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Transcript

Making Life Easier – Part 9 – Self-View

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We're continuing our series, *Making Life Easier*. This is part 9. The topic is *Self-View*. Of all the things we've covered so far in this series, this is the one that has the most impact – makes the most difference, does the most to reduce difficulty in life.

We read in the Bible that after God created Adam and Eve, as well as His whole creation. He looked at it and said it was very good. If we jump 6,000 years to our present world, it doesn't look so good. How did that happen? How did things get so bad? Well, the Bible tells us what happened after God created Adam and Eve was a telling episode between the first humans and the devil. Modern Christianity believes the devil, somehow, changed human beings at a fundamental level, instilling another element to the human mind, called confusingly in the Bible, *the flesh*. They talk about this fundamental change as *the fall*.

Now, this term, *the flesh* – or *sarx* in the Greek – lends credibility to the idea that Satan, somehow, modified God's creation – the human brain. But that's because of how we've been think about it. If we think about it in this specific way – that it's something the devil inserted – the whole idea of it is preposterous. The devil is strong enough without giving him more power than he has. There is no indication that he's really any kind of a creator. I dare anyone to find anything in the Bible that shows us that the devil could create a new element to the human mind – that humans, subsequent to Adam and Eve – are born with it. It's not there! I know that David said he was conceived in iniquity. That's a weak attempt to try to prove the point. It does *not* say or mean that his parent passed on a sinful nature to him genetically. It only means that they had committed sin, which we all know to be true. David was conceived in sin, not that he inherited it. If that were true, David would not be responsible for his own actions anymore than he could be responsible for having red hair. It tells us that he was ruddy. It seems, after thinking about it, David's remark meant that the world is utterly corrupted by sin and that it touches all of us from birth. And he references his parents.

If we take a genetic modification out of the equation, what's left? How could the devil cause all of us to have a *sarx* – something Paul said he had, and that, in his *sarx*, there is no good thing –

something so universal in humans that it has been called *human nature*. What other means would he have? Well, it's as plain as day in the Bible, if we'll just look at it. And that's what we're going to do today. We're going to look at what the Bible actually says the devil does, how he causes evil in the world, and evil in you and me, and sin. We're going to examine the implications of all that. In this topic of terrible truth, there is an element of good news for all of us. Life can be easier if we just know what to do.

It all started when I began using EMDR to help people get over their depression, their anxiety, their addictions, their destructive and self-destructive behavior. When we set up the EMDR, we select events from a person's past that cause negative feelings and behaviors in the present. There are two questions we always ask in this preparation. One is: How does that event make you feel about yourself? And the second one is: How would you like to feel about yourself now?

Let me give you some examples of some things I've heard. I met an elderly man once who had come to therapy to deal with his lifelong alcohol addiction. He told me that one of his worst memories from early childhood was when his drunken father called him a "sorry little rat." He was in his late 70s when he told me this story. It had happened a long time ago, and even though it was a long time ago, he broke down and wept as he told me about it.

I asked him the first question: How did that make you feel about yourself? And he said, "Like a sorry little rat. I felt like I was defective – no good." Now, that wasn't just one time that he heard that. The way his father looked at him, the tone of voice he used, the ignoring that went on – all that – had an effect on him. And it all combined to cause him to believe that he was as his father said – a sorry little rat. He was extremely anxious and defensive, and had been all his life. And yet, he had been able to marry and live an honest life. He raised children who seemed to do well. He had helped many people in the community. But he drank to mute the pain of his worthlessness. This made him unavailable to his wife and children a good bit of the time. As we talked, I wondered what he might have accomplished in his life had he not believed he was worthless and defective. When I asked him the second question: How would you like to feel about yourself today? he said, "I would like to feel like I'm no better, but no worse, than all the other people.

Now, I want to ask you this question – this is important: Which is true of this man? How did God create him? Was he born a sorry little rat? Or, was he no better, but no worse, than anyone else? So, you see, he believed a lie about himself. And that lie had a negative impact on his whole life.

