



Serenity

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The Ethics of a Christian Testimony

In Recovery we are urged to admit our issues and make amends. This of course has a distinct caveat; "Unless to do so would harm others".

There have been occasions when people have simply dumped their garbage on others to carry just so they can feel better. This is not a Christian testimony based on the grace of God. This is often just abuse. It is true that some history in certain circumstances just needs to go to the grave with us. We should never aim to feel better at the expense of someone else.

Remember that the Holy Spirit will not dwell in a dirty house. We can still talk it over with our accountability partner however. James 5:16 implores us to, "confess our sins to God, ourselves and someone we trust, and pray for each other so that all may be healed." Prayerful consideration

then applies to enhance your testimony and make it a healing tool to set the captives free.

What about this situation: I have confessed my porn addiction to the world. There is no one who does not have access to my past because I have made it available. Is it Christian or ethical for my repented past then to be held against me in my future? That's the risk you take however, because humans are very unpredictable. Many will disguise their gossip and vengeful thoughts under a mask of prayer or as a gesture of help to someone afflicted with an addiction.

I can safely say that I am unaware of any recent attempts to shoot me down and discredit me because of my testimony. But in the early days there were several that I am aware of. Some were anonymous and others were more overt. How did I get through? God got me through. He wanted

me to tell my story and He has protected me ever since. As it turned out, the attacks originated from Satan, under the umbrella of concerned brethren. What it did for me was to show me who needed help. The people who behave against us in this manner are heavily bound by a sin that holds them down. They have not the love of Christ in them or the Grace that frames it.

My testimony has set me free and in Christ I am free indeed.

God never wastes a hurt.

Graham.

United We Stand, Divided We Fall

The politics of church can be very divisive. Issues of music, dress codes and doctrine are all handy tools of evil set to divide and to conquer. Conservative versus contemporary, traditional versus modern. It's enough

to do your head in if you let it. The differences can often become and overcome the message.

To those on the outside considering a faith journey this must be very discouraging. The truth is we need to relate to the world in which we live, and this means adapting to the times. However, we must hold up the Standard of Jesus [His Battle Flag] without being lost in upholding our own man-made standards.

The wisdom of the past must always be considered and there is nothing wrong with tradition, in fact often the contrary applies. The youth of today can learn so much from our seniors and the same can be said in reverse.

The truth is that we need to remain relevant in order to fulfill the Gospel Commission of our faith. We are often asked who would benefit most from our message in Radical Shift. The truth is that we all need to hear it; young and old, conservative or liberal.

To be relevant today we need to "speak in tongues"; not a geographically foreign language but in the language of other people's pain. We need to relate to people who are hurting because they want to be saved – no – they deserve to be saved. The only way we can do this is

to be healed ourselves. It is said, "hurting people hurt people" and this is true. The opposite can also be said. Healed people heal people and when you have been saved and recovered, everyone wants what you've got. The door to evangelism is then opened and the people will come.

Until we learn the importance of this we will continue to be divided and all our well-meaning attempts to entice people into our faith will just become another inward-looking, navel-gazing extravaganza that shows us just how irrelevant we have become.

God never wastes a hurt.

Graham.

Spiritual Pornography

Pornography is Satan's counterfeit for God-given sexual love and intimacy in marriage.

So what is spiritual pornography?

This is a phrase I coined recently after talking to yet another disaffected young person who struggles to remain in the church.

Brenda [not her real name] recently came to Mission Serenity struggling with a spiritual identity crisis. Growing up in an abusive, church-going family, this third-generation Adventist woman struggled with a view of God as though seen through the bottom of an old coke bottle.

Home schooled and trapped in an abusive family who attended church every week, Brenda wandered away from God when she was old enough to leave home. Her father would

often physically and emotionally abuse her and her siblings while bashing his strange and loveless theology into their lives and the life of his wife. All members of the family had totally lost their identity. Several years ago, Brenda realised a need for God. This need however was for a God distorted by years of tradition and ceremony, framed in abuse, physical, mental and spiritual.

Prayers that seemed unanswered and fear of this mean spirited God left her wide open to intervention from less than godly influences. Brenda was losing her grip of her faith. It became evident that Brenda was worshipping not the God of the Cross, but the God of man-made rules and strangled and twisted theology that totally distorted the grace filled experience that is Jesus. Brenda had been the victim of what I call Spiritual Pornography.

This, sadly, all too common upbringing had the same effect of distorting her spiritual journey as pornography has on our lives of intimacy with others. This all stems from a fanatical understanding of God, driven by unhealthy fear, without respect and a heartless misinterpretation of doctrine and scripture. Brenda has gone away with a different view now. A view of the Jesus that many in Recovery see. That of a warm yet strict, compassionate yet disciplinary, God who impresses the faithful to a life of healing change. This is the Jesus of recovery, the God of second chances.

1 Corinthians 1:4 spells it out perfectly.

"If I could speak all the languages of earth and

of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God's secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn't love others, I would be nothing. If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would have gained nothing."

If the churches have a desire to stem the flow of youth through the one-way gate to the world it must come to terms with a couple of very basic facts.

1. Youth who seek spiritual guidance from adults in the church are as allergic to hypocrisy as a bat is to sunlight. They know it when they see it and they can smell it a mile off.

2. The Bible should be eaten with our minds and digested by our hearts. Our demonstration of the Christian faith should be projected by Christ in us and not by distorted, over-emphasised, rule-based theology. To put it in simple terms. It's all about the Cross and nothing but the Cross.

God never wastes a hurt.

Graham.

South Queensland Big Camp

The September camp meeting at Watson Park, north of Brisbane, is a spiritual feast and an event not to be missed. This year Mission Serenity will have a very large presence. We will be presenting programs on Recovery Road over five days at the camp, as well as other initiatives. We will

be manning a booth at the expo and launching our new DVD series and other Recovery Road resources.

In partnership with our friends at 3ABN we hope to launch the exciting new Recovery Road television series with resources for sale at reduced prices at the ABC store on site.

Our team is excited to be present and active and we look forward to meeting our friends at Watson Park during the September School Holidays.

Upcoming Events

June 12 to 14

Radical Shift comes to Avondale Memorial church with life changing testimony and a message of great importance. See you there.

June 15-19

Filming the new thirteen-part Recovery Road series at 3ABN—please pray for us on this one.

June 19-21

Radical Shift and Recovery Road training at the Macquarie Fields SDA church in Sydney.

Please spread the word and pray for the Holy Spirit to guide and lead us.

4HG

Our friends at 4HG are now hard at work with the arduous task of editing tens of hours of video testimony to have ready for launch in September at Watson Park. This is a very exciting initiative and we are breathless in anticipation for what is to come.