

AUTHENTIC APOLOGY

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How often have we heard our children say “I’m sorry” to their siblings or maybe to us as their parents and yet the look on the face, the gritted teeth, perhaps the clenched fists, over-rides the words! The condition of their heart is loud and clear no matter how high the volume of their words.

This reminds me of a period of time a few years back when my daughter was on the middle school emotional roller coaster that most girls go through. We were in that stage where parents are dumber than rocks and teens know everything! So, on a particularly busy afternoon, I had been explaining the importance of studying as one prepares for an exam. As I often do, I had stated something that was blatantly obvious to my teen daughter. My daughter’s response, being quicker than lightning on her feet, had been “Well, duh, Mom!” Being the proactive parent that I am, I responded quickly, calmly and matter-of-factly, “Excuse me, don’t forget your respect”. Again, without a moments hesitation, she replied “Duh, Yes Maam!?” I, not being so quick on my feet, was momentarily stunned and lost all hope of maintaining my position of authority, as I broke out in hysterical laughing! Needless to say, her response had some right wording, yet somehow the true lesson of respect got lost in the process!

The condition of the heart is less obvious with adults. Have you ever been given an apology yet find yourself questioning the sincerity of the words that were offered? Of course, we all have! The method with which the apology is delivered makes all the difference. **The condition of our heart always permeates the presentation of our message!** A true apology from the heart comes as a result of experiencing remorse or regret for something. When we hear an apology that sounds like regret over you getting your feelings hurt, then it is more like a counterfeit apology.

Perhaps you have dealt with the apology that sounds more like “I’m sorry but I only did it because of...”, and then they continue to move along with an extensive explanation of why they did what they did. The recipient usually only hears a justification for their wrong doing which overrides the words of the apology, leaving them with another counterfeit apology.

There are many forms of counterfeit apologies which reflect the true condition of the heart. True regret over my selfishness, my lack of insight or maturity, my pride or laziness, or perhaps my lack of self-control is at the heart of every true apology. Naming my mistake and accepting responsibility for my behavior is adequately accomplished by saying straight up “I was wrong”. Yet these 3 words are so very difficult for most of us. The reason for this is pride and an over-confidence in my ability to be right.

How long have you gone since you gave a true authentic heart level apology? If we stop avoiding the shame of our human condition and we are honest with ourselves, we can’t go 24 hours without some form of thoughtlessness jeopardizing our communication with others. It is not always that we intend to hurt others, but we do, because we are human. Fortunately, we do not answer for the other person’s sensitivity. But we do answer for our own insensitivity.

Therefore, we are obligated to purify ourselves before our maker as well as those with whom we communicate by expressing regret for our own shortcomings and authentically apologizing. Sincere apologies are a gift which when offered with true humility, transparency and boldness are a blessing to the offended and to the offender!!

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