

March 9, 2011

Preprogrammed Prejudice

*Breeding rebellion against God's Word
while incurring injustice toward others*

In Lifebyte 75 we wrote about "*Preprogrammed Prejudice: An Indicator of Toxicity*": "The mindset of the Hardened, Mocking and God-denying fools is controlled by what we call 'Preprogrammed prejudice.' Their response toward other people flows from a selfish and prejudicial set of values they've established, often from youth. Without the light of Jesus influencing their perspective toward others, their thinking processes operate from a fortress of darkness. This means that they resist drawing close to those whom they don't like, even if they can't explain their hostility. Or, they avoid anyone they perceive might somehow penetrate their darkness with the light of Christ."

This sort of prejudice has nothing to do with the kind of love our Lord would have each of us reflect to others:

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth" (1 Corinthians 13:4-6).

Of all these facets of love, the most commonly violated one we've observed in our years of ministry is that *people keep records of the wrongs done to them by others*. Throughout Christendom this sin of unforgiveness is pandemic. The Bible is firm in warning all of us, "**See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many**" (Hebrews 12:15). Yet because of the bitterness permeating their minds, those who have missed the grace God would give them to forgive keep holding on to what others have done to them.

What's painfully ironic is that in many cases the original hurt that precipitated the prejudicial memory may be long forgotten. But, some of the prejudiced person's *current* relationships suffer the injustice of being defiled by unforgiveness based on that *old, preprogrammed response*.

To their own woe, those who cling to their record of wrongs have NEVER come to the point of appreciating Jesus and just how much sin He's willing to forgive them of. *The degree to which you grasp the depth of your own sin and value the cost of Jesus's shed blood is the degree to which you readily forgive others*. People who feel justified in holding on to a "record of wrongs" have swallowed one of the false gospels peddled today that allow people to stay ensnared in their dark prison of unforgiveness.

Preprogrammed prejudice that emanates from unforgiveness obstructs the development of the love Jesus calls for in those who belong to Him (John 13:35). If you've been holding things against someone from your past, you'll hurt many other relationships later

in life. That preprogrammed prejudice impairs your interaction with others; you're unable to freely accept and love those He calls His "brothers and sisters." [In Lesson 48 of *Discussing How to Restore the Early Church* we describe how a man's unresolved bitterness with his mother harms his relationship with his wife.]

"A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed—without remedy" (Proverbs 29:1)

There's also a direct correlation between those who *hold ill feelings* toward others and their *unwillingness to receive correction*. If you hold ill feelings toward someone, you'll resist reproof from anyone.

You'll steer clear of the truth you need to hear:

- by avoiding people who would confront you;
- by pouting (or withdrawing) when people do speak up, thus terminating all further intervention.

What's so sad about these responses is that the very people who could offer correction back off or are driven away by the resistant spirit.

Test yourself:

- What people do you have an emotional aversion to?
- Whom have you driven away who spoke truth that you didn't want to hear?
- Are there people even from your past who are made in God's image and for whom Jesus died that you hold resentment against?
- Are you one of the people who have given up telling someone what they need to hear?

***"Do not hate your brother in your heart.
Rebuke your neighbor frankly
so you will not share in his guilt" (Leviticus 19:17).***

This command from our God confirms that we *are* our "brother's keeper," answering the question voiced by the murderer, Cain (Genesis 4:9). No matter how YOU feel about it, if you follow Jesus you have a responsibility to others—***to rebuke them when it is needed! And, to readily receive an appropriate rebuke when it is given to you!*** (See Proverbs 15:31.)

Those who keep a record of wrongs often find giving and receiving godly rebukes a difficult directive. Because of their soul's darkness they are prejudiced against *receiving correction*. And, they lack the love of Jesus that would prompt them to offer a *righteous rebuke*. In reality, preprogrammed prejudiced people befriend each other under the condition that "if you don't burst my bitter bubble, I won't burst yours." But sorely missing from that perspective is an essential criteria for love: "*Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth*" — even if that truth is given in the form of a reproof.

A word to the wise:

***When you're rebuked by someone,
appreciate the courage it took for
that person to speak up.
Don't focus on your hurt feelings.
That you can receive a rebuke without being ruffled
is a sign of humility, revealing that your heart
is resolute in becoming more like Jesus.
That you are willing to rebuke someone
reveals both your love for them and for the truth.***

On what basis do you rebuke someone? And for that matter, on what basis do you correct your children? NOT because they're doing something that annoys you or inconveniences you. A rebuke is a *redemptive act* with the goal that the rebuked person would instill a biblical character quality to replace the sinful one you are confronting. (See Revelation 3:19 for the intertwining of rebuke and love.)

