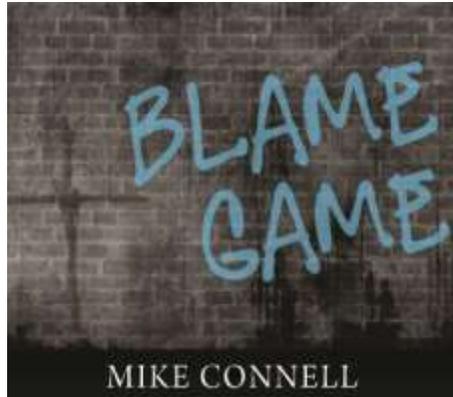


Blame Game

Mike Connell



🔊 Audio Transcripts of Sunday Sermons

Smashwords Edition

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Blame Game (3 sermons)

[Passing the Blame \(1 of 3\)](#) "It's not my fault, you can't blame me for that". If we don't relentlessly deal with the Blame Game, then we think we're trying to move in faith, but we're actually continuing old patterns of unbelief and irresponsibility. The Blame Game started in Genesis, when God talked to Adam & Eve about eating the fruit of the tree. When they started blaming, God stopped talking - they experienced the consequences of their decision. Will you stop blaming and start to take responsibility? Find creative options. Take action. Jesus took responsibility for the sins of the world, offering hope and a different future.

[You Always Have a Choice \(2 of 3\)](#) God empowered man with a free will, and the ability to overcome challenges in life. Man learned to be helpless, he developed limiting beliefs about himself. Israel learned to be slaves (helpless) in Egypt. The challenges they faced in the wilderness were designed to shift their slave mentality to explore what God had for them. We have the ability to handle every challenge in life if we choose to believe & trust God. We disqualify ourselves from our destiny, purpose & blessing if we blame & make excuses. Learn how you can break free from learned helplessness. Choose to change.

[Dealing with Failure \(3 of 3\)](#) The origin of the Blame Game is failure. Blame places the responsibility for a failure/mistake on people or circumstances. We all fail, we need to

admit that. Take responsibility and acknowledge failure so that God can lift you up, and you can change. Look at some of the glorious mistakes & failures recorded in the Bible, then discover powerful keys for handling our failures and moving on.

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Passing the Blame (1 of 3)

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"It's not my fault, you can't blame me for that". If we don't relentlessly deal with the Blame Game, then we think we're trying to move in faith, but we're actually continuing old patterns of unbelief and irresponsibility. The Blame Game started in Genesis, when God talked to Adam & Eve about eating the fruit of the tree. When they started blaming, God stopped talking - they experienced the consequences of their decision. Will you stop blaming and start to take responsibility? Find creative options. Take action. Jesus took responsibility for the sins of the world, offering hope and a different future.

[13:35] I want to just start on another short series. This year we're looking at what it means to be apostolic, but what I want to do at this point is I want to just address an issue, which is a big one in New Zealand, called the Blame Game, the Blame Game. I'm sure you have played it. It goes like this: it's not my fault. You can't blame me for that, it's not my fault. We have a culture you know, we live in a culture, which is a culture of blame. When you live in a culture of blame, you start to think and act and behave and do what everyone else does, so when there's a culture which one of the aspects of culture is people blame one another, we then turn to get in, buy in and do the same kind of thing. So when people blame someone else, they kind of feel a bit better; oh not my fault, it's you, it's what you did. The problem is that, when you blame someone else, you remain powerless to change your situation; and God is wanting us to become empowered as people and believers.

If you're going to be empowered as a believer, and begin to move in dimensions of faith, you have to be relentless in addressing any habits you have of passing the buck, or blaming someone else. To walk in faith will require that we take responsibility, so I want to push in on this area of the blame game, so we begin to understand what it looks like, sounds like, so that we can deal with it. There was an interesting thing in the United States recently. Two very overweight women sued McDonalds. [Laughter] They sued

McDonalds, for not warning them of the dangers of their food causing them to put on weight, and creating physically attractive and psychologically addictive food; so their condition of being overweight was McDonald's fault. Fortunately the judge saw through that, and threw the case out, but what on earth is going through people's minds, that they think you can blame someone else for their weight? It's about a way of thinking, a blaming way of thinking.

As we open this up over a couple of weeks, you're going to start to find it everywhere. It comes up in such subtle ways but the core of it is something like this; instead of taking ownership of the problem, and doing something about it; people blame someone else, or something else, see? The reason I'm not married, is there's not enough Christian men in the church. Oh, what did they just blame? Just blamed the church. Oh too bad, you'll stay single the rest of your life then, because you've assigned responsibility outside yourself. You've put the blame for your single condition outside yourself, somewhere else. Whoa, that was a bit close. I shouldn't have started that deep so quick should I aye? [Laughter] That's a bit nasty wasn't it aye? [Laughs] Oh well. Got really difficult times financially you know, the nation's going through a bad time. Blame! Is God my source or not? Where am I putting the blame? Where I put the blame, is where I put the responsibility; and when I put the responsibility out there, I'm left unable to do anything except be powerless, resentful and talk negatively about how bad it is.

