

“Blaming Others” The Blame Less Project, Part 4

It would be extremely hard to accurately describe the horror of a WWI battlefield!

This was a war where primitive tactics like charging on horseback with swords and lances... came up against advanced weaponry like machine guns and poison gas and tanks and airplanes.

In just one battle.... the Battle of the Somme.... there were roughly 1,000,000 casualties.

An estimated 1,000,000 men were either killed or wounded on that one battlefield!

And.... after all of that conflict.... after paying that high of a price.... and doing all of that damage.... do you know what the results were? the allies advanced a total of about 5 miles....

There was a movie about WWI that came out a few years back called 1917.... Did any of you see it? That movie provided a glimpse into the absolute devastation that occurs when two opposing sides... entrench themselves... in fortified positions... and fire at anything that dares to enter the no-man's land between them.

The central characters in that film are two runners. Runners were responsible to deliver mission-critical messages from one point on the battlefield to another on foot!

They often would send runners in twos.... with the HOPE... that at least ONE would make it alive.

My Grandpa Tom was a runner in WWI.... and.... like the movie.... my grandfather watched his friend die on the battlefield.

We still have the helmet that Grandpa Tom wore, his coat, his rifle and his bayonet....

And we also have this.... It's German.... He found it on the battlefield.... and here's what it says.... Can anyone translate this?

Gott Mit Uns

What does that say in English? God. With. Us.

It's amazing what you can justify... when you believe GOD HIMSELF is on your side!

Here are few relevant things I'd like to point out about war...

When you're at war

- **THE FOG OF WAR** can turn friends into foes
- **PROPAGANDA** is used to dehumanize opponents
- **TRENCHES** get deeper and “no-man's land” gets deadlier

- **TREATIES should never be signed with people who aren't trustworthy**

For the last three weeks, we've been talking about BLAME.... In just a few minutes, I'm going to explain how BLAMING OTHERS creates a form of TRENCH WARFARE....

But FIRST.... here's a recap of where we've been...

- In WEEK 1, we began laying out the case that blame is a really, really big deal.... Blame usually backfires.... and does harm in the areas that we care about most!
- In WEEK 2, we traced blame all the way back to the beginning.... Blame is a primal instinct.... that we all have.... to protect our self-image and social status....
- And LAST WEEK.... we had a conversation about blaming circumstance.... and how people who see themselves as a victim of circumstance.... will never reach their potential.... and might even find themselves sliding down the slippery slope of shame...

Along the way.... we've been emphasizing that humans... have a unique RESPONSE-ABILITY!

We can PHYSICALLY RENEW OUR MINDS... to think in more helpful and healthy ways!

Here's why I'm so glad that you're here TODAY.... TODAY.... we're going to apply our UNIQUE RESPONSE-ABILITY to our RELATIONSHIPS.

Nothing that we're going to say in this ENTIRE SERIES... has the potential.... *to make bigger difference in your life.... than what we're going to discuss today!*

Why? Because we are HARD-WIRED for relationships.... If you don't believe me, Google INTERPERSONAL NEUROBIOLOGY.... It's a thing!

If follow the links from there.... you'll come across terms like "mirroring".... and biological realities like "cuddle chemicals"... countless ways... that our bodies.... are designed to help us create STRONG BONDS with other people!

Does anyone want to create STRONG BONDS with other people?

Well.... here's what happens when we BLAME...

Blaming others creates a battlefield!

When we blame others.... or when others blame us.... it triggers the same response that we experience... when we are PHYSICALLY ATTACKED! Here's how one team of researchers put it...

Countless generations of genetic shaping drive humans to handle crucial conversations with flying fists and fleet feet, not intelligent persuasion and gentle attentiveness . . . Two tiny organs seated neatly atop your kidneys pump adrenaline into your bloodstream. You don't choose to do this. Your adrenal glands do it, and then you have to live with it.

Crucial Conversations (Page 5)

And that's not all. Your brain then diverts blood from activities it deems nonessential to high-priority tasks such as hitting and running. Unfortunately, as the large muscles of the arms and legs get *more* blood, the higher-level reasoning sections of your brain get *less*. As a result, you end up facing challenging conversations with the same intellectual equipment available to a rhesus monkey.

Crucial Conversations (Page 5)

Your body is preparing to deal with an attacking saber-toothed tiger, not your boss, neighbor, or loved ones.

