



The Blame Game

Small Group Work Sheet
April 10, 2011

Part 1 - Ice Breaker

- This week I learned about the *Blame Game*. In what ways do I play it? (Be careful, those who know you best in the group may show you ways you play it that you are not aware of!)

Part 2 - Sermon Review

- There is a special relationship between trials and temptations in James 1:13-15. Where do these particular temptations come from? What are other sources of temptation in my life? (See Ephesians 2:1-3, Proverbs 5:3-6; 1 Thessalonians 3:5)
- What is more dangerous than the trial I am in? Why is this so dangerous?
- If I play the *Blame Game* to excuse the sin in my life, why will I always face the same problems?
- How does the *untemptability* of God change the way I look at trials in my life?
- Pastor Kurt shared some places in the Bible where, at first, it appears God tempts people. Can I think of other problem passages? What might be a solution? (See Matthew 6:13)
- God promises never to let me face a temptation beyond my *ability* to resist, but I will face temptations beyond my *desire* to resist. Knowing this, what is the wisest way for me to avoid giving in to temptation?
- The source of significance in my life will determine the course of my actions. What things in my life give me a feeling of significance and how does this leave me vulnerable to the temptation of my lustful desires? What steps should I take to guard against being led astray?
- Of the four *steps to victory* over temptation at the end of the sermon, which one is most important for me to focus on this week?
- Consider breaking your small group into smaller groups, men with men and women with women. Spend some time praying for each other in areas of common struggle.

Part 3 - Digging Deeper... *A Tale of Two Kingdoms*

Satan began life in a high position in God's kingdom (Ezekiel 28:14). Unwilling to serve God, he became filled with pride and tried to keep the worship of God for himself (Isaiah 14:13-14). What ensued was a battle in heaven where Satan was defeated and cast out of heaven to earth (Ezekiel 28:16-17). Satan's rather swift exit from heaven was a sign of ultimate defeat and humiliation. He had been defeated, and he knew once and for all that a direct attack against almighty God was a futile attempt.

Think for a moment. If Satan could not defeat God, what would be the next best thing?

Satan went right to the top of God's order, to man, being created in the image of God. To defeat man would be to defeat all of God's creation on this earth, because it was put under man's authority. Satan's attack on mankind was simply his way of striking back at God. His intent was to reverse God's process and return the world to a state of disorder and chaos.

History is in one sense a record of how successful Satan has been. Man has suffered and so has everything under his authority. God cursed the ground (Gen. 3:17), and since that day, all of creation has suffered. Paul said,

For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.—Romans 8:19–22

Simply put, the point is that you do not struggle with temptation in a vacuum. Every temptation we encounter is Satan's way of striking against God. By attempting to introduce into our life disorder and chaos, Satan continues his work of undoing all God sought to accomplish in the beginning. On the other hand, every victory against temptation we experience is a testimony to both Satan and the world that God is at work restoring things to their original state, a state in which Satan has no place or power.

As a Christian, we are called to be God's delegate to a lost world. Our message is that God is in the world reconciling men to Himself and that one day He will return to rule and reign forever. This is the last thing Satan wants anyone to hear. Therefore, our Christianity sets us up to be the primary candidates for Satan's attack. Satan knows that if he can get us caught in some sin—however small it may be—we are sidelined as far as the kingdom of God is concerned. Not only that, we will become another feather in his hat, so to speak. Every victory Satan has over us is a victory over the advancement of God's kingdom.

This establishes a whole new perspective on spiritual warfare. I will be the first to admit that I have a great deal to learn about this somewhat mystical subject. But one thing I do know is that every temptation is part of a larger struggle. Another thing I know for sure is that I have a difficult time remembering this fact.

When I am being tempted with the little things that pop up every day, I tend to think it is just my little problem and that no one else will be affected. I forget that I am an ambassador for Christ and that every victory—no matter how small—is a sign to the "spiritual forces" that Jesus is alive and well. Each victory reminds Satan that the same power that gives me victory over sin will one day give our King victory over all His enemies! Paul could not have been any more clear about this than when he wrote,

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places—Ephesians 6:12

He did not qualify which struggles. He did not distinguish between the big ones and the little ones; the struggles of the mind versus the struggles within relationships; the struggles of the well-knowns versus the struggles of the unknowns. All our struggles are spiritual in nature. Each one is a part of an ongoing struggle between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. It is imperative that we keep this simple truth in mind: we do not struggle in a vacuum; every temptation is a small part of a universal struggle between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of the living God.