

Coping With Our Mistakes

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Nobody knew Jim was the one who did it, so he just shrugged and turned away. He didn't get far before there was a hard tap on his shoulder and, in an accusatory tone, someone said, "But I saw you do it!" While still walking away, he mumbled, "It's no big deal," and when someone voiced an insistent, "What?!" he said, "It didn't hurt anyone... everyone does it—in fact you've done it yourself!" Jim managed to avoid them for a while, and he hoped it was over.



Wait, wait, wait. Is that how we handle our mistakes? Do we deny them? Are we skilled at making excuses for what we do wrong? Is it our goal to escape facing problems we have caused and wish they will somehow go away? When we make a mistake - whether spiritual or physical, sin or just a slip-up - we need to stop and notice how we are dealing with it.

Denial Isn't Resolution

"When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer" (**Psalm 32:3-4**). It's sleepless nights. It's fear of being discovered. You can't get it out of your head. You feel like something is dying on the inside; your strength is gone, and life has lost a sense of joy, peace, and meaning.

When David tried to keep silent about his sin, when he hid and denied it, his life was eaten up by it – spiritually, emotionally, and physically. To make matters worse, living a lie sears the conscience (**1 Tim 4:2**). Hearts are dulled, and spiritual ears and eyes aren't open to pure truth anymore (**Mt 13:15**).

Self-justification leads us to "call evil good, and good evil... put darkness for light, and light for darkness... bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (**Is 5:20**). But the truth is still there. Denial, lies, and rewriting doesn't change or resolve anything.

Excuses Aren't Resolution

"The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate"... "The serpent deceived me, and I ate" (**Gen. 3:12-13**). Beginning with the very first sin, the art of excuse making was born. So which excuse will we use today: bad crowd, bad parents or childhood, public school, stress, physical illness, weakness, "It didn't turn out as planned," "I can't help it," "I was made this way," "Everyone does it," "It didn't hurt anyone," "I have stronger desires than others," "You don't understand my life..."?

"Abraham is our father" was a popular first century Jewish conscience salve (**Jn. 8:33-41**). But explanations and exceptions and excuses don't change the past—they don't make a mistake into something right, and they don't make sin into righteousness.

Escape Isn't Resolution

"But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord" (**Jon. 1:3**). We don't like to be around problems. So we avoid people we have offended and hurt. And we don't feel like being around people who are peacemakers—people who show us our problems and urge us to resolve them. We scoff at Jonah —fleeing from the presence of the Lord! But how often have we run and hid from dealing with mistakes and sin? I asked a friend why people kept using drugs and

alcohol when it clearly often didn't make them feel good and exacerbated their problems. She said it was because it dulled what they didn't want to feel and made it so they didn't have to face life. There is a sense in which the book of Ecclesiastes is one man's attempt to escape life (and death). But distraction, pleasure, burying one's self in work, and numbing one's senses are all empty. In the end, nothing has been resolved. The problems, mistakes, and sins are still there.

Repentance, Admission, and Forgiveness Are Resolution

Remember David who was being consumed by the guilt of his sin in Psalm 32? Now see how it was resolved: "I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and you forgave the iniquity of my sin" (**Psa. 32:5**). It's not about pride, what others think, always being right, or defending one's self. Those things fuel denial, excuses, and escape.

We need to be people who resolve our mistakes. When we're wrong, whether it is sin or not, we accept it, admit it, and apologize. As sons of God, we are peacemakers (**Matt. 5:9**) who want to quickly agree with our adversaries (**Matt. 5:25**). And we crave forgiveness more than having a false veneer of perfection. So we admit our faults to others (**Jas. 5:16**). We confess our sins (**1 Jn. 1:9**). We say that we're sorry and ask to be forgiven, without denial, excusing, or hiding. This is how things are really resolved with one another and with God.