So if we don't relentlessly deal with the blame game, we will find: on the one hand we think we're trying to move in faith; on the other hand we're actually continuing old patterns of unbelief and irresponsibility. It's everywhere. It is everywhere. So normally people blame - so we ask people: well what's your problem? They tell you where the problems are. Well how come they're problems? Oh well it was my father, it was my mother, she abandoned us. Yeah well heaps of mothers have done that, but it doesn't mean to say you end up with a mess. You've got to make a choice how you respond to that bad deal. You have to learn to play the cards you're dealt, not wish you got a different hand. God knows how we're going to come into this world, and knows what we're going to experience, and He's promised to help us, if we will stop blaming, and step up, and begin to think creatively what to do. If we're going to be faith people, we have to think creatively about the problems of life; and I want to get us out of blaming, and into some other kind of thing.

So people have got all kinds of reasons why they're like they are: well it was my teachers, you don't understand, that first year at school - oh well I was at high school ... terrible! Listen, I am hearing blame. You're putting the problem on someone else. Maybe they did contribute to it, maybe they did some very bad things; but at the end, if you don't stop blaming, you remain powerless and helpless, and you remain a victim of what happened. We have to make decisions, what we'll do about the hand we've been dealt by life. Here's another one: people blame the government, or they blame the church; you don't understand, that last church I was in - well the pastor or the leader or the... I'm hearing blame, because you're ascribing the reason you are like you are, to someone else or something else. You have to recognise the reason you are the way you are, is because of the choices you've made; and if you made bad ones, you can

make better ones - and even better ones, see? So we blame everyone; we blame our background. Well you don't understand my background, I never had the education - woops! Blame.

There's heaps of people succeed in life without education. Come on, you've got to think this one through, and you'd be amazed. Well I had some bad experiences, I was abused. A lot of people in life are abused, it's a terrible thing, incredibly wounding and hurtful - but that does not determine your future, how you respond does. It's not what happened to you, its how you chose to respond, is the key. My lack of opportunity, I didn't have opportunity! Listen, everyone's got opportunities; what did you do with the ones you go? So you'll find in our culture, and I want you to listen for it this week. As people talk, I want you to listen for the sound of someone who is losing, blaming someone else. They will blame a person, or they will blame circumstances. How come you were late here? Oh well you understand, the traffic. Yeah, you're blaming something else, and so it goes on. You'll find everywhere in life, people want to blame, so I want to get into this whole thing of the Blame Game.

Let's have a look first of all, see how God designed us. Genesis 1:26-28, God said: let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion. Verse 28: God blessed them, and said to them: be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, subdue it and have dominion - so we are designed for dominion. Here's one of the greatest gifts God gave you; He gave you a will, an ability to make choices. You choose what you do with your life. He gave you a free will to make choices, creative choices, so you have desires in your heart, and you will choose whether you are creative in fulfilling the desires, or not. With the capacity of free-will choice, we have consequences. God said: you can eat all of that fruit and that'll be fine, but eat that one you've got problems; so God gave us the ability to make decisions, the ability and right to be free in choosing what we do. But consequences, we have no control over them, they're what happen after you've made your decision.

So God has given us two things; one is, He's given us a free will to make choices; two, He's given us a creative ability, He expects us to use to solve problems. Notice what He said to Adam and Eve: subdue, have dominion. That meant there were some things out there that were not right, that had to be overcome; and they had to face the problems that were outside them, and creatively think how to deal with them. That's what God expects of us, all the time. We can pray to God, and we do. We can ask God's grace and help, and we do, but there's a part He expects us to play. For example, in Genesis 2:19 God had created all the animals. That was His part, and He brought all the animals to Adam, and He said to Adam: here you go Adam, I've created you for dominion, so go give them all a name. Oh, I'll call that one an elephant - and so he went and - now that's not an easy task to think up a creative name for all the animals. Imagine if you had to go here, and give everyone here a name - but all the animals, that's a big challenge.

Now Adam could have responded one or two ways. He could have thought through, and been creative in solving the problem; or he could have said: well that's not fair, you haven't given me a list of names to choose from! How do expect - this is unreasonable,

to expect me to do all of this! He could have done that. He didn't do that though, but we do that. Well that's not fair, how can you expect me to do all this? Well God's given you a free will, and an ability to be creative, He expects you to kind of generate a few ideas on the way you know; to think through what you can do, instead of blaming the culture, blaming the people, blaming the government, blaming white people, blaming black people, blaming this person, that person, age. I mean people blame, and blaming leaves you powerless. So God expects us then, to be creative in finding solutions, and He will help us be creative in finding solutions. He expects us to take action, to do some things, so faith always has got action to it. Now where did the blame game start? Well over here unfortunately it tells us how it started.

Adam and Eve were given a great opportunity, and God said: eat all of this; don't eat that one. You eat all of this, you live; you eat that one there, you die - really quite simple. Here is a way that you train children: you show them what they can do, you show them what they can't do. If they do this, these are all the benefits; if they do that, that's the consequences. That's how you train them. Now here's the issue. When they break the laws, you've got to have consequences, because that's how people learn, it's God's way of doing it. In the pre-school, they have this thing: was that a good choice, or was that a bad choice? The little ones will say: I don't want you to ask me that, [laughter] because they're forced to decide whether their choices were good or bad, and if they were bad, then consequences will follow. Most people in the blame game want to make bad choices, but not have the consequences; so I'll make bad decisions about money, but you've got to help me out! No, no, no, you need the pain of the consequences, so you learn about managing money. When we bail everyone out all the time, what happens is, they never learn the lessons. Isn't that true?