Crucial Conversations (Page 5)

Whether you believe.... like these researchers do.... that brains EVOLVED over millions of years.... or if you believe that it's all part of what it means.... as SCRIPTURE SAYS... to be "fearfully and wonderfully made".... EVERYONE who studies the human brain knows that this BLAME RESPONSE is REAL.... and UNIVERSAL...

Here are just a few of the ways that BLAME BACKFIRES when it comes to RELATIONSHIPS.... and I encourage you to write this down...

Blaming others creates a battlefield

- **Blame turns potential ALLIES into ADVERSARIES**

When we blame others.... or when others blame us.... all of our energy becomes focused on *attacking* and *defending* instead of *problem-solving*!

Potential allies become adversaries.... and.... if we're not careful.... THAT leads to THIS!

Blaming others creates a battlefield

- **Blame is a slippery slope to SCAPEGOATING**

It is a very, very slippery slope from "this is what they DID" to "this is who they ARE"....

It's a very, very slippery slope from "We disagree".... to "God is WITH US.... and God is AGAINST THEM!"

When you begin to DEHUMANIZE people.... there is no limit to the INHUMAN acts that HUMANS capable of!

Here's another thing that blame does.... *and once you see THIS TOOL explained.... you will begin to see it everywhere!* Is everyone watching?

Blaming others creates a battlefield

- **Blame triggers the TRIANGLE TRAP**

Here's how this works....

A psychiatrist named Stephen Karpman proposed a version of this model in the 1960s....

The more we blame OTHERS.... the more we see everyone as either....

- A VILLAIN, a VICTIM, or a RESCUER
- THE VICTIM believes THE VILLAIN is the problem....
- THE VICTIM sees themselves in a “poor me” situation.... and seek out help.... or sympathy... from THE RESCUER...
- THE RESCUER tends to be a good person who sees a “poor them” situation.... and wants to help....

BUT.... rescuers often fail to recognize all of the SUBCONSCIOUS FORCES that aren't helpful in this situation.... they often underestimate how good it feels to be needed.... and how easy it is to be drawn into a STORYLINE that leaves out a lot of information that's crucial to understanding the actual STORY....

When you fall into this trap.... RESCUERS almost always enable UNHEALTHY behaviors.... instead of helping to make things better.... Which brings us to our next bullet...

Blaming others creates a battlefield

- **Blaming quickly makes it harder to FIND THE FIX**

I learned a new word last week... OPS.... my 19-year old taught it to me.... It's a word that refers to someone who is OPPOSING you.... an enemy...

When we start labeling people as ops.... and we start falling into the TRIANGLE TRAP.... it's WWI.... TRENCH WARFARE....

We're using PRIMITIVE techniques.... and digging our muddy, miserable TRENCHES deeper.... and taking shots at our ENEMIES.... and creating a NO MAN'S LAND for anyone who isn't one trench or the other.

Is that the WORLD you want to live in.... OR.... contribute to?

Well.... that's the world that blame creates.... Consider these quotes....

Blaming others is a great way to make friends and influence people.

[Who said that?] Nobody Ever

The best minds in the BUSINESS WORLD realize the importance of working together.... Here's a quote from Henry Ford....

If there is any one secret of success, it lies in the ability to get the person's point of view and see things from that person's angle as well as from your own.

Henry Ford

And here's a quote from someone that we'll circle back to later. A guy named Chris Voss who used to be the LEAD HOSTAGE NEGOTIATOR for the FBI!

**Once people get upset at one another, rational thinking goes out the window.
Chris Voss**

And here's a quote from Dr. Brene' Brown.... a researcher.... and expert in the areas of shame and vulnerability.... She says this...

A deep sense of love and belonging is an irreducible need of all women, men, and children. We are biologically, cognitively, physically, and spiritually wired to love, to be loved, and to belong.

Brene' Brown

Here's another.... from psychiatrist Curt Thompson...

**Every newborn comes into the world looking for someone looking for her.
Curt Thompson**

If you're trying to create a family.... or foster a healthy culture at work.... or on a team.... or as a church.... blame will blow it up!

Let me give you one more quote, and then let's open our Bibles together...

