

## 2-2-25 How to Lead: Mistakes Leaders Make

### Week 1

**Text: Genesis 3:1-12; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21**

**Topic:** Adam, Responsibility

**Big Idea of the Message:** Adam avoided taking responsibility and blamed Eve. In contrast, Jesus took our blame as His responsibility.

**Applicational Point:** As godly leaders, we must use our responsibility to help others.

**Big Idea of the Series:** What can we learn from the Bible about what it means to be a good leader? How can we learn from others' mistakes, using their faults to fuel our journey to becoming effective guides in our homes, jobs, communities, and churches?

This series examines biblical leaders, detailing how each experienced acute failure at specific points in their lives. Each week's message contrasts that leader's shortcomings with Jesus' redemptive role as the perfect leader. Touching on the topics of responsibility, endurance, discipline, and fear, Mis-Direction both explores what godly leadership is, and what it isn't.

What is your favorite game to play?

Could it be World of Warcraft, Minecraft, Warzone, or Fortnite?

What about board games: Monopoly? Risk? Bunco? Scrabble? Battleship? Chutes and Ladders?

The most popular game in the world is also the oldest game, and it has been played by every human being ever born, it's called the Blame Game, and most of us are experts at it. The problem is that this is not just a game, it has ruptured relationships and fractured countless families. The Blame Game lives in our spiritual DNA.

**Read Genesis 3:1-9.**

After Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, sin's first consequence was shame, so they tried to cover it up by sewing some itchy fig leaves together. After this, they heard the Lord God walking in the garden, so they covered and ran for cover. The shame of their sin caused them to hide from God's holiness. Just a short time earlier they enjoyed intimate fellowship with God but now the fruit of disobedience brought distance and dissonance between them and the Creator.

**“For all that is in the world – the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life – is not from the Father but is from the world.” 1 John 2:16**

Lust of flesh Good for food.

Lust of eyes Pleasant to eyes.

Pride of life Desire to make one wise.

After covering up and attempting to conceal themselves, in **verse 9** we see God's searching heart as He called out to Adam, **“Where are you?”** Don't you love how the Good Shepherd always looks

for lost sheep? God comes to the guilty couple and instead of driving them away, He drew them out with grace and mercy. Even during their failure God is drawing near, attempting to reconcile the fracture. God seeks for full restoration. But there must be a full examination of what caused the fracture.

### **Read Genesis 3:11-13.**

After reflecting on this Scripture, I wrote down this summary: The shame of our sin often leads us to shift the blame. Don't play the blame game; own it by name and avoid shame.

God continues to draw Adam and Eve out of hiding with two questions in **verse 11**. The first was indirect and was designed to stir up Adam's conscience to elicit a confession: **"Who told you that you were naked?"** This is a rhetorical question designed to help Adam link the shame of being naked with the guilt that comes from disobeying God. Our culture is so quick to demean guilt but true guilt from God is a gift which prepares us for God's grace.

The second question follows immediately and is more direct: **"Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?"** God was inviting Adam to acknowledge that his shame was a direct result of his sin so he would confess.

God was reminding Adam that when he ate of the tree, he was deliberately disobeying the one clear command given in **Genesis 2:17**: **"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."** Adam was very uncomfortable answering these questions. He'd rather shift the blame, minimize what he did, and make himself out to be a victim. Instead of running behind a tree, they hid behind five excuses, which are still very common today. We cannot lead our homes, churches, communities and jobs if we continue to subscribe to them.

Before we go much further, let's collectively confess we are no better than Adam and Eve. We've had millennia to perfect the blame game and most of us qualify as "expert gamers." As we walk through these verses, let's hold up the mirror of God's Word so we can see ourselves as we really are.

