

A MESSAGE FROM PURITY PARADIGM

Of Pimples, Sin and Tragedy.

Heather McEwan 31.7.07

Once upon a time I think I must have thought the Christian life was a bit boring. I think I thought that because I let the world lure me away from walking with Jesus for a time during my late teenage/early adult years.

These days I often feel that living the Christian life can be a bit like **walking along the edge of a precipice**, never knowing which way the wind is going to blow. It's exciting and wonderful, terrifying and mystifying, exhilarating and comforting to know if the wind should blow you over the edge, that just as He has promised and is faithful – He will bear us up on wings as eagles... like the mamma eagle who tips the egrets from the nest watching them plummet and flap about madly as they fall **but then swoops in under them before they go 'splat'**. Sometimes I have felt awfully close to going splat but realised that He did catch me... He did bear me up.

One of my friends has this little piece of glass stuck in her cheek. It's been there for over 20 years – since a teenage car accident. This little shard is so tiny it's never been able to be removed and sits there mostly without notice or complication, but every now and then, it flares up... fills with infection and oozes around the edges of the scar. Eventually it heals over... increasing the area of the scar... making it harder for the infection to escape next time.

I have described **sin** to our kids as being **like the core of a pimple**. Where unless we get the core out, it will reinfect, becoming larger and larger each time it becomes an issue. Sometimes the removal of the core can be painful! It requires some poking and prodding and squeezing – perhaps over a few days – before it's all out. If we don't get the core out, it will reinfect, bigger and more painfully – with increased scarring to have to break through. All this was caused by the tiniest piece of dirt or bacteria or other infection. Something foreign to the body.

Sin has been so much a part of us that since The Fall (Genesis 3), it **masquerades as a normal part** of our flesh. We so often don't recognise it as the foreign body... the intruder that it is. We may look on it as something normal, or that we treat topically without ever really getting to the core (the heart). We never heal the sore spot. We continue to make allowance and justification and provide cover for it.

A very common prayer I have prayed for our kids is that they will get busted when they need to!

A couple of more spiritual ways of phrasing that might be "that their sins might find them out", or that "God may bring their sin to the light" or as in part of the original prayer which I think I picked up in the series 4 GKGW "Let me see this day what I need to correct and let that which may pass pass me by". Essentially it means the same thing... "Lord help our kids get busted where they need to have sin brought to the surface that their heart be known and taught".

This is **not a prayer for the faint hearted** because He *will* bring it to pass. Sometimes I have wanted to crawl under a rock for a good 20 years or so... in fact raising kids on a mountain top and knitting yak yarn jumpers for a living was looking good there for a while.

I have known nothing else yet in my life (gulp, oh help Lord, what next?) more humbling than the sin or error of our kids combined with the fact that as leaders of one sort or another we are somehow 'meant to have it together'. One time I was questioned on this in regard to our children, and I simply answered that our kids are entitled to their childhood – without who we are, or who others perceive us to be – getting in the way. It's a tricky balance, no doubt.

Perhaps you're a teacher, a Pastor, an elder, a course leader - and with that comes all sorts of expectations; on ourselves, of others, and thirdly what we allow ourselves to perceive others put on us! All can create different responses/reactions.

One of the single most helpful things I have ever got out of all the leadership training we have done was a line in one of the GFI workshops – can't remember which one – which posed the question **"do you humbly**

accept the reality of your child's sin nature". This has helped me breathe deep and walk through many a difficult door – sometimes into a teachers or Principals office, sometimes through gateways in my own heart and sometimes pushing through to the unknown depths of a growing child's heart. They are not paper cut-outs of us, or of each other... we can find things in their hearts which we would never have expected as each is so unique. Their circumstances, factors, teaching, discipline, personalities and experiences all adding up to quite different outcomes. Not at all formula.

Every Christian is a leader.

Every Christian is in ministry.

One of our kids once asked me if I pulled back from something I was involved with because of them. This is not a kid who wants to be trifled with... this is a kid who wants the guts of a matter. My answer had to be real. My answer was this... "no I did not... I felt like it at times but my reasons were simply practical. Also I have come to the conclusion that if everyone who had issues, all withdrew from ministry there'd be no one left".

Everyone needs someone who's been on their trail to help them in their way.

2CO 1:3-5 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.

Breakdown: "do you ¹humbly accept the ²reality of ³your child's ⁴sin nature".

¹ Humbly accept

Without justification, excuse finding, fault finding or casting blame.
A knowing of possibility.