Let's look at the second example. I met a nineteen-year-old girl in my office one day. I couldn't help but notice that she looked emaciated. I thought she might have been anorexic or bulimic at first. I could see the veins in her face and neck under her pallid skin. She was almost translucent. Her hair was dull and lifeless. I learned that she grew up with her fraternal twin sister and her mother. Her father died when she was six. She mentioned that he drank a lot. She told me also that she had a malignant ovary that she was being treated for. I found out later that it wasn't with

chemo or radiation, but through natural means. He had a history of voluntary emotional enslavement, starting at sixteen, that led to all kinds of sexual abuse that she tolerated. She had a violent blood phobia. She had a needle phobia that would cause her to pass out when getting shots of any kind. She could not fly or drive a car without intense anxiety.

I worked with her for two years, and when I asked the first question: How did these things make you feel about yourself? she said, "I'm a weakling." When she answered the second question, she said she wanted to be a strong person. Well, over time, we did the EMDR on all these things. She started perking up. She gained some weight, had more energy, began to drive a bit, got a job, moved out of her mother's home to an apartment of her own. She felt so good she stopped coming and I was all for that. I was pleased with her progress, but I had this nagging feeling that we had not gotten down to all of it yet.

About a year later, she returned, and I saw her off and on over a nine-year period after that. During that time, she flew to Scotland and did a masters' degree, in spite of her anxiety. She flew to Italy, because she had Italian citizenship through her mother. She started a business teaching English to Chinese people on the Internet and flew to China at least once that I know of. Making good progress. In one set of sessions that came somewhat before our ten-year therapy history ended, during her processing, a repressed memory came up. She recalled a family upset when she was six, where her father said, "All you women are too hard to deal with. I'm going fishing." He then loaded a case of beer into his boat and drove off. That was the last time she saw him. He fell out of his boat and drowned. I stopped the process and asked her what that meant to her. And she said, "I'm a murderer. I killed my father." I said, "That's quite a secret you've been keeping on yourself." And she said, "I didn't know until right now that I thought that." And I asked, "Is it true?" And she said, "Well, no. When I put it into words, it sounds like the stupidest thing ever." So, we worked through that and things really started to turn around for her like never before. She realized she'd been enslaved to the lie that she believed about herself all her young life.

Working with people, asking them these two questions, I began to see that the way they felt about themselves caused them to have the problems they had. If they felt unworthy, they didn't try to do anything worthwhile – it didn't fit. And if they felt unlovable, their attempts to feel loved were usually twisted in some way and caused them to sin or to fail in their efforts to gain relationship. And all those beliefs about themselves, that they thought were true, were *not* true. And all the good things they wanted to believe about themselves, but didn't, were true at base. Most of the time, their sins and demotivated behavior started in early children with lies they believed about themselves.

So, how far back does that go? Well, all the way back to Adam and Eve, hiding in the bushes from God, blaming each other for their failure to trust Him. When all the people I've worked with come to me the first time, they all believe they are terrible people, that their addictions, their sins were a part of them that were hardwired in and could not be gotten rid of. It was a part of their nature. But they're not! They're the result of believing lies about themselves that they had

learned from living in a world of lies. It doesn't have to come from parents, though often it does. I think that's why David mentioned that he was conceived in sin.

I think about all these young girls that I've talked to, who don't think they're viable females. How did they get that belief? They got a lot of that from looking at all the airbrushed pictures in grocery store magazine stands, the Internet and movies. Every time we see a narcissistic politician lie and scheme to steal money from the public trust, we see someone who, deep down, believes they can't make it without cheating, because they're not strong enough to do it honestly.

Think about Cain. He believed God didn't love him, even though God told him He did. Where do you think he learned that? And where did it lead him? Well, he acted out his distress by killing the competition – his brother, Abel. How he got there probably included the idea that God isn't fair, which is an idea fed to his parents by you know who. Cain probably watched them and picked up on it that way.

