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Truth Vs Lies: Which Do You Follow? (Part 3)

Lion King Video: Hakuna Matata (No rules – No responsibility = No worries)

Intro: We live in a culture that is in denial of personal responsibility. It has embraced the “Hakuna Matata philosophy. No one is responsible for their actions anymore. (Examples: Oil companies not responsible for gas prices although Exxon posted \$11 Billion profit last quarter.) Pictures – Scapegoat / Irresponsibility

Lie #3: “I’m not responsible.” “It’s not my fault.” Run from responsibility rather than embrace it. This is a lie that has horrible consequences in every arena of life.

I Samuel 15 – King Saul

I. The Elements of Denial

A. Make a conscious choice (To do the wrong thing.)

I Sam. 15:9 “But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were not willing to destroy them utterly...” (NASB)

1. Saul knew exactly what God wanted him to do. He wasn’t confused about his orders. He willfully chose to disobey God’s command. He was not willing to destroy everything. That is a choice! No one forced him...
2. We do the same thing. We make conscious choices to go in the exact opposite direction God wants us to go. We know what we should do, but are unwilling to follow it.
3. The situation may have been tempting / the friends we were with may have been influencing / the circumstances may have had us beaten down / the stress may have been unbearable / BUT, we still made a choice.
4. Maybe there are some areas of your life where you know you’re making some choices that are in the exact opposite direction where God would have you go. Sometimes we all do.
5. If that’s the case, we have to do something with those choices. Now, we embrace the next element of denial.

B. Rationalize the behavior

- Saul returns from the battle and the prophet Samuel confronts him.
I Sam. 15:15 “...the army spared the best of the sheep and the cattle...But they are going to sacrifice them to the Lord your God...” (NLT)
- 1. Doesn't that sound so spiritual? We disobeyed God so we could honor God with these sacrifices. Spiritual rationalization.
- 2. We can rationalize just about any choice we make. Christians are great at spiritualizing their wrong choices. It's amazing. Over the years, I have heard quite a variety.
- 3. “I know we were talking about so and so, but it wasn't gossip, we wanted to make sure they were getting prayed for.” Spiritualized gossip
 - I know I didn't ask the leader of that ministry for permission first, but I was just trying to help, so I did it anyway. (Spiritualized insubordination)
 - I know God would want me happy, so that makes it OK. For me to do this.
 - We just want what is best for the church so that makes these secret meetings acceptable.
 - I don't like this particular thing about the church so I'm going to withhold my money / and-or / not get involved in serving.
 - I'm just trying to be obedient by providing well for my family, therefore it's OK for me to be gone all the time / never home / no time for relationships
- 4. **Illustrate:** Years ago when I was a Youth Pastor, we were coming back from a Jr. High retreat. (share story about two girls with a bag of pot)
- 5. Are there some choices you've been rationalizing? If you are, you're probably embracing the next element.

C. Shift the blame

I Sam. 15:20-21 “...I did obey the voice of the Lord...But the people took some of the spoil...” (NASB)

1. Now Saul completely removes himself from any responsibility (even though he is the king), and blames the people. It's not my fault. What could I do? I obeyed God as much as I could. I'm just the victim here!
2. How natural it is for us to go here. My actions are not my fault, they are someone else's fault. Someone else is to blame, not me! How many times have I heard this?
3. Examples: “I wouldn't have said that mean comment if you hadn't made me so mad. I wouldn't have hit you...”
 - I would be a better (husband / wife) if it wasn't for my work stress.
 - I was raised in a very dysfunctional family so it's not my fault.
 - I wouldn't have stolen from the company if they would have paid me more money.

- In the paper 2 weeks ago – story of a police officer who busted 2 drivers exceeding 100mph (share) Excuse – I was just trying to catch up to the guy speeding so I could get his license plate and report him.
4. Have you been blaming other people for the choices you’ve been making? If so, there is one more crucial element we need to understand.

D. Ignore the accountability

- Saul completely ignored the fact that he was responsible for his choices. Saul didn’t disobey God privately, he disobeyed God publicly. He made a choice that lead his entire army to disobey God. They all knew what the command from God was as well. (Samuel reminded him of accountability)

I Sam. 15:22,26 “What is more pleasing to the Lord: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to His voice? Obedience is far better than sacrifice...Since you have rejected the Lord’s command, He has rejected you from being the King of Israel.” (NLT)

1. For us to fully embrace our denial of responsibility, we have to convince ourselves that there is no accountability. We have to choose to ignore the fact that I am accountable for ALL my choices in this life.
 2. We see this attitude running rampant in our culture. Very few people see themselves as being accountable for their actions. There is the belief that I can do whatever I want without consequences.
 3. Examples: Professional athletes / Corporate executives / Famous people who think they are above the rules – anyone say...OJ? / Politicians /
 4. Are there some choices you’ve been making where you’re in denial about the consequences? Have you been buying into the lie that you’re not responsible or accountable for your choices?
- God has a path of responsibility that He wants us to embrace. Responsibility is NOT bondage. It is not something we should try to avoid or run from. It is something we should embrace. Look at God’s perspective.