How many of you have helped someone out, you help them, help them, help them; but they never change, because they're in a victim mode. The responsibility for their getting the release is put in someone else's hands, and you'll just keep helping them, and helping them, and helping them, until you get sick of helping them, because you saw no change. What you're better to do is actually initially give the help to lift the burden, but then begin to talk about being responsible. So if we have people in trouble financially, we're quite happy to help; however, it requires they submit to budget advice. Why? Because that's part of the consequences of goofing it up. You've got to then manage it better, and someone's got to help you manage it better. Does that make sense? Now this is really good stuff isn't it, because this really hits at the core of what's going on in our society.

Now notice what happened here. Adam and Eve both ate the fruit of the tree, and then this is what happened. The Lord God called to Adam and said: where are you? He said: I heard Your voice in the garden, I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself - so they both ran away. He said: who told you you were naked? Did you eat the fruit of the tree I commanded you not to eat from? Now here it is, classic, here's where the blame game started, Verse 12: And the man said: well, speak to the hand! [Laughter] Listen, whose idea was it about women anyway? And who was the one talking to the snake? Hey, it's not my problem. The woman - notice he said: the woman You gave me;

so basically he's now not wanting to be responsible for his failure, and of course men have an acute vulnerability to do this. Is that right women? [Laughter] Oh they're not saying that, because I'll get into trouble if I say that one, but it's true. So Adam blamed Eve, and then Eve said: well don't look at me, it's that blimmin' snake. If You hadn't made snakes, I mean whose idea was it to make - I don't like snakes. Why did You make snakes? You understand that here's what the problem is. They have actually made a bad choice, and now they're blaming someone else for their actions, transferring responsibility.

Imagine if they had assumed responsibility, and said: Lord, I really blew it. I got it wrong, I'm so sorry, will You forgive me? Now imagine if they'd said that? What a dilemma God would be in. He'd have to forgive them wouldn't He, give them a fresh start, because He's a forgiving God. But because they blamed, they were rendered powerless, and had to experience consequences. So notice what happens in here, they blame. So why do people blame? We want to divert the attention away from what we've done. So the heat was on Adam, he's feeling a bit embarrassed, and so what he does, he says let's get the attention away from me, onto her. So blame is about getting the attention away from me, onto someone else, because I don't want to take responsibility for my mistakes and failures, so I will blame someone else. That's what it's all about, it's diverting attention; and then what happens is, when you blame someone, it diverts attention, and you avoid your responsibility, and you become powerless, so you're going to end up with some consequences.

Now notice this, that both Adam and Eve, after God had spoken to them, when they started blaming, He stopped talking. When Adam blamed Eve and God for what he'd done, God stopped talking to him. Next time God spoke to him and said: here's the consequences, you broke the law, and this is what will happen. Didn't I tell you that? Did I tell you that, and you chose that, then when you chose that, you also unleashed a certain consequence into your life, and I'm not going to spare that for you. I will come to you in the consequence and help you, but I'm not going to spare you the consequence of the decision. That's how God operates. If you're going to help people, you have to think the same way, think the way God thinks, don't buy in to the blame game. So God held them accountable for their behaviour, so when people tend to blame someone else, so they can divert attention and not be responsible - have you ever done that? Have you ever done that? Wow, the silence says it all doesn't it? Of course we've all done it, we've all bought into it. We've found someone to blame, and this is an issue, it's a major one.

Let's have a look at another guy, and you've got to realise this: well, it's not my fault. That's kind of like in our mind, it's not my fault. Anyone said that, not my fault? Don't blame me, not my fault. Well it's not my fault. It's not my fault, it's my dad's you know, it's the pastors, it's the church, it's the government - not my fault! You just can't blame me, it's nothing to do with me! Except it's my problem, and if I don't do something, I'll never solve it. That's the dilemma with blaming. Okay, now let's have a look at another guy here, in 1 Samuel 15. This is a classic one of a guy who said: well it's not my fault, don't blame me; but like everyone else in the Bible, he received consequences of

making bad choices. Now I'm wanting you as we just do this, is to just be thinking, and be reflecting, as to how often you would, in some way or another, say: well it's not my fault, or blame someone else, rather than actually face the problem, take responsibility and be creative to solve it. Remember this: every time you blame someone else, you render yourself unable to do anything. You become powerless, even if they were responsible.

So suppose for example a father was very abusive, alcoholic and there was a messy thing all through the family life. The child was beaten up, got all kinds of problems, so here he is later in life standing on all these issues now in his own marriage and all these problems in his own family. Now if he blames his father for it all, he now actually becomes the victim of what's happened. He becomes helpless and powerless, and then all he can say is: it's not my fault that I'm such a mess. Yeah, well that's why your wife left you, because you wouldn't take responsibility, and you blamed it somewhere else. Yes, there may have been an abusive background, and you may have deeply been hurt. However, this is your life, and God gave you this life. It's your responsibility to actually own your life, and be creative in making decisions how to make it succeed, not blame someone else. Oh well, we'll blame the economy - now notice what happens here. In this story in Verse 1, Samuel said to Saul: the Lord has sent me to anoint you king over His people, and over Israel. Now listen to the voice of the words of the Lord. I want to punish Amalek for what he did to Israel a long time ago, so God never forgets. He ambushed Israel on the way, he came up from Egypt.

