



Foundation Stone #1: Intimacy April 2006

Why People (Ministers Included) Often Sabotage their Intimacy Needs

The introduction of sin into the human race was a destructive gift given us by our earliest parents, Adam and Eve. The result of their sin was intimacy lost, both with God and each other. There were four significant results of humanity's fall into sin and loss of Paradise: fear, shame, hiding, and blaming. They are evident in Adam and Eve's rebuttal with God (Genesis 3:9-13). These same tendencies are no less evident in our own lives.

"I was afraid": The very first effect of sin was *fear*. With fear, we don't want others to see our flaws, our weaknesses, our insecurities. We are fearful because we believe if others *really* knew who we were they would reject us. "If my congregation only knew how insecure I am, they would fire me." "If other ministers in my organization knew my secret sins, they would gossip about me to others and ruin my reputation." "If the lay leadership only knew how uncertain I was about how to pull off this new building campaign, they wouldn't want to follow my leadership." It's the fear we've all lived under since the Fall.

"Because I was naked": This fear originates from unhealthy *shame*. John Eldredge in his bestselling book *Wild at Heart* used the term "poser" – someone who pretends to be something he's not. We fear becoming real in intimate relationships will jeopardize our standing in their eyes. They will harm us by their reaction to the real us. Perhaps they would become so disgusted with us they would no longer want to have anything to do with us ever again – the ultimate rejection. Isn't that the fear deep down inside? Oh, you put on a great game face to prove it isn't so. In fact, you might often put on this face to keep *yourself* believing the same thing. But deep inside you sense it.

"So I hid": Fear and unhealthy shame are what we feel as the result of intimacy lost. *Hiding* is a common response to such feelings and becomes a further block to genuine intimacy. It happens when we feel like a fake in a world of people who really *seem* to have it all together. We hide to protect ourselves from harm by others and from being exposed by them. It sometimes becomes the only tool we know for holding it all together. Some hide by physical isolation. Others attempt to prevent exposure by sewing elaborate "fig leaves" to hide behind. What are these "fig leaves"? They could be good works, perfectionism, a relational mask, being "good", a forced smile – *anything to hide the real us from exposure*. *It's an attempt to get others to think better of us than we do of ourselves*. The more important a relationship is to us, the more "posing" we may do with them.

"The woman you put here with me": If we're unsuccessful at avoiding the pain by hiding, then we might attempt to shift the responsibility and attention to someone else through *blaming*. When hiding doesn't work and others begin to see the "real us" leaking out from behind our mask, we might use the defense of blaming as a means for shifting the focus from *our* weakness to *someone else's* weakness. Like Adam with Eve and like Eve with the serpent, the blame game becomes our attempt to "save face" and avoid the rejection of God and others.

Thoughts to Ponder:

- How do fear, shame, hiding, and blaming keep you from *genuine* intimacy with God, close friends and your spouse?
- Spend some dedicated time with the LORD, asking Him to help you *no longer sabotage* intimate godly relationships.

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