Jesus also adds to our understanding of how this whole thing works. There was an episode in John 8:39 – I quoted this scripture a lot in our series, *Waging Spiritual War*. In that series, I did a lot more detail work with the lies we've been told. But there was a discussion Jesus had with some of his followers – maybe not the twelve, but others. In the discussion in John 8:39:

John 8:39-47 – *They answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. You are doing the works your father did." They said to him, "We were not born of sexual immorality. They're shifting it off to Him in not having a physical father. We have one Father—even God." Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God."* So, the context of this conversation was living in sin. Jesus tells us that when we believe the devil's lies, it leads us to sin.

My experience with EMDR showed me how deep that goes. It's not just about doctrine. It's about all of us. Satan does not want us to believe that God loves us. He focuses us on our mistakes, our weaknesses, our sins. Then he blames God for all the sin in the world. See, he's not only a liar. He's a hypocrite. *He's* the originator of all the suffering and evil we see in the world today. But, because it's not genetic, but belief driven, and since we have a God-given choice

about who we follow, that means we're perpetuating it. We could drop it, if we wanted to. We could *choose* to believe God.

Going back to Adam and Eve, what happened there with the devil? Did he perform neurosurgery on them and implant the flesh – or the *sarx*? No. He just talked to them. He passed on an attitude – that God isn't fair and that He doesn't tell the truth. What is that? That's a lie!

It's his lies by which he binds and enslaves all of us. That's where we need to focus. That's what Jesus said. When Jesus was attacked by the devil early in His calling, He spotted the lies the devil was telling him and called him on it. And then He told him the truth.

The devil makes us all feel like garbage when we really are inheriting the future he wanted, but blew. That desperation and discouragement he must feel he imparts to us. And what was Jesus' solution then? Well, we already read it – the truth about God and God's truth about us will set us free from all that. The truth is our weapon. I know it doesn't feel like it's an add-on or an attitude. It feels like we are. But let me tell you what I've learned working with all my clients, helping them rid themselves of the devil's lies.

The woman I mentioned that believed she was responsible for her father's death found some relief as we processed that. But after we processed it, she still had some serious, life-damaging anxiety. So, we did two things. Every time one of her lies would come up, we would process it with EMDR. And next, I taught her five steps to refuting the lie – doing battle with it consciously at a different cognitive level.

So, here are the five steps. Anyone can do these. It's what we *should* do. We start with an activating event. Her father says, "I'm going to go fishing because you're just too hard to handle," and then he gets killed. So, that's A) activating event. And B) – the next step – is belief. "I'm unlovable," or, "I'm a murderer," "I am weak. And then C) is the consequence – that's discouragement, depression, anger, guilt, etcetera – whatever it might be for you. So activating event (A), belief (B), consequence (C). D) is to dispute the lie. Dispute – where is the evidence? What is true? What does God say about me? And E) is the effect, which comes from freedom from lies. These five, with prayer at the beginning and end of every day, and along the way, Jesus said works. In every case – every case – where someone was willing to *do* these things, they gradually, slowly, over time began to change a set of attitudes and feelings they thought were completely a part of who they were. They became more godly, even when they didn't believe in God. Did you know it's possible to behave in a godly way, even when you don't believe in God? Yes, it is! And, as long as we stop believing the devil's lies, it works for anybody.

Finding lies is something hard to do. So, here's the big tip on where to look. After Adam and Eve believed the devil, they began to suffer huge losses. They lost their relationship with their Provider and Protector. The Bible paints a picture of them hiding in the bushes from God, Him calling their name, trying to find them. He lost the perfect job for them. They were cast out of

the Garden. They lost the perfect place to live. They lost their relationship with each other. They wound up blaming each other for the problem. There was a loss of harmony in the family. One son killed the other. And they felt a loss of love from God. That was a lie! That's what *they* felt, but it wasn't true. The losses they suffered are staggering when we think of them. These losses confirmed the lies the devil taught them, which is primarily that it's all God's fault and He's unfair. He's not telling you the truth.

So, believing those things blinded them to the truth. The losses came along with the lies they believed, rather than causing them. Knowing that, if we look for the losses we have experienced in our lives, we get close to the lies we have believed.