Now this is hundreds and hundreds of years later, and God says: I'm going to settle the score now. I want you to go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, spare nothing. Okay, Verse 9: but Saul and the people spared Agag, the king, spared the best of the sheep, the best of the ox, fatlings, lambs, everything that was good, and were unwilling - notice this - unwilling to utterly destroy them. But everything that was despised and worthless, that's what they destroyed. So you notice now, he's got a very clear mandate, and Samuel puts it to him in a certain way. He says: the Lord sent me, to anoint you. God has positioned you as a king to represent Him. Now just stop there for a moment. God had given Saul a role. God expected Saul to carry out His will. Now how many know and understand that God calls everyone of us priests and kings, and that He anoints us with His Holy Spirit. He has commissioned the church, every believer, to go into the community, to make disciples of nations. He's called every one of us to enter the community as a king, as someone authorised from heaven to represent Him, to move supernaturally in miracles, signs and wonders, and the power of God. He's called us to do that. It's not like an option.

Saul had a particular mission. He was sent, and given an assignment in the community, but God is giving assignments to every believer now. Now I want you to see what happens. Saul had a look at what he was called to do, and he made a decision: well look, I don't want to get rid of all of that stuff there. This looks good to me. I'll make some money here and there - so they just changed the plan, changed God's plan. But he's not allowed to change God's plan. He's going to have consequences for changing God's plan; and the church has been given a mandate, a plan from God, and it can't

change God's plan. If the church changes the plan of God, we're in deep trouble, because we're not here for ourselves. We're here to love and worship and represent Him, and if God is saying to the church worldwide, certain things about global mission, and about reaching community, and about releasing the power of God - we can't change the plan. If we change the plan, we're like Saul: well I'll pick and choose the bits I agree with. I'll just pick the bit I like, and the bit I don't like, I'll leave that out. That's what's happening in the church in the west, picks out the bits it likes, and leaves all the other stuff out.

God's saying: I want the church to move in power, I want you to move, and pray for the sick, and cast out devils, and minister to people. I want you to witness, enter the community, and change the culture. You have to arise. There's a particular challenge is involved in this, and so Saul did this, so anyway he changed the plan, and then notice this. Samuel went to Saul, and Saul said to him: blessed are you of the Lord! I'm so glad to see you. I have done what God wanted me to do. He was so happy, like so many Christians, come to church on Sunday, well bless the Lord! I've done what the Lord wanted. Really? And Samuel asked a very pertinent question: How come I can hear sheep bleating? [Laughter] Wait a minute, let's go back to the original plan. Wasn't the original plan, that everything was killed? Oh, ah aah... How come I hear bleating? [Baa baa baa.] I hear all the animals. He drew his attention to the fact that there's some noise there, there's some bleating going on. I wonder if Samuel was here now, whether he'd talk to many of the Christians, and say: I hear a lot of bleating. [Laughter] All the things we didn't do, they're all bleating!

Notice the first thing he said, he was in total denial: I've done what God said. Verse 20: I've obeyed the Lord, I've done what - now notice this. He's in total denial about the fact actually he didn't do what God wanted him to do; but he come along, and he said: bless the Lord, I want to praise the Lord now, I've done what God wanted me to do. This is the condition of so many Christians, he's in denial, he's not facing he didn't do what he's supposed to do. God says to the husbands: love your wives, marriage is in a problem, did you love your wife? Probably not. I hear bleating, the bleating of your wife. Why didn't you do what God said to do? Oh, not my fault, you don't understand what kind of woman she is. [Laughter] Oh really? Bleating, I hear bleating, see? So notice what he said, Verse 15, now he passes the blame, and excuses himself. Hey listen, don't talk to me. The people, they bought them from the Amalekites, it's the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen. So now he's come into ways of excusing. So first he denies that there's a problem - when faced with the issue and reality, he carries on like there was no problem whatsoever, ignores it.

Then when he says: what about the bleating of the sheep, well he then excuses it: well listen, I realise there's a problem here, there's sheep here, but don't look at me. It was the people. Hello, aren't you the leader? Oh yeah, but it was the people, they did it. See him passing the blame, excusing himself, taking no responsibility. You know what he was really saying was: well yes, but you can't blame me, because it's them. It's amazing isn't it? It's a very powerful story this one, and then he minimises it: well you know, we did actually get rid of the bad stuff. We really got rid of the bad - now listen, Samuel,

don't you hit on me now. We got rid of the bad stuff. That's trying to minimise the issue. He's trying to make it smaller than it is; but he had a clear command, he just didn't do it. He just chose what bits he'd do, and the rest he didn't do. First he denies it, second he tries to minimise it, third he blames someone else, and then finally he tries to reason - now get this, this is the best of all. He spiritualises it. [Laughter] Well, of course we bought these sheep and oxen so we could give them to the Lord. [Laughter] What a fob-off. He's trying to fob-off a prophet of God. He's trying to use every kind of defensive way possible, to do one thing: he blew it, and he wouldn't own up. That's what people do.

They blame someone else, minimise it, deny it, pretend it isn't there, try and spiritualise it, all kinds of things. They just didn't do the right thing, and they won't own it. Now here's the problem: if you don't own it, then you are in a problem. Defensiveness is a major way of avoiding responsibility, and blame shifting; and if you are a defensive kind of person, for whatever reason, when faced with failure, difficulty, challenge, set backs, if you become defensive, you are not taking responsibility. You are acting like a victim, and you're playing the blame game. We have to get out of that. We have to make decisions to get out of that, to be able to be what God called us to be. So notice this, that he experienced the consequences. The consequences were, he lost his right to rule. Now let's just stop there a moment. We're trying to get it out of the Old Testament and into today, so let's have a think about it. God calls you and me, children of the Father, we're children of God, we are kings. What does that mean? We're anointed kings. That means we have the baptism in the Holy Spirit, we have the anointing of the Holy Spirit, we are able to go into the community, and through prayer and faith, influence the outcomes of what's happening.

