

If there are children involved, the victim may enlist the support of the children against the offender. I would say this especially true in situations when the husband is caught with pornography. Because the wife is experiencing great betrayal on such an intimate level, she informs the children to ruin their opinion of him and to shame him into stopping his sin.

What is quickly evident in our fictitious case is that while Bob was responsible for the sin that brought this couple to the table, God has used it to reveal some areas in Carol's heart that need to be dealt with as well.

What we have learned through ministering to people like our imaginary couple, is that the former victim has now become the offender and enjoys the grilling the other person gets by friends and family. In their mind, it validates the anger and bitterness they hold for these (in some cases) long standing sins.

Likewise, the former-offender-turned-victim (Bob) is realizing that he is not necessarily the scum of the earth that he has been made out to be since he repented of his sin!

So the focus of the people helping must be balanced equally between the victims and offenders, of which there are now two of each!

The challenge in any of these situations is to move beyond the victim mentality, cease being the offender, and go forward in a restored relationship.

For that to take place the heart must be affected in the areas of forgiveness, pride, anger, bitterness, and fear just to name a few places to begin. A person has really got to be willing to humble themselves in such a case but I can think of no better place to start the work than in the area of pride.

No matter what the resulting issues may be, it is imperative that we remember that God is actively opposing the prideful person. He is standing against you if you are prideful and self-righteous! (Jas. 4:6) Prideful thinking arises out of the misbelief that you are incapable of such an offense like the one you have been affected by. The prideful person wrongly believes they are too holy, too good, too to ever be caught up in such sin. The only biblical response is repentance.

The prideful person must remind themselves daily of their need for the gospel! God will take care of the offender; you must now focus on your own sinful areas. (Rom 12:18, 1 Thess. 4:11) Remember that you are also unworthy of forgiveness, and mercy and grace! Demonstrate the kind of forgiveness that God has for you!

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8

God's forgiveness of you is conditional only in the sense that a person belongs to Him to receive it. He forgave us in eternity past when He predestined us to be His children (Eph. 1) and He throws our sin as far as the ends of the earth. (Ps. 103:12) God does not "forget" our sin; he chooses to remember it no more! (Jer. 31:34; Heb. 10:17) You can do the same!

...seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. 2 Peter 1:3 (see to verse 8)

Choose today to remember no more the sin of the one who has hurt you. Tell him or her you forgive them from the heart because it glorifies God to do so and then determine to never again bring it up to them, yourself, or anyone else.

Do not give in to the temptation to manipulate by emotions. Ask yourself if what you want to do glorifies God. Determine to attack the problems before you, not the person. Anger is an emotion given by God to motivate us to solve problems not to hurt each other with. (Eph. 4:26, 27)

You will be amazed at how these little steps can make such a difference in your heart and life and these people and relationships you have struggled with for so long. You don't need to avenge yourself, or to be afraid of being made a fool of. God, who sees all and knows all, will honor your desire to follow Him and to honor Him by how you live. Go forward in freedom from the past!

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THE VICTIM'S HEART



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The Victim's Heart

Many of the people we help have been grievously sinned against. Perhaps they have been abused by someone they trusted, their spouse has violated the marriage covenant, or become untrustworthy in any number of ways.

Here are a few fictitious scenarios:

Example #1: Husband has been secretly viewing pornography on the internet or DVD. Wife discovers this and trust is shattered. She considers this adultery. Everything is now suspect about her husband. He is now a liar, cheater, adulterer, pervert, untrustworthy, purveyor of illicit sex, whoremonger.

Example #2: Wife has been spending money on credit that the family does not have. She has run all the credit cards to maximum and there is not enough money in the family budget to make the monthly payments on them plus the usual bills. After repeated attempts to stop, and numerous broken promises husband discovers wife has opened new charge accounts and is having the bills sent to her mother's address. Husband's trust is shattered. His wife is a liar, and has stolen from the rest of the family by her self-indulgent spending, she is untrustworthy.

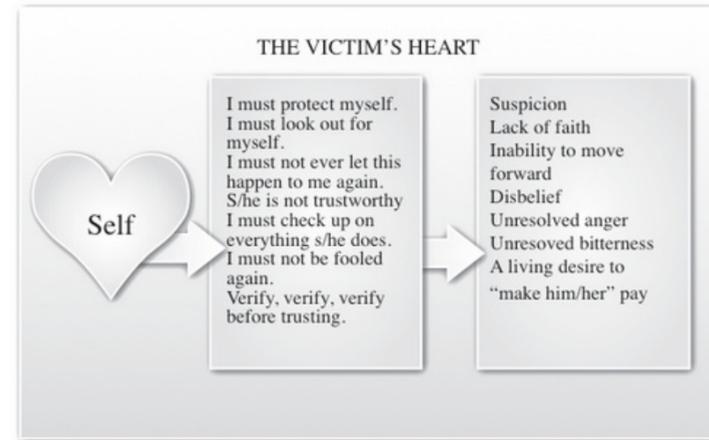
Example #3: Wife has been involved with numerous extra-marital affairs. Each time she promises to never do it again. Husband has been forgiving of her, and is granting her forgiveness time and time again only to find another "love" note, receive mysterious "wrong number" phone calls, and realize his wife has unexplained missing blocks of time in her schedule. She is an adulterer, cheater, and liar.