I don't know how many times I've heard parents insist their particular child doesn't lie. I tend to think that there go the best liars of all. Man lies because he IS a liar. Maybe some have less issue. Some certainly are compulsive about it, but all by commission, omission, voice inflection, - depending on the stakes – are capable.

² Reality

Sin is not just what we commit... it is the flesh nature... the propensity... the leaning towards. I think sometimes those who become Christians later in life understand this better. They know what they've been forgiven for! Those who've lived lives free of the 'big sins' perhaps have not faced this realisation head on yet.

Another reality that fits hand in glove here, is the more we recognise our sinfulness, the bigger God's grace becomes. The bigger His love. The bigger the impact of His love. The less worthy - the more noteworthy.

³ Your child's

When speaking to a group of adults once I read a funny excerpt from an Adrian Plass book where he was attending a dance test with his little daughter. It's a while since I read it, but it was along the lines of how accurate the judges were on their points and comments on all the other children but how useless and pathetic they were when it came to their judgement on HIS little angel. I talked to the group about how this love for our kids takes us by surprise in it's force and almost violence of feeling.

May the force of our love for them help us lead them for their ultimate good not their (or our) short term ease.

⁴ Sin nature

I talked with an older woman once who explained how the fear of God was put into her. She was taught in Sunday School some 70 years ago that she would go to hell if she broke the 10 commandments.

How many I wonder have grown up with this backwards view of sin? That we are sent off to hell when we sin... not that we deserve hell because we are born sinners who cannot stand before a sinless holy God without being washed in the blood of Jesus? That we all are in the same boat – deserving punishment, being offered mercy, forgiveness and grace?

In all of this it needs be said that we are not to assume automatic guilt. But do we see a propensity to sin and a possibility of it?

Another friend of mine talked about how her mum taught her to Champion her children.

To me this means (in part) that we stand by them. Through thick *or* thin. Right *or* wrong. Not covering but supporting, not condemning but showing them a Way.

Another tack on: “do you humbly accept the reality of your child’s sin nature”.

Equally difficult to face is that I’m a child too. Just taller.

There are layers of protection I place around me – for me, and for my child.

There are many faces on deceit...

- “It’s normal”
- “It’s OK”
- “He’ll grow out of it”
- “It wasn’t her fault”
- “She was lead”
- “It was that other little snot”
- “It doesn’t matter”
- “I shouldn’t have to deal with this!”
- “It’s not possible!”
- “How dare you!”
- “You’re over reacting”
- “I think you should look at your own issues”
- “You just don’t understand...”

Shall we name some true deceits? Do we dare?

- Pride
- Shame
- Denial
- Justification
- Blaming
- Avoidance
- Minimising
- Intimidating
- Patronising
- Charm
- Blame
- Self pity

*All a man's ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the LORD.
Proverbs 16:2*

*He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.
Proverbs 28:13*

Salvation can be instant, sanctification is life-long.

When a sign or symptom appears - what will you do?

When the Holy Spirit whispers - 'pay attention here', 'check into this', 'do not rest' What will you do?

When your emotions want everything to be OK but your gut keeps niggling that it's really not - what will you do?

The pimple/pus/scarring/reinfection analogy is very fitting. **Anything not dealt with comes back bigger and worse.**

What's the bigger tragedy:

- A child whose behaviour makes you embarrassed or uncomfortable for a season or a teen who walks away from God because they didn't learn to look into their hearts?
- A child who must apologise or a teen that will not?
- A child who feels ashamed by their actions or a teen that sees no need?
- A parent who faces life square-on or a child who learns excuse making by example?

Steps to Tragedy in Spiritual Leadership

Author Unknown

1. Neglect your family for the sake of ministry to others. (Make sure the priority of ministry over family is apparent to your family)
2. Gradually begin to focus more on the process of leadership rather than on your own spiritual growth
3. Be concerned with your image as a spiritual leader to the point that you do not seek help for personal family struggles from others because it might affect your established/perceived image.
4. Surround yourself with 'yes' men/women.
5. Allow your husband/wife relationship to deteriorate to a physical union rather than a spiritual union.
6. Begin to enjoy and seek leadership opportunities in a sinful manner (i.e. self gratification/centre of attention) rather than in a servant manner.
7. Become characterised by lack of spiritual authenticity within your own family (Don't walk the talk but require your family to).
8. Allow your prayer life to become repetitive, shallow and infrequent. (E.g. allow your mind to wander during public prayer time)
9. Focus your eyes primarily on the words and actions of spiritual leaders rather than on Christ and His Word.
10. Begin to view leadership as a necessity/requirement in your life and not a privilege granted you by the Lord.