Rebuking is ALWAYS based on confronting a violation of God's Word. The laws of God — His teaching and instruction — are aimed at producing Christ-like character in His people through His indwelling Spirit. Many of His commands entail the freedom and boundary that our children and others we deeply care about need to know and to make their way of life. Establishing the parameters of *freedom* within God's *boundaries* is one of the seven needs we are all born with.

Consider why parameters of freedom and boundary in parenting are so important:
"Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in His holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it" (Hebrews 12:10,11). With that in mind, what is the biblical definition of "discipline?"

A word to the wise:

**Discipline is God's means of training children and adults
to make His commands a way of life.
His commands become the principles
upon which character is founded,
and guides the just treatment of others.**

*Discipline uses appropriate chastisement/punishment
to correct disobedience and instill obedience.*

Because the sin nature inherently resists any and all of God's commands, no one in authority should resort to *cajoling* anyone, including children, into obeying God's Word. Verbal arm-twisting reinforces rebellion and perpetuates stubborn resistance. If you as a parent or person with authority have the truth someone needs to hear, never try to persuade them to obey through coaxing or bribing. That's nullifying the veracity of God's Word!

When you appeal to a person's sin nature, that hardens him or her to the truth they need to hear, closing them off to the Christ-like character quality they need to develop. When you wheedle, you're actually convincing them that they're in charge. No one in authority should ever beg for obedience. As the Bible so often affirms, *the fear of righteous, prompt punishment is a strong deterrent, keeping both children and adults from repeating the same sin.*

A word to the wise:

**The boundaries of attitude and behavior
God requires of parents to instill in children
are a God-given need at birth.
As God's principles become part of their character,
a child develops deeper trust in the parent
who loves them enough to do whatever
is necessary to instill God's boundaries in them.
A child's continuing trust in his or her parents
is a sure sign that they are fulfilling
the corrective responsibilities
God requires of them in His Word.**

***"...rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith"
(Titus 1:13)***

We who follow Jesus have no excuse to duck rebuking someone when it is appropriate. Our Father commands us to do this out of *love* for that person! If you're reluctant to rebuke, then your motives need a deeper understanding of WHY God gave us the Bible: every bit is *breathed by Him* into the Scripture writers. He WILLs that we know and use His Word — BOTH Testaments.

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2Timothy 3:16). Paul then tells Timothy to fulfill this biblical purpose: ***"Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke***

and encourage—*with great patience and careful instruction*" (2Timothy 4:2). We need to be able to do likewise whenever the situation warrants it.

If you can lovingly give a corrective rebuke when it is needed, that's a clear sign that you are not hindered by preprogrammed prejudice against the commands in God's Word to do so, or against any human being. How important to you is this admonition? *"Better is open rebuke than hidden love"*(Proverbs 27:5).

***"Today, if you hear His voice,
do not harden your hearts"
(Hebrews 4:7)***

One last area of preprogrammed prejudice can impede your growth in Christ. It's your reluctance to willingly obey our Lord no matter what. When Jesus says to you, "Follow Me," or "Obey Me," He doesn't allow for any preconditions. In other words, He won't entertain any preprogrammed prejudice against immediately responding to what His Spirit is telling you, His beloved child.

Unconditional, prejudice-free willingness to obey is His prerequisite for His loving disciple to respond, "Yes, Lord!" Jesus rejected or rebuked those who offered Him any precondition to immediate obedience (see Luke 9:57-61). He didn't accept excuses from His first followers, and He certainly doesn't today! Our hearts should always be ready to respond, **"Yes Lord, here am I!"**

The indwelling Spirit of Christ brings forth so much character development in those who have ears to hear and follow through! Love, patient endurance in times of trial and persecution, and a readiness to obey that's borne out of a love for Jesus and ALL others we encounter must be the foundation of our motivations. Anything less than this reflects a prejudicial heart toward our Lord, His Word, and/or other people.

If you need help in what we're discussing here, cry out to Jesus *and* solicit the help of others who want to become more like Him themselves. If you hesitate in your response to Jesus, don't rest until you root out the prejudicial cause that's hindering you.

Wanting to help prepare you for the Dark Days of Chastisement,
Mike & Sue