

Developing a Sound Mind (Part 2)

7. Control Fallacies and Blame

Misplaced blame is something many people are guilty of. If we get this right we can solve many of our problems. We blame others when it is our responsibility. We blame ourselves when it is outside our control.

External. You blame others, e.g., your boss for having to do overtime, for your poor quality of work. “If my boss gave me more time my work would be better.” By saying this you give external control to someone else. You could do it, but there are other people who have less time that could do a better job than you have been doing. Some people like to blame their children. These are strongholds. To whom or what do you tend to assign blame for your situation. This is prevalent in our worldview on the continent of Africa. We tend to be fatalistic and it affects our future planning and ability to solve problems.

Internal. You continually blame yourself for someone else’s happiness or sadness. “If my spouse is sad it must be because of something I have or have not done.” We see this when people are co-dependent. Your spouse may come home drunk and stumble up the staircase and based on this you decide to move into a bungalow. Can you handle someone else being frustrated or sad or do you believe it is because of something you have done wrong? Instead of being concerned for the person your deeper interest is ensuring that they are not too upset with you. If you believe the latter it is a stronghold in your mind and if you do not deal with it you are going to become someone who tries to control and manipulate every situation to keep people happy. When they are happy you are happy. Do you automatically blame yourself when your child fails a test? “I am a bad parent.”

You are responsible for your own behaviour. You cannot say someone made you do something or that someone made you feel bad about something because that is a lie. Based on a choice you either respond or react, and when you react you display your weaknesses. Do not let anyone’s poor choice of words affect your dignity. Treat everyone with honour and respect because you are an honourable person. Who are you blaming for your situation right now? On the other hand if you are high on responsibility you might find yourself blaming yourself for other people’s choices and behaviour. It’s important to remember that there is a difference between influence and control over others. Self-blame sometimes offers you an illusion of control and it also avoids attack on others. Sometimes self-blame is learned from childhood. “If I take the blame then I won’t have to be angry with dad and he will not be angry with me.”

Philippians 4:8 ESV

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

This verse does not qualify the situation. Paul wrote this whilst in prison.

8. Fallacy of Reward and Fairness

The reward fallacy is expecting that sacrifice and self-denial have an automatic immediate pay-off. When this does not happen you so get disappointed and think that life is not worth living.

The fairness fallacy is very common. Life does not work out like a formula and if you were told that life is fair you will often be disappointed. You may tithe more than someone else and therefore expect that your breakthrough should happen faster. God does not think like we do. His thoughts are much higher than our thoughts and His ways higher than ours. “Lord I pray more than her but why did she get married before me?” The Bible throughout tells us not to worry when we see the wicked prosper because that is not the end of the story.

Ps 37:1 – 9 NLT

¹ Don’t worry about the wicked or envy those who do wrong. ² For like grass, they soon fade away. Like spring flowers, they soon wither. ³ Trust in the LORD and do good. Then you will live safely in the land and prosper. ⁴ Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you your heart’s desires. ⁵ Commit everything you do to the LORD. Trust him, and he will help you. ⁶ He will make your innocence radiate like the dawn, and the justice of your cause will shine like the noonday sun. ⁷ Be still in the presence of the LORD, and wait patiently for him to act. Don’t worry about evil people who prosper

or fret about their wicked schemes. ⁸ *Stop being angry! Turn from your rage! Do not lose your temper— it only leads to harm.* ⁹ *For the wicked will be destroyed, but those who trust in the LORD will possess the land.*

Wise to measure life by looking at eternity not just this year.

9. Debilitating rules

We feel very drained, stressed and shamed because of debilitating rules we have created for ourselves. These often manifest in 'shoulds' (weights) that Christ has not put on us. If you live by 'shoulds' you will always live in guilt, shame and self-loathing because it is a standard that has erected itself above the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Beware especially of 'shoulds' that are not in the Bible. "I should speak to people like this", "I am 30 therefore I should be doing....", "By now I should be this far." Who said? Have you received a prophetic word that said "because you are this age you should be doing this or that by now? That is another lie from the devil. Perhaps you put 'shoulds' on other people, for example, telling your spouse how they 'should' dress. What 'shoulds' have you got in your life that are not based on the Word of God? Don't SHOULD on people unless you can back it up scripturally. Tear them down because they are strongholds causing conflict in your life. Remember God knows you better than you know yourself. What are the debilitating rules you have created for yourself? How can you replace these with empowering rules?

Luke 11:46

Jesus replied, "And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them.

Sadly, we do this to ourselves.

