

CHAPTER SEVEN

OUR RESPONSE

God's priority is Satan's priority!

We can be certain of this! Whatever God's purposes are for mankind, Satan will do his utmost to hinder that work. If it is the Lord's desire that believers live in unity, the enemy works very hard to hinder such unity.

As we study the Bible it is very evident that, high on God's priority list, He wants mankind to be people of *relationships*. He created us for Himself and for one another. From cover to cover, the Bible emphasises relationship, man with God and man with man.

In Genesis, God created man *in His own image* - that they might have fellowship together.¹

Then for the man, He created a woman - *It is not good for man to be alone*.

Later, He chose one man from whom would come a special nation - He called Himself, *The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob* - and He became to their descendants as a Father and a husband.

Satan did all he could to break these relationships - with a lot of help from men themselves! He is still working frantically to draw men from God, to break up families and to destroy the Jews.

The Old Testament ends with a wonderful promise concerning relationships: *"In the (coming) great and terrible day of the Lord, He will turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers."* (Malachi 4: 6).

¹ 1 John 1:3

The emphasis of the New Testament is the same as that of the old, with the added responsibility for the believers of being *in unity* as a foundation for their witness.

Major sections of the NT emphasise this truth, ending with the invitation of the last chapter, “*The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’*” (Revelation 22: 17). ‘Bride’, like ‘Body’ is a relationship word!

Dysfunctional wounds

If the Lord would mature a man or woman to become a mighty warrior, effective in the battle against evil, the enemy will try to ‘cripple’ that soldier, even before he enters the army as a cadet. Satan is **NOT** omniscient and does not know your future, **NOR** is he omnipresent, to wrestle with you every moment, so he must use ‘guerilla’ tactics in the warfare, with his soldiers (demons) using a ‘hit or miss’ policy. Clear ‘hits’ are seen in the high proportion of people classified as coming from ‘dysfunctional’ families. Counsellors, both secular and Christian, spend many hours in trying to teach people how to deal with their wounds, their dysfunction. They hope to bring their counselees to a place of ‘maintenance’ where they learn to effectively use the ‘crutches’ the counsellors offer them. For example, the goal of Alcoholics Anonymous is to enable their members to ‘maintain their sobriety’, rather than to bring them to *healing*. Sadly, many Christian counsellors have adopted worldly methods and tools in dealing with these wounds, seldom bringing their people to the place of healing that Jesus obtained on the cross. “*For by His stripes, we are healed.*” (Isaiah 53: 5).

Satan’s devices wound many who will never even enter the army against him, as they will never avail themselves of the salvation offered them in Christ. However, when one is recognised as being in the Body of Christ, then Satan concentrates his efforts on that man or woman, especially if he or she begins to come on the offensive against him.

The ministry of reconciliation

Jesus came to defeat Satan's power in the life of men. In Him, our new relationship should be manifested in our unity as believers - the unity of the One Body. Satan has no power to destroy this unity, these relationships, but through ignorance, carnality and the unhealthy wounds of our souls, we have given him opportunity.

What can we do to correct this situation? Of course, we can pray! After all, without the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit, we can do nothing! However, we must realise that the Father will seldom answer prayer in those areas where He has already given the authority and responsibility to us. The responsibility for reconciliation between man and man, is no longer His, it is ours. *"God has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation..... and has committed to us the word of reconciliation."* (2 Corinthians 5: 18, 19).

We need to deal with our offences, seek to understand our 'wounds' and use biblical principles to obtain healing, restoration and reconciliation. I trust that this section of the book will give you, if a 'wounded' reader, some assistance in bringing you to a place of wholeness in Christ, knowing as David did, that *"He restores the soul"* (Psalm 23: 3) and that those *"whom the Son sets free, are free indeed."* (John 8: 36).

The offended sheep

For those who are counsellors, elders or pastors, I would charge you that this is your ministry. A passage of Scripture that greatly challenges me as a pastor and counsellor is found in Matthew, chapter 18. The entire context of this chapter is dealing with offence, restoration, reconciliation and forgiveness. I am particularly challenged by Matthew's account of the parable of the shepherd and the hundred sheep (vv 12-14).

“If any man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety and nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying?”

It is a sheep that has left the fold, not a goat. In the NT, believers are usually referred to as ‘sheep’ while the word ‘goat’ is used for non believers. The picture is of the believer who has been offended, and has walked out of the church, possibly with a little poison ready to spread to whomever will listen. All of us have had this happen in our congregations and very often we are tempted to rub our hands together saying, “Good riddance! He was such a miserable man!” Instead, we are urged to go after that sheep, seeking to understand him and to minister to him without condemnation, trusting that the Lord will bring about a reconciliation and restoration. If we did, maybe we would have far fewer ‘miserable men’ in our church!

Sometimes the sheep leaves feeling deeply wounded. I remember a young lady who came to me, deeply hurt because the leaders of her ‘ministry’ had disciplined her, having received some bad reports concerning her. However, no one would tell her what the reports said. I went to see her leaders and was told by her chief judge, that they were “letting her stew in her own juice to teach her a lesson”. I told that leader, who considered himself a pastor, that we have no permission to treat the sheep that way. “If a sheep is caught in a bramble bush, I must crawl in to set it free, even though I may get scratched with thorns and possibly bitten by the hurting sheep. Then I pour in oil and wine and bind up the wounds, before releasing the sheep with the admonition not to go into a bramble bush again. If I hear the bleating again and see the sheep in another bush a little while later, I repeat the process. This continues with more admonition and possible use of a leash, but I can never stand outside the bush, wag my finger and say, ‘Serve you right! Stew in your own juice!’ The Great Shepherd gave me no such permission when He called me to serve as an undershepherd!”

That young lady was dismissed from that ministry, though I had clearly shown her leaders that the reports against her were based on a lie! No wonder she was so badly wounded and needed lengthy professional counselling!