We're able to go into workplaces, and shift spiritual atmospheres. We're able to pray for the sick, we're able to see breakthroughs and miracles take place; and we have a mandate, a command, to go and to reach out to people, to win them to Jesus Christ. That is the plan. That is the mandate. It was not a suggestion, it is the plan, and so we have to be prepared for the plan. But part of being prepared is: I have embraced, this is the plan. Now what happens today is, if we personally will not take responsibility for our own lives, and for fulfilling the commission God gives us, we lose our ability to be able to do it. When you lose your ability to be able to do it, you become oppressed, and you become so like the culture, you can't change it, because there's no anointing, and no empowerment of God around your life anymore. Anointings are always to get the job done, so if we don't own the responsibility, and set out to do the job, we don't get the empowerment we need to do it. So we blame someone else: well you don't understand my workplace is so hard. Listen, every workplace is the same. You've just got to make a decision.

So here it is then, so let's get out of the: it's not my fault, it's someone else's fault; and let's get into the thinking: I've got choices. You always have a choice. Now you say: well it's really hard. Yeah. My background was really bad - yeah, but what are your choices? What could you do about it? What could you do to change? God has called you to have dominion. You were dealt a bad hand. You're in a difficult place. You've got difficulties

going on. What are your options? One option: don't take it, the blame game, it's not my fault. If you play that game, you are rendered impotent and powerless. It may not be your fault, but if it's a problem in your way, as soon as you open your arms and say: I embrace this, I will find some creative ways through it, you are now rising up to be what God called you to be, [applause] and that's what we have to do. That's what God is calling us to do, to put our arms around situations, even if we didn't create them, and say: yep, it's a mess. Yep, it's bad, but I believe I'm here for such a time to change it. I can do something about that.

One of my daughters, Sarah who's here, she never found any boyfriend in the church. The man she's married, she found outside the church, because she never got into the blame game: I'm single, because there's no men in the church; she just went out and got some. Everyone she went out and built a friendship with, she brought to church and got saved, because that's what she's believing for: get them saved; otherwise you're playing the blame game. You've only got to work out in a church, if there's 20 single young women, and there's three young men, some single women are going to stay single, unless there's more men. Someone has to do something - well not my fault! But you can do something. Go talk to Sarah, how'd you do it? Every one, every guy she befriended, ended up in church, and made a decision for Christ, and then she made a decision whether she wanted to marry them - bring them home to dad, what do you reckon about this one? Na. Brought another one home, what do you reckon about this one? Na. Brought Andrew home, what do you think about this one? Oh yeah! [Laughter] That one's a good one, ah he's the one! And he is, he was, he's a great young man.

Now come on now, there's no blame game here. Andrew had to deal with the blame game didn't you? [Laughs] Go on, ask him. He'll share your testimony, had to deal with the blame game, and now he's dealt with it, his whole family's changed too. Come on now, you've got to get out of the blame game. Deuteronomy 30:19, it says: I set before you life and death, choose life. Choose life, that you and the next generation may live, so the choices you make are going to affect the next generation. Here it is in a nutshell: you always have a choice, it just may be not the one you wanted. Often the choice that's available to us that we wanted, our preferred choice, isn't going to work or isn't available - have to make another decision. You've got to learn to make different decisions, so what choices are available? We've always got a choice. Whatever I choose, there will be a consequence; so if you blame, that's a choice, you will then be a victim. We have to make choices, and expect that God will act as we will make the decisions, and be responsible.

So here it is: Life isn't fair. How many have said this: it's not fair? How many still think it's not fair? Well wake up, the whole world's not fair. It's not fair. Good people get bad stuff, bad people get good stuff, that's the world. It's not fair. It's not just. Heaven's a great place. It's fair in heaven, and it's just in heaven. Here on the earth, it's not fair, face it. At some time you're going to get a bad deal, and it's not fair. However you have to stop living in a fuzzy unreality. You have to face: this is life, bad stuff happens; but God empowered me to reach into the bad stuff, and make great choices, that influenced it and made things better. That's how Jesus came, He said: listen, I didn't come here to

be served. I didn't come with any expectation I'm coming into a great place. I knew I'm coming into a messed-up world, and I came here with a heart to reach into it, make great decisions, bring the power of God into it, change it. That's what He did, and that's what we're called to be like Him, not complain how bad it is, but say: boy, aren't they all glad I'm here, God is with me, I can make a difference. God, show me some creative ways of making a difference.

One of the most amazing things is this. Listen, who sinned? Was it God or man sinned? Let's get this clear. It was the man that sinned, is that right? Who took the responsibility to fix it up? God did! Jesus came into the world, to take on Himself responsibility, for the sin of every person. What an amazing thing! He came into the world, took responsibility for everyone's failure, took it to Himself, took it in His heart, and He went to the cross, and in His heart he'd embraced the failures of - they weren't His failures by the way. He embraced their failures, and said: I can do something to change it. He didn't come in, and go back to the Father, and say: Father, this plan of Me going into the earth was a bad plan. It was tough going. Right from the beginning they were trying to kill Me, and then they were trying to kill Me all the way through My ministry. Finally they surrounded Me, took Me away, and put Me up on a cross. We need to burn this place up! [Laughter] But God doesn't think like a victim. He thinks: we, together, can make a change - and it still changes for every person who received Jesus Christ, they're able to have a changed life. Jesus took responsibility for your sins. He only requires that you acknowledge them, and come to Him, and He'll forgive them. What a wonderful thing!

