

November 2009

I was having coffee the other day with a friend when he began to describe to me a typical morning in his house.

He was running late, in no frame of mind for conversation. But his wife had a few things she needed to run by him. “Honey, what do you think we ought to send the kids for Christmas?” He tried a quick dodge. “I dunno, sweetheart. Just send ‘em what we did last year.” He kept moving towards the door, and as he grabbed the car keys he gave them an extra shake, for effect. (Jingle, jingle, gotta go). She ignored the signal. “What about your mom? Maybe we ought to have her down for Thanksgiving. You know she didn’t come last year....” *O dear Lord*, he thinks, *she’s got a whole list*. By now, the internal commentary running in his head has drowned his wife out, “...and would you call the plumbers?” *She’s nagging me. I hate it when she does that.*

“Okay, Sweetie. Gotta go,” and with that he jumped out the front door, as if his house were on fire. At least, that is the relief he felt upon his escape. But the climax of the scene was yet to be played.

As he pulled out the driveway, he was irritated. He gave way to the irritation, allowed himself to feel irritated. It felt good, in a sick sort of way. Like picking a scab. *I hate it when she does that*. Now what he didn’t realize is that he was being baited. There was another Presence in the car, egging all this on. An external source of provocation, but it felt so linked to real events (what happened in the kitchen) that he didn’t see it for what it was. *She’s always nagging me. She’s such a nag*. It felt so justified. *It’s always been like this*. He took the bait. He made an Agreement.

This sort of thing happens all the time, in all our lives.

Now, this might just peter out, might not be a big deal. The day goes on, he runs into far bigger irritations at work, and by the time he gets home it’s water under the bridge. But those agreements linger, like tiny cracks in the structure. They might go away over time, but more often than not they become the beginnings of deeper fissures. Little cracks don’t matter much in your sidewalk, but in other places they matter a great deal – like airplane wings, for instance, or the Hoover Dam. Places that will come under immense pressure. Like marriage.

A neighbor confided in me one day that he believed he married the wrong woman. “I realized it on my wedding day.” “Really,” I said. “How!?” “It just came to me. *I made a terrible mistake. I married the wrong person.*” I offered that the thought might not have come from God, not even a moment of personal clarity, but a suggestion from the pit of hell. He looked at me with absolute incomprehension, like a frog looks at you. He didn’t believe we have an Enemy. He simply swallowed the lie. And it destroyed his marriage. They had about fifteen years of shared disappointment, during which time he was mostly checked out. After all, he “married the wrong woman.” They divorced last year.

Friends, you have GOT to keep your radar up for these “Agreements.”

Satan is a liar, “the father of lies” (John 8:45), so utterly convincing he deceived a glorious man and woman to betray God, whom they walked with every day. I think we tend to dismiss Adam and Eve as the idiots who got us all into this mess in the first place. But they had not yet sinned; they had

experienced no wounding; they were man and woman in their glory. And they were deceived. It ought to give us all a healthy respect for what the Enemy is capable of. Even the best of us can be taken in.

Now, what this father of lies does is put his “spin” on a situation. It typically comes as a “thought” or a “feeling.” *She doesn’t really love you. He’ll never change. She’s always doing that.* What Satan is hoping to secure from us is an Agreement – that often very subtle but momentous shift in us where we *believe* the spin, we *go with* the feeling, we *accept* as reality the deception he is presenting. (It always *feels* so true). *Just settle for what you’ve got; Don’t risk being hurt again.* Once we buy into the lie, make the agreement, we come under the spell, we come under that interpretation of events. Then it pretty much plays itself out; it becomes self-fulfilling. These agreements begin to define the relationship. They certainly color the way we experience one another. It can be devastating to just let this stuff roll on unchecked and unchallenged.

Look what happened to Adam and Eve.

“It breaks my heart,” our friend Lori said, “to realize I’ve been a Believer for thirty years, and only now am I understanding the category of the Enemy, how he’s trying to take me down.” Better now than never. For the sake of those we love, for the sake of our own lives, we must recognize what’s happening as the Enemy presents us with an Agreement, and give it no quarter. Fight it, resist it, send it packing to the outer reaches of hell. So much is at stake.

The kingdom teeters on the hundred small choices we make every day.

I felt a reminder about the power of Agreements was in order, especially with the holidays coming and often that means time spent with family – or time alone – and all the opportunities for Agreements which go with it! This is an excerpt from *Love and War*, Stasi and my new book that releases December 15! (You can pre-order online now through Amazon and other e-tail sites). And, we’re coming your way on tour in January and February. Tickets available now at www.loveandwar.net!

We are also proud to announce the release of our newest video series for men – *Fathered by God*. An incredible journey for small groups of men to take together! (More about this awesome resource in the insert we’ve enclosed; check out the trailer at www.ransomedheart.com/fbg).

Lastly, I wanted to ask you to consider a financial gift to Ransomed Heart as the year approaches its finale. I know the economy hit many homes; I know it’s been a rough year for a lot of folks. I also know many of you have given to us sacrificially, and we are *profoundly* grateful! So with humility I simply wanted to ask you to pray about it. Ask God, *Jesus, what would you have me do to help Ransomed Heart?* Stasi and I take this approach to our giving, and it is so freeing. We know we are doing what God would have us do, and we know he’ll provide the means to do it! That takes all the pressure off.

Okay, that’s it for this month. Head’s up to Agreements.

And know that we love and appreciate you!


John