Example #4: Husband has always been an angry guy. He has yelled about everything their whole married life. He has never admitted he was wrong in all the years they have been married, everything has been her fault. It has gotten so bad that he has been forced to get some help (by whatever means) and has received counseling that has begun to make a difference in his life. He is viewed as angry, hostile, unreasonable, and untrustworthy.

In these situations there is always a victim. The heart of a person who has been victimized is focused on protecting self from being hurt again.

The heart is the biblical term Jesus Himself used to describe the inner man. It contains your thoughts, beliefs, emotions, mind, thoughts, spirit, desires, soul, will, and every other immaterial thing about you. Your heart is the place where the essence of who you are resides.

When a person has been victimized, they are very self-protective. They simply do not want to be hurt again!



When someone has been deeply hurt, it is natural for them to be suspicious of the one who hurt them. They become hyper-vigilant and become very suspicious of the actions and motives of the offender. The victim perceives that the offender is always plotting and scheming some new hurt. Often times, the victim is irrational about actions of the offender; they seek to demonize them in every respect.

If there is no repentance on the part of the offender, the wariness of the victim is warranted. In such cases, we teach the victim how to live with the offender in a Christ-like manner, bearing up with the strength of God. In other cases, the church may allow the victim to seek a divorce if it is clear that hope for repentance and reconciliation is gone.

However, the majority of our cases involve two believers who say they are willing to submit to our counsel and who say they are willing to change. What we find through the counseling process, is that even when the presenting issue of the offender is dealt with biblically there is much work yet to be done.

In some cases, the victim is never satisfied with the repentance, change, or progress the offender makes. To illustrate this dynamic we will consider the situation of a fictitious couple, Carol and Bob.

Bob was the offender, and through biblical counseling he has recognized his sin against Carol. He has repented and there is evidence of true heart change. Bob has confessed his sin to Carol, and has asked her forgiveness.

Carol has been down Apology Lane before with Bob; more times than she can remember. She is not at all sure his is for real and has even said to the counselor that she doesn't know why this time will be any different. She does not trust Bob's words or his new actions. She is always looking to catch Bob in some act of deception. She is critical of his professions of change and it shows in everything she says and does concerning Bob.

Carol, the once-victim, often perceives herself as the righteous, wounded party. She has adopted a position of self-righteousness and her pride in that is evident. She appears to believe that her spouse is not as spiritual or as acceptable to God as she is. She communicates through verbal and non-verbal means that she has no sin, or certainly none as egregious as Bob's, and almost literally peers down her nose at her spouse "The Sinner."

What has happened here is that the two people have switched rolls and the one who was a victim (Carol) now becomes the offender. Carol reveals her hard heart though ongoing bitterness, a critical spirit, condemnation and in general, a "raising the bar" lifestyle. Any changes Bob has made, good reports from the accountability he has in place, and successful navigation of all the hoops Carol has him jump through is never good enough. She is always looking for that one shred of evidence to prove to herself, the counselor, their friends, but most especially to Bob that he hasn't changed one little bit.

In these situations the person, in this case Carol, must be confronted about her sinful attitudes toward her husband. She must be called to account on these numerous levels.

Often, someone like Carol would come to counseling with the expectation that the former offender (Bob) be the only one challenged, rebuked, or corrected. She sees him as the only one who is in need of any kind of change!

She is often very offended when confronted about her own sin, saying things like, "This is not why we are here." "Why are you picking on me?" "What about him/her?"

This position of leaves little room for self-examination, and little room for accepting any responsibility or contribution to the problems that led up to the violations. There is often an admission such as, "I am not perfect either", but there is much more focus on pointing out their spouses wrongs.

When challenged during the counseling process, their responses often begin with, "Yes, but he..." "Well, I did (blank) and she ..." in an attempt to shift any blame away from themselves.

In situations where the victim does say she forgives, I see another common issue arise: the demand for "love" and "understanding" for time to get over the offense. This is accompanied by radical mood swings, crying jags, the silent treatment, and reminders of the past offenses that she is quick to assure him he is forgiven of!

The demands for love, understanding, and time to heal are often impossible to meet. The former offender learns that no matter how much love, time, and understanding is given, it is never enough! The former offender is forever held as an emotional hostage by his deeds of the past.

These responses are often confusing to the former offender. For example, things at home may be going just fine, Bob and Carol have enjoyed a day of companionship and then apparently out of the blue, the victim (Carol) suddenly becomes angry and nearly hostile toward them. Sometimes no amount of asking or pleading will pry from their lips what happened.

Their questions and attempts to understand are met with silence or responses like, "You should know!" or, "If you loved me, you would know!"

Intimacy is nearly non-existent between the two. There may be sex, but no intimacy because she is not going to allow herself to be vulnerable again. Her heart becomes a closed room to him.

Small and insignificant matters balloon into major confrontations, and there is little peace in the home. Over time every word and deed is analyzed and becomes cannon fodder for arguments that degenerate into hostility on both sides.