**Twenty years of research involving more than 100,000 people reveals that the key skill of effective leaders, teammates, parents, and loved ones is the capacity to skillfully address emotionally and politically risky issues. Period.
Crucial Conversations (Pages 9-10)**

Does anyone here NOT want to make the relationships around them worse? OK.... then let's get BETTER at this by looking at the Words of Jesus of Nazareth!

In 2015.... as a church.... we began a deep dive into how to do conflict resolution well! We were in a season of conflict.... and it was so intense that I lost 14 pounds in 2 weeks....

- We took our staff through a facilitated, offsite retreat...
- We brought in outside experts
- We consulted counselors
- We read a TON of books

And.... one of the themes that we saw repeated.... over and over again.... is that the BEST PRACTICES are anchored to BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES...

With the time we have left, let me give you a sampling.... From the words of Jesus Himself! And let's start here.... Under the heading "Science is catching up with Scripture"....

Science is catching up with Scripture

- **A house DIVIDED can't stand (Matthew 12:25)**

If you have your Bible with you, open with me to Matthew 12:25....

Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand.”

Matthew 12:25 (ESV)

It doesn't matter if it's two friends.... or a team.... or a business.... or a school.... or a church.... or a nation.... a HOUSE THAT'S DIVIDED cannot stand!

Which is why.... the greatest church planter in history gave this instruction...

As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him.

Titus 3:10 (ESV)

Here are different principles that Jesus Himself provides for those who want to experience something better.... and I invite you to write this down...

Science is catching up with Scripture

- **Start with SELF-REFLECTION (Matthew 7:3-5)**

Let's turn to Matthew 7:3-5...

Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, “Let me take the speck out of your eye,” when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

Matthew 7:3-5 (ESV)

Here's where ALL of the most effective bridge-building, problem-solving models start.... Begin with PERSONAL REFLECTION!

What are YOUR blind spots? How are YOU contributing to this? What could YOU be doing differently?

If you study blame.... it won't be long before you come across something called the FUNDAMENTAL ATTRIBUTION ERROR....

When SOMEONE ELSE is late.... we blame THEM for not getting there on time... But when WE'RE late... we blame it on our CIRCUMSTANCES!

We ATTRIBUTE bad behavior on *someone else's part* to CHARACTER.... but we ATTRIBUTE bad behavior on *our part* to something outside of our control.

Before we start blaming or judging OTHERS.... Jesus taught us to consider our own blind spots.... and CONTRIBUTIONS first...

Once we've done THAT.... then we can move on to THIS...

Science is catching up with Scripture

- **Hold one another accountable to a PROCESS (Matthew 18:15-18)**

We WILL to disagree.... WHEN we do.... it's so important to have an *agreed upon pathway* to resolve our differences.... Here's a process that Jesus outlines for us...

If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

Matthew 18:15-17 (ESV)

When there an allegation of ABUSE.... It's going to look different than this.... but in MOST SITUATIONS.... This is such a great template!

I recommend that EVERY team.... or organization... or household.... has something like this in place.... So that WHEN there's CONFLICT, there's not CHAOS!

- 1) Begin by clarifying the nature of this conversation.... is this a SIN.... is this VIOLATION of agreed upon beliefs or values or policies.... OR.... is this simply a difference of PERSPECTIVE.... These are VERY DIFFERENT conversations! Identify what kind of conversation that you're having early in the conversation!
- 2) Go to that person DIRECTLY.... And try to resolve the disagreement BEFORE factions begin to form....
- 3) If you try but can't resolve the conflict alone... bring in another person.... or maybe two... The key her is to avoid escalation and faction-forming whenever possible! It is so hard to undo that!
- 4) Have a mediation group in place for cases that can't be resolved in steps 1-3.

Jesus has SO MUCH to teach us about community and healthy relationships.... but let me give you just one more.... *One that nice church people often forget!*

Science is catching up with Scripture

- **Remember that trust is EARNED (Matthew 7:15-20)**

Jesus taught us to be BOTH innocent as doves... AND.... ALSO.... to be as WISE as SERPENTS....

Here's how He framed this out in Matthew 7:15-20...

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit . . . Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

Matthew 7:15-20 (ESV)

We've said it before in this series and we'll say it again.... this is *The Blame LESS Project.... not the Don't-Ever-Blame-Anyone-In-Any-Situation-Ever Project!*

If you're going to only read one book this year, read the Bible. If you're going to read MORE than one book this year, read the Bible and *Trust* by Dr. Henry Cloud...