Why don't we close our eyes and bow our heads. I wonder is there any person here today, and perhaps you have never experienced God's love and forgiveness. You are separated from God. You have no relationship with God. You think you're a good person, and you try to live a good life, but being a good person isn't enough. We need God to forgive our sins.

You may be here and you've come to church, or go to church regularly, but that's not enough either. We need to make a personal decision to receive Jesus Christ. He reached out to you, that you could become a Christian. He reached out to you, so you could have your sins forgiven. It just requires of you a decision. Don't blame your background, don't blame your past, don't blame someone else. Why don't you own up, and say: there's a lot of things have been wrong in my life, and I'm willing to own it, and acknowledge it. I'm willing to ask Jesus Christ to take the responsibility for that failure, and to make me clean.

I wonder how many people, just while we're sitting here, as I was speaking today, you just knew in your heart: man, I've been living this blame game. I've been blaming my husband, my wife, my kids, my dad, my mum, my background, my education or lack of it, the workplace, the boss, the country, the white people, the black people. I've been blaming. It doesn't matter what you've been blaming, just remember: when you do it, it's a choice, and you end up powerless. If you felt God speak to you today to repent of the blame game, why don't you just raise your hand and say: that's me, God's speaking to me today.

Father, I just pray that you'd give grace to every person who's responded today, to begin to make choices that are different, to break out of blame, and into taking positive action. Father, I pray that a creative anointing would be upon us all, to see ways through situations we haven't seen before, instead of waiting for someone else to do it. Father, I pray initiative would begin to come upon people in the church, in seeing problems, to begin to ask You what they could do, and how they could work, and begin to think with You: how they could work to change this. Father, I just pray that in these days ahead, the church is going to arise out of this victim mentality, out of blame shifting, and into a place of being very, very proactive in solving problems in the community. Father, I pray for release of your anointing upon us right now. I feel the presence of God here, favour of God here.

Summary Notes

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Introduction:

- “It is not my fault!”, “Can’t blame me for that!”
- People think, act and behave as the culture around them, does as everyone else does.
- When you blame someone else you stay powerless to change your situation.
- God wants us to be empowered as believers.
- To walk in faith enquire us to take responsibility.
- Culture = the behaviors and beliefs that are characteristic of a group of people e.g. Youth Culture; Drug Culture; also Blame Culture
- Culture of Blame = people rather blame anyone or anything for their misery than to take responsibility to own the problem and make it better.
- Blame = makes people ‘feel better’
= does nothing to solve the problem
= people think, feel and act as if there is nothing they can do.
- Core = instead of taking ownership of their problem in doing something about it, blame others or something, assigned responsibility of condition outside self.
- Example: USA – 2 overweight girls blamed McDonalds for their eating habits – sued McDonalds.
- Examples: People Blame : Father / Mother / Teachers / Church / Pastors / Government/ God

Background/Experiences/Lack of Education/Lack of Opportunities

- Key issues: Will you stop blaming and start taking responsibility?
- Is God my source or not? Do we blame or excuse ourselves for what is going on inside us?
- Learn to play the cards you were dealt, stop wishing for a new hand of cards.
- To be powerless, remain victim = blame.
- You are who you are because of the choices you make.
- It’s not what happened to you, it’s how you respond to them/it.

You are Designed for Dominion:

Genesis 1:26-28 - “Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, have dominion ...”

- God’s great gift to man – Free Will – ability to choose!
- You are able to desire and make choices, take responsibility for your desires and dreams.

- “Subdue’ = there are challenges, opposition, difficulties.
- Dominion = you are given freedom how you will respond, creativity
- You cannot always choose what happens to you.
- You can always choose how you will respond – choice to make!
- Man given:
 - 1) Freedom to make creative choices
 - 2) Responsibilities for the consequences experienced for each choice.
- Genesis 2:19 - “ ...God brought the animals to Adam to see what he could name them”
- God expected Adam to take responsibility - make creative choices.
- Option 1 – Make a creative choice.
- Option 2 – Blame God for not supplying a list of names, expecting too much.

- We can pray to God for grace but we have a part to play in it too. Think through what you can do before you blame. Be creative in finding solutions. He will help us.
- Faith = Action
- People make bad choices not to face the consequences and expect others to come through for them = blame game.
- God expects you to use the freedom you have.
- i) Take responsibility for the situation
- ii) Find creative options
- iii) Take action
- God allows us to experience the consequences of our choices.

3) How the Blame Game Started:

Genesis 3:1-13 - ‘diverting attention by blaming’

- Adam blamed God and blamed Eve.
- Why blame others? Why blame circumstances? = divert attention
- They blame others instead of taking responsibility for their actions/decisions and didn’t ask for forgiveness so that God could give them another chance.
- It is easier to divert attention by blaming than assuming responsibility. Get the attention away from me onto someone else.
- Blame diverts attention: 1) owning responsibility 2) solving the problem
- People rather blame than take responsibility and solve the problem.
- When Adam blamed Eve, God stopped talking; the next time He talked He told them their consequences.
- Think how God thinks, don’t play the blame game. With choices come consequences.
- Proverbs 19:3 - ‘a mans folly ruins his life yet his heart rages against God’
- God always hold us responsible and accountable for our actions.
- If blame comes, take responsibility, don’t blame someone or something else, think of a creative way to fix it to succeed in life.

