



Psychology Reimagined

What Are You Passing Along to Others?

Looking back, at the age of eight or nine, my life took a dramatic turn. I always walked to school, whether it was to elementary school or high school. I may have gotten some rides when it rained but almost always I trudged to school by myself. I passed several businesses and homes along the way and one day I made a decision that dramatically impacted how I saw myself. I walked into a grocery store while heading to school and casually cruised about, not having a dime to my name, without a cent in my pockets. I walked to the back and there was a barrel of individually wrapped little hard candies called Jolly Ranchers. Carefully peeking about to see if anyone was looking, I shoved my hand in the barrel, pulled out one small candy, thrust it into my pocket and swiftly walked out of the store. Not once did I pull out that little candy from my pocket the entire way to school. I didn't take it out at school and never touched it on my walk home. My conscience was inflamed with guilt and for the first time ever, I felt the weight of sin clinging to me.

Have you ever realized you had sinned and felt the ugliness of your action? In what is the basis of Christian psychology, the Apostle John makes this profound statement. **If we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.** (1 John 1: 7 CSB) Let's consider a more literal translation of what John wrote. **And if in the light we continually walk as He Himself is in the light, we continually have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His son cleanses us from every sin.** Now what does it mean to "walk in the light"? This is of course the foundation of all real change that matters and brings emotional and psychological health. It is the basis of living well. Walking in the light is allowing the transforming power of Christ's death and resurrection to work in you to bring eternal life to your actions and attitudes. The blood of Jesus is God's plan for making you perfect and taking out of you the deadly effects of sin. The fundamental error most, if not nearly all in the field of psychology make is the lack of recognition sin has in damaging human personality. And it is not just the sins you commit but also the sins others commit against you or around you and not only in your time but since the beginning of time itself when Adam introduced sin into the world.

Consider this case study to help get at how sin impacts not just individuals but even generations. The first we know about David in the Bible is when he was a young man. God had decided to send the prophet Samuel to David's home to anoint David as the next king. The only problem was that Samuel didn't know it was to be David, he just understood that someone at that house was to be the future ruler of Israel. **The Lord said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king."** (1 Samuel 16: 1 NIV) It was a monumental event for the prophet Samuel to show up at the little town of Bethlehem and the leaders came out to greet him. They wondered if Samuel was there to start trouble, but he reassured them. **Samuel replied, "Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me." Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.** (1 Samuel 16: 5 NIV)

This is where the account gets fascinating. Samuel went to Jesse's house and started trying to figure out which of his sons was to be the next king. /shockingly, none of them there were God's choice. How could that have been? God sent him there. Was it a waste of time? Of course not. It turned out Jesse had one more son who wasn't at home. Where was he? Of his eight boys, only one was gone. It was the youngest. David. And where was he? Out in the field taking care of his dad's sheep! Does this strike you as strange? It does me. The greatest day ever for that family, the visit of Samuel, the second biggest celebrity in all of Israel was there to eat lunch with them and David was left out in the pasture taking care of the sheep. What

does that say about how his father Jesse thought of him. Now, before you jump to Jesse's defense and argue that Jesse did not have anyone else to take care of the sheep and David had to be there, pause a moment. Not much later, Jesse's older boys had joined King Saul's army to fight against the Philistines and David, the youngest was sent by his father to bring the older sons food to help them get by and to share with their commanders. Listen carefully to the oldest son's reaction to David showing up on the battlefield. **Early in the morning David left the flock with a shepherd, loaded up and set out, as Jesse had directed. He reached the camp as the army was going out to its battle positions, shouting the war cry.** (1 Samuel 17: 20 NIV) At the time, Goliath the giant was challenging the men of Israel to mano et mano combat to the death. David was interested, as any young man would, in what this was all about so he went around asking various Israelite soldiers what was with the challenge Goliath was issuing to the Israelites. The oldest son of Jesse was having nothing of this. He angrily came after his younger brother David. **When Eliab, David's oldest brother, heard him speaking with the men, he burned with anger at him and asked, "Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the desert? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle."** (1 Samuel 17: 28 NIV)

Consider this with great thought. Two points to make here. 1. There was someone available to take care of the sheep and only a few sheep at that according to Eliab. It was the shepherd the father Jesse had in his employ. That same shepherd could have taken care of the sheep when Samuel was at the ranch looking for the future king there. Jesse, the father, left David out in the field, thus missing out on the biggest day in his life. Jesse had every son there...all seven of the others, but David was not included in the feast and at first denied the opportunity to meet the great Samuel. Why would he do that to his youngest son? It is conjecture but consider how Eliab treated him. He called him conceited and wicked in heart, showing up only because he wanted to get a front row seat to the battle. Where did that attitude originate? Usually older brothers are protective and generous to their much younger brothers! Could it be it was passed down from dear old dad who didn't think enough of David to include him in the great feast? 2. David seems to have been the rejected son, unvalued and disrespected. No father should do that to any of his children, let alone the most vulnerable, the youngest of eight sons!

Let's take this one step further. What would you imagine this would do to the personality of one treated this way? Would it not lead to a certain level of craving for attention, affirmation, and respect? Every son or daughter who has faced this same sort of treatment at home knows exactly what I am describing. Consider this. After David killed Goliath and became a famous war hero for his exploits on the battlefield, his fortunes changed dramatically. No longer was he the despised and rejected eighth son, now he was the talk of the land. **When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with tambourines and lutes. As they danced, they sang: "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands."** (1 Samuel 18: 6-7 NIV) That's pretty heady stuff for someone who was ignored and despised at home. What came next is almost heart-breaking. Saul grew increasingly jealous of David's popularity and became paranoid he would try to take the crown from him.

Here is a question to ask yourself. Most people think it is all on Saul, that he had no reason to be afraid David would lead a rebellion against him. But is that the case? Could it be, that someone who had never been appreciated by his father and was disregarded by his family might have had a really tough time, once he became so revered, to make it clear that he didn't see himself as the bigshot, as the man of the hour and even more important than the king himself? Would it have been easy to demur when beautiful women and handsome, virile young men told him he was greater than the king? Developed insecurity and feelings of inadequacy are hard to shake loose and it would seem that David probably did not work hard to alleviate the king's fears that David hoped to wrench the kingdom from him. Sin is not just something you do; it is also a force that shapes your personality. Is it possible that those ten years David spent running from Saul in the desert and even the terrible fate Saul and his own sons suffered on the battlefield could have been avoided



if one father, Jesse, had made sure to help his youngest son know that he was loved and valued? The sins of fathers can and do get passed along to their children. But so can their salvation! When you have been born again you have a new heritage to pass along, one of grace and mercy and generosity and freedom from sin. The Apostle Paul has this prayer to pass along and perhaps it could be the gift we give to those God puts in our lives. **May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.** (Romans 15: 13 NIV) Out of the overflow of God's work in us can stream joy and peace and Christian love to those Christ gives us.