Just as you shouldn't sign a TREATY on a battlefield with an enemy who isn't trustworthy.... It's not only OK to hold people accountable for their actions.... *It's wise!*

Cloud reminds us of this...

What someone has done before is usually the best indicator of what will happen next time . . . Trust is incremental, and earned.

Henry Cloud

It's one thing to CONTRIBUTE to a toxic CULTURE OF BLAME....

It's another thing... altogether... to recognize that there are some people who consistently drop balls.... or repeat unacceptable behaviors....

Naming that isn't TOXIC.... Holding people accountable to that isn't TOXIC.... That's what HEALTHY CULTURES DO.... For everyone's sake... including their own! Here's what Dr. Cloud says about that...

When we are trying to build trust in others, we must be aware that we are always building a map, a track record, in someone's head. That map will make them able to trust us, or not.

Henry Cloud

There are SOME PEOPLE.... who you SHOULDN'T TRUST.... that's not toxic.... that's wise!

There are some people who WILL HURT YOU.... or TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOU... if they can! There ARE people... in this world.... who do evil things!

Sometimes.... our fight or flight instinct... is RIGHT! In this fallen world there are people who are acting in VILLAINOUS ways! Calling that out isn't contributing to a TOXIC CULTURE.... It's creating a SAFER ONE!

Trust by Henry Cloud.... can HELP YOU... with questions like...

- What IS trust?
- When is it wise to extend it? When is it wise to withhold it – or to at least be cautious?
- How can you earn it? How can you earn it back if it's been broken?

And Cloud's book is one of MANY OUTSTANDING RESOURCES that can help you develop healthier and stronger *relationships, teams, and cultures!*

Two weeks ago.... we compared our unique RESPONSE-ABILITY as humans to a POWERFUL LITHIUM BATTERY....

Those POWER SOURCES.... are a BIG FRONT END INVESTMENT.... But it's worth it.... because you can plug it into so many different applications!

Let me introduce you to your BLAMING OTHERS LESS power pack!

These resources can provide a MASTER CLASS in developing EXTREMELY HELPFUL SKILLS in navigating difficult conversations!

We already referenced *Trust* by Henry Cloud.... I also HIGHLY recommend *Difficult Conversations* by Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen

This book does an outstanding job of teaching us how to have LEARNING conversations with our friends.... our partners.... our coworkers.... just about anyone!

Here's one of MANY helpful tools and frameworks this book provides...

Every difficult conversation has at least three conversations

- 1) **The "What Happened" conversation**
- 2) **The feelings conversation**
- 3) **The identity conversation**

Difficult Conversations equip you to navigate each of these conversations well!

Another great resource is this one.... *Crucial Conversations* by Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, and Switzler

There's a lot of overlap between *Crucial Conversations* and *Difficult Conversations*, but one of the extremely helpful competencies that THIS BOOK can help you with is learning how to *start with the FACTS and not the STORY!*

Think about how often people do the opposite! Something happens and people get this whole story in their heads about how evil and wrong that person is.... or what their intent was.... and often that story is way.... way off!

One of the best things we can do to have helpful, productive, LEARNING conversations.... and less TOXIC CULTURES.... is to avoid CREATING STORIES until we've had conversations about THE FACTS....

Here's how someone else described this tendency...

Our perceptions are influenced by what psychologists call cognitive illusions. These are subconscious mental maps that often get in the way of accurate or rational assessments . . . We tend to forget that our brains are talented forgers, weaving a tapestry of memory and perception whose detail is so compelling its authenticity is rarely detected.

Ben Dattner

I really, really wanted to narrow this Master Class bundle down to THREE resources.... but if we left any of these out.... you would be missing out!

A fourth resource that will improve your RESPONSE-ABILITY when it comes to relationships is this one.... *Never Split the Difference* by Chris Voss

I mentioned him earlier.... he's was the lead international kidnapping negotiator for the FBI.... Talk about high pressure, high stakes conversations! He's been in countless situations where the conversations he's in... have life or death consequences!

This is hard-won, researched-based wisdom!

Like... how you don't really want to hear the words "YOU'RE RIGHT" as much as you want to hear the words "THAT'S RIGHT".... When you begin to hear people say "THAT'S RIGHT" you're building bridges.... if you hear "YOU'RE RIGHT".... they might just be trying to get out of the conversation....