4) “Well, it’s not my fault!”

1 Samuel 15:1-3,9 - Saul fails to fulfill God given assignment.

- We are priests and kings as believers, we are all called to enter the community to move supernaturally – there is no other option = this is an assignment to us now. We cannot change God’s plan, if the church change it we are in deep trouble. If we change the plan and pick the bits

we like and leave other things out. Go out and change the culture, ARISE = plan of God.

- Saul was positioned and anointed by God as a King.
- Saul was expected to fulfill God given assignments.
- Saul obeyed partially – did what he agreed with.
- Samuel confronts Saul: Defensive responses
- i) Denial - when face with painful reality Saul denied it - verses 13,20
 - Denial protects people from pain facing issues/ignores.
 - Saul – ‘bless the Lord, I have done what God wanted’. Samuel heard lambs bleating and asked Saul about them. Saul did have the plan God instructed to him. Does God hear bleating in the church?
- ii) Minimizing – look for ways in doing damage control by making the issue smaller than it is, to avoid pain for us.
- iii) Excuses/Blame - admit there is a problem but refuse any responsibility, “Yes, but ...” = excuses, people wanted to take the best; it is them they didn’t want to get rid of the good stuff.
- iv) Rationalise – admit there is a problem but explain it away – ‘Spin Doctor’ – Make it look good.
 - He tried to fob off what God wanted him to do. He didn’t own his responsibility.
 - Defensive people = not taking responsibility, act like victims and play the blame game.
 - Even when made to face responsibility Saul wanted to keep up appearances to look good before people.
 - Defensiveness is a major form of avoiding personal responsibility - verse 25,30.
 - Saul’s consequence = he lost his right to rule.
 - We are anointed as priests and kings. We are able to go and reach out to people and win them to Jesus Christ through prayer and faith action. Have you embraced this? This is God’s plan.
 - If we personally don’t take responsibility of our own life, we lose our ability to do it, we become oppressed = no anointing or empowerment in our own life to fulfill God’s instructions. We make the choice and God will be with us.

5) You Always have a Choice:

Deuteronomy 30:19 - “I set before you life and death, blessing and cursing therefore choose life that both you and your seed may live”

- You always have a choice!
- It may not be the preferred one but there is always an option.
- All choices have consequences!
- Blaming is a choice! The consequence for this = helpless, resentful
- The choice you make affects the next generation. Put your arms around them even if God didn’t create them, use your creativeness to change.
- Life is Not Fair or Just – Accept that Reality!
- People wish for a world that is just and fair where people do, what people should do and good things happen to good people.
- Stop sitting protesting, ‘Not fair’ and blaming others.
- Deal with life as it is – not what it should be.
- ‘God enables me to change the bad in my life/this messed up world to make great decisions. God is with me, I can make a difference.’
- W sinned? = man. Who took the responsibility? = Jesus (for everyone’s failures). Jesus didn’t go to the Father telling Him of His bad plan. We together can make a change.

- Acknowledge sins and Jesus will forgive.
- Stop blaming – Take Responsibility – Look for Options:
- face reality as it is – own responsibility to initiate change.

E.g. Jesus: Took responsibility for the sins of the World.
Able to offer hope and a different future.

You Always Have a Choice (2 of 3)

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God empowered man with a free will, and the ability to overcome challenges in life. Man learned to be helpless, he developed limiting beliefs about himself. Israel learned to be slaves (helpless) in Egypt. The challenges they faced in the wilderness were designed to shift their slave mentality to explore what God had for them. We have the ability to handle every challenge in life if we choose to believe & trust God. We disqualify ourselves from our destiny, purpose & blessing if we blame & make excuses. Learn how you can break free from learned helplessness. Choose to change.

We looked at the Blame Game, and I want to carry on. I want to help you just to start to think about: how you think. I want to speak a message called: You Always Have a Choice. You Always Have a Choice. We'll just pick up where we were going a couple of weeks ago, Genesis 1:26-28. It says: God created Adam and Eve in His image and likeness. When He made man, He made us like Him, spirit beings. He designed us to have dominion in the earth, so it says: He blessed them; and said: be fruitful, multiply, increase, fill the earth; subdue and have dominion. So when God spoke, and it says: He blessed them, it means: He spoke words of empowerment and life into them.

In other words, He expected something to happen. He spoke words that enabled them to go out; that's why, in the heart of every man, is a need and a desire to conquer challenges. Men love challenges. Why do they love challenges? Because God called us to subdue and have dominion! And it's still inside men now. That's why men who don't rise to challenges always live a defeated life. It's something in us designed to rise and conquer, rise and face challenges. Subdue means you've got to overcome something that resists you. So from the very beginning, God's intention is that you and I would face challenges, that required us to step up, face them, overcome them, and bring them into the way God wants them. Isn't that an awesome thought, right from the very beginning. Sometimes Christians get a fuzzy-wuzzy idea that Adam and Eve lived in a perfect world, everything was just perfect, though actually it wasn't. If it was a perfect world, why did God say they had to subdue something? Why is it that He said: you have to bring dominion into the earth, if it was all perfect?

