

UNPICKING THE PANDEMIC THIEF'S POCKET

Part 5 – Who Now Can I Trust?

THE ISSUE: Coming out of the pandemic, there is a sense that, at our time of GREATEST NEED, we looked to people around us for SUPPORT and we felt they LET US DOWN.

→ *Do you feel 'let down?' If so, by whom? Do you think your expectations of them were reasonable? If you were facing lockdown again, what do you think you personally would have done differently?*

3 AGENDAS THE ENEMY HAD IN PLAY

1. UNDERMINING & BREAKING RELATIONSHIPS

- * The Enemy knows the power of AGREEMENT in MARRIAGE → So, he's after that.
- * He knows the power of UNITY in the CHURCH → So, he's gunning for that.
- * He knows that if IRON stops sharpening IRON, Christians become BLUNT → So, he's after that.

Identify relationships that are important to you & INVEST in them heavily, GUARD them ferociously & VALUE them tremendously.

→ *Did you lose any relationships over the Covid period? Did you gain any?*

→ *Why is fracturing relationships so foundational to the Enemy's strategy? Which relationships is he after and why?*

→ *How do you invest in and guard your important relationships?*

2. SOWING SEEDS OF OFFENCE & UNFORGIVENESS

- * Sometimes offence comes from GENUINE SIN aimed in your direction.
- * Sometimes offence comes from EXPECTATIONS UNMET, whether realistic or unrealistic.
- * Sometimes offence comes when you've JUMPED TO CONCLUSIONS and got it wrong.

→ *If you picked up any form of offence through lockdown, which of those three categories did it fall into? What unrealistic expectations was it tempting to put on people during lockdown? How good are you at guessing other people's motives and why is that a dangerous sport?*

THE DANGER = If you allow a SEED of OFFENCE to take root in the SOIL of INSECURITY, that produces a ROOT of BITTERNESS, leading to the FRUIT of RESENTMENT.

→ *Why is that offence seed dangerous? How does it grow? Why is insecurity such a fertile soil for offence? What are the fruits of resentment?*

THREE SCRIPTURES

- Undischarged offence is POISON. Unforgiveness is a PRISON (2 Cor 2:10-11).
- You GUARD your HEART by FORGIVING quickly & frequently (Prov 4:23).
- Learn to YIELD to GRACE every time (Heb 12:14-15).
→ *What are the dangers of unforgiveness? How might the Enemy 'outwit' us?*
→ *"If you let a lingering offence start to dominate your thought-life, it can become defining 'stronghold.'" Discuss!*
→ *"Forgiveness is a decision, but more than that, it's an attitude" Discuss!*
→ *How does forgiveness act as a guard over your heart?*

3. STIRRING REBELLION AGAINST AUTHORITY

- * There's no such thing as a PERFECT SOLUTION to an IMPOSSIBLE PROBLEM.
- * What we all needed during Covid was GRACE. What we got instead was OUTRAGE, media HYPERBOLE, constant FEARMONGERING and political POINT-SCORING.
- * The Enemy is trying to turn God's things UPSIDE-DOWN. Don't get SUCKERED into that.

→ *What should we have expected from our authority-figures during Covid? What should our attitude towards them have been? How do you honour when they've made what you perceive to be a mistake?*

→ *What is our responsibility to those in authority? How do we act that out?*

→ *Why is the Enemy so keen to upset lines and orders of authority? Why are such lines important? What is the Enemy trying to 'turn upside-down'?*

→ *Why was grace in such short supply during Covid? Was it? Have we become a graceless society?*

A SURPRISING THOUGHT: God doesn't tell us to TRUST them; He tells us to LOVE them (John 13:34-35, Romans 13:8, 2 Timothy 2:22).

THE MASTER TEXT ON LOVE (1 Corinthians 13:4-8)

- Love is PATIENT → NURTURING, TOLERANT, teases the BEST out of people, gives them SECOND CHANCES.
- Love is KIND → Kindness should be UNCONDITIONAL.
- Love does not DISHONOUR others → HONOUR is not to be SOUGHT, but is definitely to be GIVEN.
- Love is not SELF-SEEKING → The QUALITY of your love is best demonstrated when you don't GET YOUR OWN WAY.
- Love keeps NO RECORD of WRONGS → If you're storing up a list of OFFENCES, you have stepped out of LOVE and into DANGER.
→ *What is the Enemy doing to undermine that kind of love in society? How/why is that kind of love so powerful, effective and/or attractive?*