Voss also provides key insights like this!

In two famous studies on what makes us like or dislike somebody, UCLA psychology professor Albert Mehrabian created the 7-38-55 rule. That is, only 7 percent of a message is based on the words while 38 percent comes from the tone of voice and 55 percent from the speaker's body language and face.
Chris Voss

As we've been learning throughout this series.... our amazing brains are constantly taking in information! And most of it is getting processed faster than the speed of conscious thought!

One of the things that our brains are constantly picking up on is tone.... and body language.... and facial expressions.... and even MICRO-EXPRESSIONS.... These have the potential to either *bring us together* or *trigger the Triangle Trap*.

Again.... there is so much great stuff out there! In this week's ECC-mail, I'll provide a list of the resources that I talked about TODAY and over the course of this series.... You can sign up for ECC-mail updates by going to Emmanuel.Church/Next.

As we bring our time together today to a close.... *let me leave you with this reminder that the bar is really, really low for those of us who want to witness to a better way!*

Not long ago, I felt the need to have a difficult conversation with a soccer club that one of my daughters was a part of.... I was frustrated.... and I was tempted to respond ONE WAY.... but I used many of the RESPONSE-ABILITIES that I've learned from these resources...

BLAME creates a battlefield.... these BETTER WAYS.... Biblical Principles.... and helpful practices.... build bridges.... and help us problem-solve together...

My conversation started with the coaches.... trying first to understand before trying to be understood.... and then.... with their blessing.... spoke with the director of the

program.... and before I knew it.... the Club President was asking me if I'd consider joining the Board!

I came in with a concern.... and was ultimately asked to join the Board...

That's not a brag story.... *that's a testimony to what Jesus said about being a light!*

And consider how brightly we shine as FAMILIES.... and FRIEND GROUPS.... and TEAMS.... and ORGANIZATIONS.... and CHURCHES.... when people hang out with us and DON'T see a war zone!

When we aren't falling into the TRIANGLE TRAP.... but are pursuing healthier practices like the EMPOWERMENT TRIANGLE.... I was introduced to this just a couple weeks ago by Pastor Dan and Tina Hofler...

In the Empowerment Triangle... it's not Villain, Victim, Rescuer.... It's Challenger, Coach, and Creator!

Everyone working together for a common cause.... and working to bring out the best in one another! Finding a fix together!

- The Challenger casting a vision of where we could go together, and consciously encouraging and equipping the Creators
- The Creators using their unique response-abilities to increase their capacities.... and to overcome challenges
- And Coaches providing real help instead of enabling a sense of victimhood

I'll send a link to this model in that ECC mail as well....

A HOUSE DIVIDED can't stand.... But consider what can people do TOGETHER... when they UNITE around God-honoring principles.... and a God-honoring vision?

How many of you have heard of Amish Barn-raising? A HOUSE DIVIDED can't stand.... When we're UNITED.... we can build an entire barn in a day!

And take a look at this.... Can we play the clip?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZL7TqSeDus>

What you're seeing here is a whole lot of Amish folks.... literally moving a barn.... together!

A HOUSE DIVIDED can't stand.... *What can a barn do when people are united?*

It can walk! It can go places!

The world sees enough battlefields.... Can I get an amen?

The world could use more unity in Christ.... Can I get an amen?

So.... if you haven't already.... pick up one of these wristbands at the Resource Center in the lobby.... I believe we have STICKERS now too! As a reminder to not only HEAR these words.... but to put them into practice....

NEXT WEEK.... is the LAST WEEK.... in this series...

And as the WORSHIP BAND COMES FORWARD.... to seal our time together with a song....

I want to encourage you to read or re-read the BOOK OF ESTHER in the Old Testament Section of the Bible.... Pretty much everything we've been talking about in this series is there!

- People using their RESPONSE-ABILITY to overcome circumstances
- People accessing power beyond their own
- People falling into the Triangle Trap
- Other people challenging, coaching, and stepping up!
- Real danger from real enemies!

It's a great recap.... It has an important challenge as we go forward...

AND.... there are some important bonus insights... into Israel's history as a people... that might add some perspective to current events that are unfolding today...

Put on a wristband.... Stick a sticker someplace that you'll see it.... Read Esther.... and join us for the final week of these series.... as we discuss where we go with this important project from here!

LET'S PRAY