II. God’s Path of Responsibility

A. Responsibility is from God

- Let’s go right back to the beginning. What was God’s original intent?
Gen. 1:28 “God blessed them and told them, ‘Multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. Be masters over the fish and birds and all the animals.’” (NLT)
Gen. 2:15 “Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.” (NASB) Responsibility from the beginning!
1. God created us to fulfill responsibility. Unfortunately, most people tend to equate responsibility with work and employment / bondage / with something negative / BUT, it’s more than that!

2. Let's look at some key areas of responsibility God calls us to. Responsibility that we MUST embrace, yet in our culture, people are running from.
 - Responsibility of marriage (50% divorce – no better with believers)
 - Responsibility of parenting (to raise a godly responsible generation – Quote from MTV – “Thank you for letting us raise your children.”)
 - Responsibility of healthy relationships in general. God calls us to love one another – 2nd greatest command.
 - Responsibility to be good stewards of our resources (financial / material / stewards of God's creation.)
 - Responsibility to be salt / light / witnesses / ambassadors that every believer in Christ is called to. We are to represent Christ!
 - Responsibility to the local church we attend (serve / give / support) Not just be consumers who take but those who give back.
 - Responsibility to allow God to transform my character (Actions / attitudes / motives / goals / values / thoughts / I need to cooperate with Him.
3. These things are not optional. We can't throw up our hands and say, “I'm not responsible!” OR, if things are inconvenient or stressful, we really can't say, “It's not my fault!” We're no different then King Saul.
4. We can't say that because of the circumstances I am no longer responsible for these things / OR because of my past / Because of others...
5. As my old High School choir teacher used to say, “That is a reason you're late, NOT an excuse.” There may be reasons you made certain choices, but they are not excuses. They don't excuse us from responsibility.
6. Maybe we need to come before God and ask Him for His forgiveness for running from the very responsibilities we were created for. Making excuses that let us off the hook in our minds. Embracing a Hakuna Matata philosophy.

B. Accountability is from God

1. Responsibility makes no sense without accountability. Things get done and are followed through with that are “inspected” not just “expected”.
2. There was accountability in the Garden of Eden. They had specific things they were responsible for. (Cultivating The Garden / multiplication / Master over the physical creation / avoiding the tree of good and evil) God held them accountable for these things.
3. There is accountability for how we live in this life. We reap what we sow / obedience results in blessing /
Gal. 6:7 “...you will always reap what you sow...” (NLT) Cause and effect!
Gal. 6:9 “Don't get tired of doing what is good...for we will reap a harvest of blessing...” (NLT) Our choices we make in this life pay off in this life...create positive consequences in this life.

4. There is accountability in eternity. We all will someday stand before Christ and give an account for our lives.

II Cor. 5:10 “For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in our bodies.” (NLT) How I live this life matters eternally as well. I will have to give an account for this one life I am living.

5. We have to be careful not to diminish the accountability that God has set in place. It’s not just for negative re-enforcement, but for positive encouragement as well. There are 2 sides to this coin. God is not trying to scare us into obedience. He wants us to know how His world works.
6. We need to change our belief about accountability. Many people view it as a negative thing, when in reality, it is a very positive thing. How do you look at God’s accountability?
7. Does the fact of accountability help you embrace responsibility?

C. Cooperation comes from us

1. Our lives simply will not change until we cooperate with God and embrace responsibility. Until we stop making excuses / stop rationalizing / stop blaming others / and step up to the plate and trust God with our lives in the areas that He wants.

Phil. 2:12-13 “...work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.” (NASB)

2. What’s with the “fear and trembling” part? Once you start understanding it is God’s program for you to embrace responsibility from Him and that we are held accountable for that responsibility in this life and the next; and that God is actively at work within you trying to accomplish this purpose in you; you begin to see how important it is to cooperate with Him.
 - We realize there are negative consequences for ignoring what God says we are responsible for. (fear and trembling – serious thing)
 - We also realize there are blessing for cooperation with God. This is the life of real freedom. (Partnership with God)
3. Are there some areas of your life where you area running from your responsibility? Where your saying...”I’m not responsible...It’s not my fault!” Where you are making excuses / blaming others / rationalizing wrong choices? Where you are not cooperating with God?
4. Maybe today it’s time to walk away from this cultural lie and step up to the plate and become the man or woman God knows you can be. The one He is already at work creating you to be.
5. Some of you are thinking...”I can’t”...I’ll fail”...”I don’t have it in me”. The truth is that you do have it in you because Jesus is in you. He will help you fulfill every responsibility He calls you to embrace. HOW?

- Admit you are responsible (I am responsible for my marriage / my parenting / my joy and happiness / my relationships / church /
** Sometimes this means we have to admit we were wrong.
- Reject all the lies (rationalizing / blaming / ignoring accountability)
** We need to take these lies before God and confess them.
- Decide to cooperate with God. (Even if we don't know what that looks like. God will show you what that looks like.) "God, I will embrace every responsibility You call me to."

I want to invite you to pray with me this morning. Where is He calling you to leave your excuses behind and follow Him into responsibility?