

Demolish Accusing Spirits With This Heavenly Mindset

As the neighbor boys on my front porch turned to go, I slammed the door and marched to the kitchen to find the phone.

“Mike?” I said into the phone two seconds later. “Your boys just left, but I want you to know they did not apologize. They claim they did not shoot at my son!”

Granted, it was airsoft guns that the neighbors were carrying and my 4-year-old had no welts, but still—I wanted Mike to hear fierce indignation in my tone. He calmly replied that, yes, his boys had denied my accusation with him also. “But Shannon,” he reasoned, “it’s one word against another. I believe my boys. I don’t think they shot at your son.”

Unbelievable! I ranted silently, after hanging up. My preschooler had been subjected to the line of fire without eye protection, and this man was defending the shooters? With grave resolve, I called my dear children to my side and barked out new marching orders. “Boys, from now on, when the Garvers have their airsoft guns, you immediately come home, OK? Those boys cannot be trusted! I mean, Cade, they shot at you, right?”

Cade did not assume my incensed stance, as I expected. Instead, he shifted nervously from one leg to the other. He sucked on his fingers, and mumbled, “Uhhh ... Well ...”

“Cade!” I gasped. “They did shoot at you, right? That’s what you told me.”

Perhaps I needed to re-evaluate who could and could not be trusted. As the guilt on Cade’s face grew, so did my horror. I had been the one doing the shooting—with my words!

Casting the First Stone

God's Word is filled with warnings about getting the story straight before you cast blame. In fact, one of the Ten Commandments is, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" (Deut. 5:20).

Moses circles back to this command in Deuteronomy 17, as he gives instructions for God's people entering the promised land. Moses paints a scenario where one Israelite sees another Israelite worshipping a false god. This is a capital offense and requires that the person be stoned at the gates. But these drastic measures are to be taken only on two conditions:

1. The story must be corroborated by additional witnesses (v. 6).
2. The witnesses must be first to pick up the stones (v. 7).

There is a vast difference between pointing a finger and throwing a rock. At my house, pointing a finger can happen a dozen times in a 24-hour period. But picking up a rock and throwing it at someone's head? I'm thankful to report that this has never happened at my house. Yet God clearly tied the two together in Deuteronomy 17. God didn't want someone to point a finger unless they were willing to pick up a rock. Why? Because He wanted His people to feel the gravity of a witness' responsibility.

The Heaviness of Accusation

A false witness can do much damage. I know a godly man who was unjustly accused of molesting some little girls. He had kindly allowed these girls to play on his property, and they were using this against him. After months at trial and thousands of dollars spent on legal fees, this man was found innocent. It wasn't the first time the girls' mother had invented a tale

trying to get money. But to say that the man walked away unscathed would be a mistake. Being falsely accused is very, very costly.

Among God's people there is no place for exaggerated accusations or embellished stories. Before we point a finger, we should feel the heaviness of that rock in our hand. I'm guessing you and I wouldn't stone someone, but do we throw words like rocks? Do we make heavy accusations in passing? Things like:

- "My husband is a jerk."
- "Trust me. You would not want her as a mother-in-law."
- "Look at this room. You are so lazy!"

Matthew 12:36 says that we will one day give account to God for every careless word we speak. Every one! That includes the times I have lashed out at a family member out of hurt or frustration or the times I've criticized someone from church—even just to my husband—or the times I've cast judgment on authority figures, not understanding the complexity of their decisions.

God cares about every one of these empty words. My hand might feel empty as I point a finger, but God wants me to feel the weightiness of my accusation.

Feeling the Gravity

That day that my son falsely accused the neighbor boys of shooting him with airsoft guns, I didn't even take the time to gather witnesses. I just picked up the phone and started throwing rocks at the character of some kids who had done nothing wrong. Thankfully, my little fabricator didn't go through with it.

Ten minutes later, I was standing with my red-eyed son on our neighbor's porch, ringing the doorbell. Rather than being

indignant, I was now mortified. With tones of deep regret, I apologized to the father. Then it was my son's turn. I insisted that he ask both the father and the young boys he had falsely accused to forgive him.

No doubt it would have been easier to let my son call or write a letter of apology. Easier yet, I could have let him cry into my shoulder and skip apologizing altogether. But I wanted him to look the people he had hurt in the eye. I wanted him to feel the gravity of his words. I wanted him to know just how much pain he had created by saying something that wasn't honest about other people.

This is how God, as our Father, feels about us. He wants us to feel the gravity of our words. When He says, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor," it's not because He is a harsh, rule-levying God. God loves us! He doesn't want our relationships to constantly be pelted and pummeled with damaging, untrue words. Instead, He wants us to enjoy harmony and peace in our homes and neighborhoods and communities.

What we say about each other matters. Before we point a finger, let's be the kind of people who feel the weight of our words.

Are you quick to "cast stones"? Take inventory of your words this past week. Have you exaggerated or embellished your accusations against others? How can you make this right? What steps will you take to begin feeling the weight of your words against others? {eoa}

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