

Shepherding the Accused

As a shepherd, you will often encounter people who are discouraged, guilt-ridden or condemned. Accusation can occur whenever any situation on the leads a person to discouragement and doubt and coldness *because they have an underlying weak appreciation of God's grace and Christ's work on our behalf.*

Accusation is a condemnation from the conscience, using either real or false standards of righteousness. Accusation always operates on the original "covenant of works" that Adam and Eve were born under--"this do and you will live". That original covenant demanded perfect obedience to standards. Because in our sinful state we often do not believe (or we forget) that God is gracious, our prideful conscience is deeply oriented toward the original covenant of works.

BIBLICAL INSIGHT

The word "Satan" means "prosecutor". In the beginning, the first lie of Satan was to accuse God himself! And the genesis of all our sin and misery stems from our reception in our hearts of Satan's accusation of God's immorality. Rev. 12:10 - "for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God." Satan accuses God to us. And he accuses us to God. He also accuses us to us. (He cannot, however, accuse God to God!)

VARIETIES OF ACCUSATION DEVICES/ ENTRANCES

SATANIC DEVICE

By causing them to see their present sins as greater than Christ's provision.
To look over their sins more than their Saviour

By causing them to remember past sins, especially things that can't be undone.

By causing them to see the trials they are undergoing as punishments.

By causing to see their inner conflicts as evidence that they are not Christians.

By convincing them that because they relapse often into the same sin, they are not real Christians.

By convincing them that their coldness of feeling indicates that God is not with them or the Spirit is not inside them.

By throwing into the mind and heart distracting and even violent, blasphemous thoughts when they are trying to draw near.

By causing them to reason from failures in work and relationships that God does not love them or care for them.

SELF-TALK

"My sins are too great for God to forgive or forget."

"I will never escape that. I am being punished by God for that forever."

"This wouldn't happen to me unless God was condemning me."

"The evil desires I have would not be in the heart of a real Christian."

"If I were really a believer I would be over this by now."

"I used to have very warm feelings toward God, but now I can't sense him. Maybe I was fooling myself."

"I must be a terrible person to have such thoughts."

"I am a failure, even God has abandoned me."

HELPING THOSE UNDER ACCUSATION

1. Discern

Be sure accusation is coming from the Accuser, and not from the Holy Spirit. The Spirit convicts of sin (John 16:8), but the purpose of the Spirit's accusation is to *increase intimacy with God*. The Spirit always tells us to go to God for forgiveness; the accuser always tells us we can't go to God for he has rejected us.

2. Conditions

Determine if "undernourishment" and "mishandled trials" are the occasions of the accusation. Apply basic discipleship and mentoring.

3. Support team

Depending on the severity of the problem, the person may need a mini-support team who meets to encourage and help.

4. Answer the Accusations with Scripture

Identify the Satanic devices being used and find arguments and Scripture that fortifies the person against each particular one. We are told in James 4:7 to "resist" Satan. The word "resist" is a very specific word, meaning to "contradict vigorously" and "to oppose" or "to refute, disprove". Examples: Gal.2:11 "I *resisted* Peter to his face." Acts 6:10 "They began to argue with Stephen but they could not *refute* the wisdom or the Spirit by which he spoke." Sum: To "resist" the devil takes more than an incantation-like prayer. To resist the devil is to take his arguments apart, disprove and refute them until they lose all their power.

1. "I must be condemned for the sins I have done." Romans 8:1 "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus". II Cor.5:21; Phil 3:9; Romans 3:21-26- I am righteous in Christ. In God's sight I am "holy and without blemish and free from accusation" (Col.1:22)

"The remedy against this is to look upon all your sins as charged upon the account of Christ. All our sins were made to meet upon Christ, as that evangelical prophet put it: 'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed'. Saith the wife to the bill collector, 'if I owe you anything, go to my husband', so may a believer say to justice, 'if I owe you anything, go to my Christ, who has underwritten me fully.' I must not sit down discouraged, under the fear of those debts which Christ, to the utmost farthing, has fully satisfied.

The remedy against this...is, to solemnly consider, that believers must repent for their being discouraged by their sins...it springs from their refusal of the richness, freeness, fulness, and everlastingness of God's love, and from their refusal of the power, glory, sufficiency and efficacy of the death and sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ; and from their refusal of the worth, glory, fulness, largeness, and completeness of the righteousness of Jesus Christ....God did not give a believer a new heart for it to be rent and torn in pieces by discouragements." -T. Brooks

2. "I have relapsed; I have lost my feelings."

Show the histories of Abraham, Peter, David— notorious relapsers. The sign of reality is not the number of relapses but the sorrow over sin and the yearning for holiness. Your yearning to be holy is not something you are capable of unless the Holy Spirit was in you. Even your discouragement over sins is sign of his working in you. Phil. 1:6 - "I am convinced that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion on the day of Jesus Christ". Did God begin a good work in you? Then he will bring it to completion.

5. *Help with basic disciplines*

Help the person "walk in the Spirit" day by day. Use Galatians 5:16-25

- a. There are two natures in us, "flesh" and "spirit" (v.16)
- b. To "walk in the flesh" is the same as to be "under law". (In v.16 the Spirit is opposed to "sinful nature" and in v. 18 it is opposed to being "under law").
- c. To "walk in the Spirit" then is to apply moment by moment the freedom we have from the law. For example, take the activity: Striving to do well in a project:
 In the *flesh*: "Do this because if you do well, you will know you are not a bum! You will know you are worth something." The result: fear, anxiety, pride, anger (if someone blocks you from success).
 In the *spirit*: "Do this because it will please the one who gave you your talents." The result: peacefulness, relaxation, enjoyment.
- d. To "walk in the spirit":
 1. Recognize that both motives are present. Your goal is to continually refine and purify your faith in stages.
 2. Look at what the flesh is verbalizing in your heart. Identify it and denounce (refute) it. "Father, I see how much I want this out of fear. My anxiety and anger occur because I habitually forget your unwavering love for me in Christ. Forgive me and cleanse me from these motives, which rise from the works-righteousness of my old life."
 3. Articulate the motives of the gospel, the Spirit. Say them to yourself as you proceed through the activity. Constantly remind yourself and pray to the Father as his child, reinforcing "adopted child" perspectives. "Father, I do this for you, not for the success it might bring to me. I know that your recognition is the only one I need. I know that I cannot control the situation--you are under control. If I fail it will be woven into your fatherly plan for my life, and you are out for my joy and greatness and glory! "