I told you once, many years ago, I think, the man who thought he was unlovable suffered a huge loss of love when he heard his parents discussing selling him. The woman who believed she caused her father's death lived in silent guilt. The man whose father said he was a sorry little rat lost any chance that he could believe God was for him and that he had a bright future with God, even though he was a member of the church.

What we want to focus on is how *God* feels about us. There's a term being used – maybe it's not quite as popular as it used to be – but the term *self-esteem*. Back in the 80s and 90s, the California prison population was given a set of psychological tests. I mean, they're still doing it. The prisoners scored way high – way higher than the whole population – for self-esteem. Self-esteem is not an accurate picture of what goes on with people.

Do you know what self-esteem for esteem's sake is? It's self-centeredness. What I'm talking about is *completely* different. I'm talking about a view of yourself based on what God says – through God's lens. What is the view of ourselves that God provides us? Well, we're told that God created us to be in His Kingdom, because He loves us, in spite of our deceitful hearts and our predilection for sinful behavior. We know that the member of the God family who created us sacrificed His human life for us! Jesus Christ came down here, gave up His Godship, suffered a brutal death to pay for all of our sins. We're told that the devil influenced our first parents negatively and they separated themselves from God. And we know that this separation has continued until God made Himself known to us and called us. We don't have to feel separated anymore when God calls us. He's coming us and making an overture – offering an invitation to us. We know that Christ's loving sacrifice has covered us with a blanket of grace and forgiveness, so much so that He has removed the record of our sins as far as east is from west. We know that each of us is the apple of God's eye. It says that – exact words – in the Bible! We know that God will never give up on us, get tired of us, turn away from us. He sees us for our potential and He loves each of us for our uniqueness. And when we don't live as though these things are true, then we are held captive by the devil's lies. This process puts those lies away.

My clients, almost universally, tell me that, when they start thinking of themselves this way, the depression lifts, the anxiety goes away, and they have so much more energy to live their lives.

Now, this does not happen when we just know this at an intellectual level. We have to *believe* it. With our whole hearts.

Let's look at something else that, to me, is very powerful: Paul's example for us. The book of Acts – the history of the early church – tells us of a time early on, when the church had to flee from Jerusalem, because the Jews were on a rage to kill all of them. Only the apostles stayed in town, hidden. A mob of Jews during that time stoned Stephen, a deacon. Notice what we're told about Saul, soon to be Paul, and what he thought about it. Luke says, in Acts 8:1:

Acts 8:1-3 – *And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.* And back then, prison was not what it is today.

Paul, after his conversion, said this about his attitude: In Acts 22:4, we read that Paul:

Acts 22:4-5 – *...persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, as the high priest and the whole council of elders can bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brothers, and I journeyed toward Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished.*

Here's a telling remark he makes about his past. It's in 1 Corinthians 15:7.

1 Corinthians 15:7-9 – *Then he appeared to James – that's Jesus – then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.* And yet, this man, Paul, refused to believe the lies he must have felt about his own sin against God and the brethren.

Here's his strategy. It's in Philippians 3:12.

Philippians 3:12-14 – *Not that I have already obtained this – talking about the goal of eternal life – or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.* So, he knew he had great guilt. God called him to do a work for Him, in spite of that, and he was forgiven of his sins. *...Christ Jesus has made me His own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

So, he believed God. He believed God forgave him his sin against the church and against God. He believed he was Christ's now. So, with all his weaknesses and failings, he forgot about the

past, just like God has, and strained forward, as he put it, toward the goal – the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

So, let me ask you this question: Has God called you? If so, do like Paul did. Start believing in God's forgiveness and strain toward the goal. Believe God, not the great liar. God loves you and has forgiven you your sins.

Let's look at another scripture – just one more – in Romans 8, verse 31:

Romans 8:31-39 – *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? Well, there is one against us, but God is stronger. He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels – I think he means fallen angels here – nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

And that is the truth! Believe it and life will still be hard. Living it will get much easier.