So from the beginning God designed us to live in a world, where we are required to step up and face challenges, and overcome them. You are wired by God that way. You're designed for this. Isn't that really good? Now of course as soon as Adam and Eve sinned, then immediately when God spoke to them, and held them to be responsible for what they had done, they started the blame game. The blame game goes something like this: it's not my fault. Wasn't me, it's the woman You gave me. Don't blame me! The woman - well don't blame me, it's that serpent. Why do You make serpents? They cause so much trouble. I don't - no one likes snakes! So the blame game means we shift responsibility for outcomes away from ourselves, to somewhere else, we won't take responsibility, and the blame game has been practiced every since. We live in a culture which seems to celebrate blame, it's not my fault. It's not my fault. Now you've got to realise this, that freedom and responsibility are connected. Everyone cries freedom, but you've got to realise, it's a twin with responsibility.

You think about this. A child, because it does not take up the responsibility of feeding itself, someone's got to feed it. Because it hasn't got responsibility at bedtime, someone puts it to bed. Because it hasn't got responsibility for cleaning up its nappies, someone cleans up its nappies, so children, relatively, have little freedom. But as they grow, and are able to take on responsibility, then they can actually have more freedom; and it's true as you're an adult, you are required to be responsible. If you are irresponsible, society or government will take away your freedom. In the end they lock you up, and you don't even have freedom to turn your light on and off, or to open the door or shut the door. You're in jail because you were irresponsible; so they're linked, responsibility and freedom. If you want freedom, you must become responsible, so when people get into the blame game, they then lose freedom. The moment you blame someone else, too bad, you're powerless, you can't do anything. We should feel sorry for you, but we're not, because God never called you to be like that, He called us to change.

So I want to just share a little thing that happens, it happened in my life. It happens in the lives of many people, and I want you to be able to tune in and pick it up, if it's happening in you. In Proverbs 23:7, it says: as a man thinks in his heart, so he is. So if you believe it, it's true. That's how it'll work out for you. If you believe it, then that's how it's going to work out for you - as a man thinks in his heart that's how he is, that's how his life goes. People learn to be helpless or powerless. People learn to be helpless or powerless. It's a phenomena they call 'learned helplessness'. Now let me just explain it, and then I'm going to just give you a few examples of it, and I want you to hear some of these ones which abound everywhere there are Christians. If you don't recognise it, you'll never change it; and I want to show you how God works to change our lives, so we move from being powerless, and being in bondage, and how we come to a place of being faced with Him, commissioning us to go into the world and change it. God wants to shift us from a life in bondage to sin and all kinds of things, into a life which is fully empowered and has victory - but there's a transition point between living in bondage, and beginning to explore all that God has got for you. I want to show you exactly how God takes us through a process to get us there.

If you don't understand the process, you're going to be blaming God, blaming the church, blaming pastors, blaming leaders, blaming your work. You're going to live in the blame game. You'll never be the person God wants you to be, and it won't be His fault; it'll be because you either didn't know what was going on, or you just made bad choices. You've always got a choice, doesn't matter what life dishes up. You've always got a choice. No matter how bad a hand you've got, you've got to choose how you'll play it, instead of looking back and blaming the past. So what they did is, they did an experiment with animals, and what they did was, they set the experiment up so no matter what the animal did, it could never have a good outcome. It didn't matter what it did, it could never have a good outcome, and the animals learned after a little while, you can never win. No matter what you do, you can never win, no matter what you do, it never turns out good. So once they got them so they were thinking that way, then they provided many opportunities for them to be able to escape, or get out, or get out of the situation, and even though it was obvious, they still never took it up, because they had learned: you can never win. No matter what you do, it'll never work. You know what I'm talking about?

Now people have similar things happen to them as well, and so past experiences shape how we believe; so before you come to Christ, you have many beliefs inside you, and they're not necessarily the truth, they're just what you believe. If you believe them, they're going to work out for you, just like you believe. If you believe: life is bad, man, it's really bad - did you notice? If you believe: life is good, man, did you notice how good it is? You get what you believe. Belief or faith, whatever you've got believing in your heart has a magnetic power, it pulls in around you exactly what you believe. If you're pessimistic, isn't it amazing how bad things are, how many negative things are going round. People who are positive, notice how many good things seem to come into their life - it's amazing. You seem to get what you believe for, so now what happens is, past experiences form belief systems, which can limit us. They can limit us, and those things don't necessarily change because you become a Christian. You have to make them change. They limit us.

They limit the way we look at life, and they limit what we can do; so for example, one of the things that I learnt when I was quite young was this. No matter what I do, no matter how hard I work, it's never good enough. There's a lot of pain behind that belief, and there's a lot of repeated experiences, that no matter how hard I work, hours and hours and hours worked hard, in fact every school I ever went to I got a diligence prize. I worked hard, yet no matter how hard I worked, there were never words of approval or commendation. There was always pointing out where I'd fallen short and could do better: you could do better. You could have done this, you could have done that. Now that shaped how I saw life. It doesn't matter what I do, how hard I work, how much I try, it's never good enough. Now you can imagine, even becoming a Christian, that doesn't necessarily change. Now it just transfers to God: no matter how much I do, how hard I try, I'm still never good enough - except now I've got all these other things you've got to learn to do, that you didn't have to do when you weren't a Christian. Know what I'm saying? You're getting quiet now, so I know this is probably echoing something in your own heart.

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