavy use of social media cause your facial muscles to become unexpressive. That hinders your ability to affectionately affirm people you have face-to-face contact with. Jesus wouldn’t let Himself become an expression-less zombie. DON’T YOU!

Christians who are in bondage to the halo effects which texting and social media promote find that they lose their desire to personally be a source of our Lord's **love, forgiveness** and **compassion**. Reliance on vicariousness is its own addiction — and it comes at a cost. First, you become your own halo by portraying just what you want others to think of you — an incomplete image that’s far from the reality of the total you.

Second, the seduction of vicariousness is that you focus more on you than on you looking to the interests of others (Philippians 2:1-4). Your **vicarious addiction** incites you to push for your personal rights while your sense of personal responsibility for others decreases. This is not living for Jesus! But rather a life in bondage; either addicted to exalting your own halo, or allowing yourself to be intimidated by someone else’s halo. If you’re a habitual user of social media, there are a sufficient number of reputable studies which reveal its destructive influence. When it comes to you being the best representative of Jesus and His **love, forgiveness** and **compassion**, consider Paul’s principle:

“I have the right to do anything,’ you say — but not everything is beneficial. ‘I have the right to do anything’ — but not everything is constructive” (1Corinthians 10:23; see also Romans 13:10).

Throughout our walk with our Lord Jesus we have been guided by this principle. And here’s a related motive: In our journey to our salvation we want our marriage to increasingly reflect the **love, forgiveness** and **compassion** of Jesus. That means not self-sabotaging ourselves into becoming less like Him. We hope your heart’s desire is the same as ours.

Mike & Sue