#### **1. Accusing others.**

- Instead of answering God's "yes" or "no" question by naming what he did, Adam did some gaming and went straight to blaming in **verse 12**: **"The man said, 'The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.'"** The first person he blamed was Eve; actually, he called her **"the woman,"** no doubt to distance himself from her.
- Adam tried to pin his sin squarely on Eve: **"she gave me of the tree..."** It's almost like he didn't have a choice. If it weren't for her giving the fruit to him, he would never have munched on the mango, or whatever it was (remember, we don't know if it was an apple).
- Do these expressions sound familiar? "If only he weren't so lazy, I wouldn't have blown up." Or "I wouldn't drink so much if she would just stop nagging me." Someone has said that if you can smile when things go wrong, it means you've thought of someone to blame.
- In **Exodus 32**, we read how Aaron shirked responsibility for his sin when he made a golden calf to worship. When Moses came down from the mountain, he gave him a chance to confess by asking him a question in **verse 21**: **"What did this people do to you that you**

**have brought such a great sin upon them?”** Aaron tried to evade the question and avoid responsibility with his lame excuse in **verses 22-24:**

- He blamed the people. He blamed Moses for being gone so long. He minimized his role and responsibility. He even blamed the furnace for its delivery of the golden calf.
- Brethren, the only thing some people learn from their sins is how to blame them on others. Let's stop blaming others for our sins.

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## **2. Blaming God.**

- Just as it's common to accuse those who are close to us of excusing our own sin, Adam does something even more nefarious. Listen to the verse again as I emphasize another word: **“The woman whom YOU gave me...”**
- Adam is now playing the Blame Game with God: “God, if you wouldn't have given me this dangerous woman, I never would have done it.” We could read it like this: “That woman by my side, she who was given to me by YOU to be a trusty helper, she gave me the fruit.”
- Have you noticed God often gets blamed for choices we make and for every bad thing that happens in the world?
- One pastor put it like this: *“Adam implies that a better God wouldn't have given him Eve. He's becoming like Satan, who argued that a better God wouldn't withhold anything from His people. Like the serpent, Adam says that God's good gift is malicious. He's minimizing and criticizing the goodness of God.”*

**People ruin their lives by their own foolishness and then are angry at the Lord. Proverbs 19:3**

- Notice how Adam used the word **“gave”** twice. First, he said Eve **“gave”** the fruit to him and second, it was God who **“gave”** Eve to him. Adam is implying that God is ultimately responsible for what happened.

**“Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God,’ for God cannot be tempted with evil, and He himself tempts no one.” James 1:13**

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## **3. Pointing to circumstances.**

- Inherent in this passage, is another excuse found in the phrase Adam used when he blamed Eve: **“to be with me.”v.12)** This is the idea of pointing to situations or circumstances as reasons for sinning. It might sound like this:
  - Everyone else is doing it.
  - I was just in the wrong place at the wrong time.
  - My boss doesn't appreciate me so it's OK to falsify my expense report.
  - We've been dating for a long time, and we love each other.
  - I just have a short fuse, so I blow up sometimes.
  - If I wasn't so tired, I wouldn't have tossed that verbal grenade at you.
  - I flipped someone off because he cut me off.

- I was just sharing a prayer request.

Susan Jocoby writes about people who profoundly believe they are always losers in the game of life. She calls them “injustice collectors.”

- They endlessly repeat how others have mistreated them.
- They view the world as hostile and unfair to them.
- They are “beachcombers of misery” where they see each grievance as a treasure to add to their collection.
- They have a hidden need to feel wronged.
- They live by the childish notion that life should always be fair to them.

There are places and situations we need to stay out of as well. But even when we are in tempting places, we can’t use that as an excuse to sin. **1 Corinthians 10:13 promises, “...But with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”**

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#### **4. Blaming the devil.**

- The oldest game in the world isn’t over, and the blaming picks up speed in **verse 13** when God asked Eve a probing question: **“What is this that you have done?”** This question has the force of, “What in the world have you done?”
- Instead of naming her sin, Eve began blaming Satan: **“The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”** She tried to attribute her infraction to the Evil One. It’s the classic, “The Devil made me do it” defense. While this phrase was popularized by comedian Flip Wilson over 50 years ago, its origin goes back to the Garden.
- Satan is certainly an active agent in our temptation, but he’s often given way more credit (or blame) than he deserves. Satan tempts us, but he can’t make us do anything. And yet, some people are certain the devil is behind their actions and therefore they are not responsible for what they do.
- To Eve’s credit, she didn’t blame God or Adam, and she admitted she was deceived. However, she still did some major blame shifting.

