

Oak Mountain Informer

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The Blame Game

If you have been watching the hearings being conducted regarding the September 11 tragedies, perhaps you have noticed how some desire to assess blame for the events of that terrible day. Some suggest that President Bush was to blame. Others say that faulty communication between the FBI and CIA, or a lack of adequate intelligence was responsible. Others are reproached including those who failed to heed the warning of certain governmental officials. It has even been suggested that airplane manufacturers should have developed a device that would have prevented airplanes from crashing into buildings and equipped planes with it.

All of this smacks of political partisanship. Those opposed to President Bush want to blame him and make him look like an ineffective leader so that they and members of their party might be elected. Those who favor President Bush are quick to his defense. It is indeed tragic that people will use such an event to promote their own agenda and quest for personal power. The simple but clear truth is that the terrorists and the terrorists alone are to blame for the events of 9/11.

All of this illustrates the tendency on our part to play the "blame game," and in playing that game to fail to place the blame where it actually belongs. Perhaps more than anywhere else, we play this game in the spiritual realm. We want to blame someone else for our sin. Maybe we blame our bad choices on our parents, the way we were raised, the environment we grew up in, our friends, inadequate Bible class teachers and/or preachers, or other situations that arouse our anger, lust, or greed. Almost anything that will relieve us from shouldering the responsibility ourselves will do.

We see this tendency in Bible characters from Adam (Genesis 3:12) to Aaron (Exodus 32:21-24) to King Saul (1 Samuel 15:20-21). On the other hand, we find David (2 Samuel 12:13) and the Ephesians (Acts 19:18) willing to accept the blame for their actions.

God says that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23) and, your sin has separated you from your God (Isaiah 59:2). Though some may protest, it is God who is true and every man a liar (Romans 3:4). Actually, if we are honest with ourselves, we will admit that we have sinned. Who has not spoken a word

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they should not have? Who has acted in the appropriate way in every case? Who flawlessly has controlled his thoughts. Who has done all the time what he has known he should do? Yet this is what is required to live without sin. Yes, all have sinned.

Who is responsible for these things? The answer is that I am responsible for my sins, and you are responsible for your sins. Though we cannot overlook the influence other people have on the decisions we make, ultimately each one of us, you and I, is to blame for the errors we commit. To think otherwise is only to delude ourselves.

So, what should we do about these things? Should we go to church more? Pray more? Be kinder or more thoughtful? These are at best only part of the answer. We need to do as the Ephesians did (Acts 19). We need to admit our sin, offer no excuse, and come to Jesus for forgiveness. His blood will wash our sins away and we can be free from guilt. From this point we must determine to live free from sin. We

The Sin of Sexual Abuse

Recently I was invited to speak to a group of young people and their parents about the prevalence of sexual messages in the media and the effects of those messages on those who are exposed to them. In the course of this study I came across the following information. It is quite disturbing and some may think it has no place in a church bulletin like this. However, it will do little good to bury our heads in the sand and ignore the problem the following information reflects.

Sexual child abuse is a big problem in our society. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services (Administration for Children and Families) there were 896,000 cases of child abuse or neglect reported in 2002. Of these about 10% were cases of sexual abuse. This means that about 90,000 cases of sexual child abuse were reported that year. One is left to wonder how many *actual* cases there were if this many were reported. Surely not all cases are reported.

Who committed these acts of abuse? Family members and relatives account for 87% of the perpetrators; unmarried partners of a parent account for about 3%. The rest includes people who have some other kind of contact with the child - school employees, camp counselors, coaches, etc. Though we may not want to acknowledge it, the church is not immune to such behavior. To their shame, preachers, Bible class teachers, and other Christians have been involved in this sin.

The following information is taken from an article entitled "Juveniles In Pornography" written by Dr. Mimi Halper Silbert. It reflects her conclusions based on a study she conducted for the National Institute for Mental Health in 1982. While the article primarily deals with children in pornography, it addresses the associated issues of child abuse and child prostitution as well.

Silbert notes the emotional impact of sexual abuse on children. As adults only about 1% of female victims say that they have resolved the issue successfully. All others say that the experience had a negative influence on the way they thought about men, sex, and themselves. About half of the women blamed themselves for the abuse even

though some type of force was used against them during the abuse. Almost all victims thought there was nothing they could do about the situation other than run away from home. Silbert notes that about two-thirds of the victims had not told anyone about the abuse until she had interviewed them (which makes one wonder how often this sin/crime goes unreported altogether).

Silbert suggests that grammar-school aged victims "feel extremely isolated, lonely, and rejected by a group of peers to which they wanted to belong, moving slowly out of isolation and finding friends among deviant groups, where they do not experience rejection. Isolation following sexual abuse was a common experience among all those in the study."

Not suprisingly, victims of abuse seriously consider suicide and attempt suicide at an alarming rate (44% of those involved in Silbert's study).

Hear the words of one victim,

*I was only 11 when it happened. I felt sick and disgusted...I wanted to die; I thought everyone could tell what he did to me by looking at me...I thought my mother would think I was crazy if I told her or maybe she wouldn't even have cared; she's like that...He didn't even love me: he just wanted to try something new. Yeh, I wasn't nothing but a new **** to my own father...After I ran away, I tried to get a straight job, but who would hire a 12-year old dropout who was nuts?...At first, when they tried to talk me into prostituting I said no. Finally, I was scared and hungry and lonely. I figured I was already ruined. I couldn't ever go back home after what happened, so what did I have to lose?*

We should do to others as we would have them do to us (Matthew 7:12). Sexual depravity is condemned in the Bible (1 Corinthians 6:9f). We should be kind and gentle, not violent (Timothy 3:1-5). Yet, all unrighteousness can be forgiven through the blood

April 4, 2004

Attendance

AM Worship: 238

PM Worship: 197

Wednesday Evening:

***Our Goal:
Every member
at every
service!***