10. Emotional Reasoning

We live out our feelings even though they are based on lies. "I feel it so it must be true". "I feel stupid so I must be stupid". You may be living from your emotions and even though they are so real to you they are based on lies and the fruit of those lies is a negative belief pattern. This is a bit of a reversal because your emotions reflect your thoughts and beliefs. Your emotions are a product of your belief system and not the other way round. Your emotional state is somewhat invalid as a source of truth if your thoughts and beliefs are distorted and biased. Many times we think a problem is impossible to solve because we feel hopeless. Sometimes we feel angry towards someone and assume that this means the person is acting badly towards us.

Prov 25:28

Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control.

Our emotions are useful in many ways but it is important to not absolutise them. Self-control is part of having a sound mind. Your emotions are linked to the meaning you attach to events around you, which can be very subjective.

11. Fallacy of change

To what extent is your life externally referenced? "If others change then I will be happy." "If my spouse just does this and that I will be happy." No you will not because you will just find other things to tweak. "If I just earn R50K more then I will have peace." No, you will want something else. Your standards will change. Your source of happiness and joy should not come from someone else but from Jesus. God can give you supernatural, unspeakable joy even if you are going through relational difficulty. You may think "if I just get this or that I will be changed forever" and once you get it you are no different. Why? You are the common denominator. The issues are with you. When we are honest about this it helps us to deal with idolatry in our heart. "If I just lose X Kg's then I will be happy and feel pretty". Goal setting is wonderful and I love to teach on this subject but I have also learnt that if we make goal attainment our source of joy and peace we will always be disillusioned. Here is a classic biblical illustration of this seen in the life of Leah.

Gen 29:30-35

³⁰ *Jacob slept with Rachel as well, and indeed, he loved Rachel more than Leah. So he worked for Laban another seven years.* ³¹ *When the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, He opened her womb; but Rachel was barren.* ³² *And Leah conceived and gave birth to a son, and she named him Reuben, for she said, "The LORD has seen my affliction. Surely*

my husband will love me now.”³³ Again she conceived and gave birth to a son, and she said, “Because the LORD has heard that I am unloved, He has given me this son as well.” So she named him Simeon.³⁴ Once again Leah conceived and gave birth to a son, and she said, “Now at last my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons.” So he was named Levi.³⁵ And once more she conceived and gave birth to a son and said, “This time I will praise the LORD.” So she named him Judah. Then Leah stopped having children.

12. Global Labelling and Mislabelling

You keep saying to yourself, “I am a loser” but you only failed in one task. Instead of saying “Every day I drop my children off with good assistants at the day-care” you say “Every day I abandon my children to strangers.” If you keep saying this you are not going to see yourself as a good parent and will continually be riddled with guilt. This also occurs in marriage and is a major source of conflict. Instead of saying “My spouse is fairly untidy and needs to up their game in terms of tidiness” you say, “They love to live in a pig-sty.” It then grows into “They have no respect for me.” Thereafter it becomes “I can’t be married to a pig.” It developed from them just leaving their socks in the lounge to “I can’t be married to a pig.” The spirit of divorce is very often linked to the spirit of lying. Every divorce is riddled with lies. Sometimes the labels we give ourselves are biased because human beings are far too complex to be described by a single descriptor. So be careful of saying things like, “I am stupid.” “I am ugly.”

Be careful of the voice of the accuser of the brethren. When you entertain this voice it ruins your relationships. This voice distorts truth. This voice exaggerates what’s happening in reality. We end up believing our own words, despite the fact that they are often demonically inspired.

Rev 12:10

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down."

Assumption/Misbelief/Guardian Lie: It is possible and fair to sum up an entire human being and their life in one word.

13. Always being right

This is a stronghold for many people. You have to be right at all costs despite how others feel. Your mind-set is, “If I lose this argument people will think that I am weak.” This stems from a lie you have believed that exaggerates the consequences of losing an argument. You need to come to a point where you can apologise. Your identity cannot be in your correctness, perfection or the power you feel you have over people because of this correctness. Would you rather be right or reconciled? This is an example of needing to win at all costs. This has ruined marriages and has also caused people to get fired unnecessarily.

Prov 12:15

The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice.

14. Minimizing

We see this happening when friends try to correct someone’s substance abuse and they keep downplaying it. Often people that are co-dependent do this. They rationalise someone’s behaviour and make excuses for it. Are there serious issues you are facing that you keep downplaying. Perhaps you do so in the name of faith, or “not worrying”. “Crisis, what crisis?” What have those around you been saying to you that you have rejected in your stubbornness? I have experienced this when it comes to running. What causes you to minimise certain things? Perhaps you don’t want to deal with it. Maybe you are in denial.

Prov 15:31

Whoever heeds life-giving correction will be at home among the wise.

1 Pet 5:8

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

What are people telling you? You need to slow down. You have an anger issue. You are overeating. You are not getting enough sleep. You have a drinking problem.