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#### **5. Using euphemism (You-Fa-Mism)**

- If we go back to our text, we see that both Adam and Eve finally admitted they ate but they didn’t confess they had deliberately disobeyed God’s command. At the end of **verse 12**, Adam said, **“and I ate.”** Eve reluctantly admitted the same in **verse 13: “and I ate.”**
- They’re really employing euphemisms. A euphemism is a polite expression used in place of words or phrases that otherwise might be considered harsh or unpleasant to hear. Sin loves to hide behind euphemisms. Here are some that come to mind.
- Moral failure
- Mistake
- Flaw

- Problem
- Indiscretion
- Oversight
- Shortcoming
- Slip-up
- Misstep
- Blunder

One way we can fight against this is to use words the Bible uses.

- Instead of saying, “I stretched the truth,” it’s better to say, “I just sinned by lying to you.”
- Instead of saying, “I just have a bad temper,” it’s more accurate to say, “I just sinned against you with my words. Please forgive me.”
- Instead of saying, “I had an affair or a fling,” it’s more biblical to say, “I committed adultery.”
- Instead of saying, “We hooked up,” it’s more biblical to say, “I sinned by having sex outside of marriage as defined by God as a covenant commitment between one man and one woman.”
- One pastor puts it this way: “Until we fear sin and its consequences more keenly, we will not prize our pardon very highly.” This may sound blunt but it’s much better to call sin what it is. Why is that?
- Because there’s a solution for sin - it’s called repentance and forgiveness. Until we acknowledge that we’ve sinned, we won’t experience forgiveness and freedom, and we’ll continue to swim in our shame and be gutted by our guilt.
- I have a few acquaintances who work in law enforcement. I asked them what percentage of people end up blaming somebody else or some circumstance for their problems. They responded quickly, “70-80%!” One of them said he tells people, “It would be nice to hear the truth for once. I’ve been lied too enough today.”

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### **Conclusion**

Is it your practice to accuse others to excuse your own behavior?

Are you quick to charge God with wrongdoing as an excuse for doing wrong?

Do you point to circumstances instead of confessing your sins?

Do you blame the devil to avoid your own shame?

Do you use euphemisms to avoid the clear commands of God?

I like how someone put it: “If you could kick the person in the pants responsible for most of your trouble, you wouldn’t sit for a month.”

Most of us think our sins smell better than other people’s sins as we secretly look down on those who sin differently than we do. Without a deep working of the grace of God within us, we will do exactly what Adam and Eve did, and we’ll perpetuate the blame game for future generations.

We must accept full responsibility for our guilt if we hope to experience God's grace

We need to get to the place David did when he clearly confessed his sin, without shifting blame in **2 Samuel 12:13**: **"David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the LORD.' And Nathan said to David, 'The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die.'"**

After first covering up and concealing his sin, Achan finally confessed with contrition in **Joshua 7:20**: **"Truly I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I did."**

If we don't own our sins, they will end up owning us. When we keep silent about our sins, our sins will consume us. We have a choice. We can confess or suppress our sins.

God's invitation for confession is not to shame us, but to set us free. Jesus is the only person in history who didn't try to pass the buck to someone else. On the cross, He took the blame for people like us who struggle to take the blame.

The good news of the gospel is we can pass along our guilt to Him and in exchange, He will grant us grace, forgiveness, and freedom. On top of that, He takes our rottenness and exchanges it for His righteousness.