

One of the things that frighten me the most in life is being evaluated. (Considering that fear, I'm probably in the wrong line of work since I am evaluated every Sunday morning!)

When I am evaluated I'm always nervous about what I'm going to hear. What will my employer say about the quality of my work? What will my kids say about my parenting? What does my mother-in-law think about me? And the evaluation I fear the most is when I sit down with my wife to discuss how we are doing as a couple!

As hard as it is to hear these evaluations; I realize how important it is to go through them because they make me better and I value the relationships that are the basis of these evaluations. The relationships I have with my co-workers, the relationships with my family; really all the relationships that I am a part of need honesty and openness so that they can grow and benefit everyone involved.

Just as we all have a collection of relationships; there is a climate associated with every single one of those relationships. There is a climate associated with your marriage, there is a climate associated with your family relationships; there is a climate associated with your work relationships...

So here is the key for this entire series: **the climate of your life dictates the forecast of your relationships.**

Let me give you an example. If the climate of a marriage is cold, bitter, angry and hostile, you can predict the forecast of that marriage. **The climate dictates the forecast.**

And the reason we are doing this series is because you and I have at least one relationship that could use a climate change. And just as every relationship has a climate; every one of *us* has a climate- a climate that goes with us everywhere we go.

But here is the problem; you and I can't see our climate in the mirror because we are not on the other side of us. The information is there; the problem is that most people decide not to look at it.

It is like being in debt financially and when the monthly credit card statement comes you toss it aside. You say, "If I don't look at the credit card bill everything will be ok." You and I both know that doesn't work. Ignoring something doesn't mean that it goes away; it means that we are just ignoring it to our own detriment.

And that is the reason for the challenge I'm going to put before you today. A challenge, which if you take it; will begin to change the climate of your life and how it dictates the forecast of your relationships.

In case you wonder why we need to talk about relationships; it is because your relationships are the greatest asset that you have in life. Think about it; when Jesus was asked about the greatest commandment, he summarized it in terms of two relationships. Loving God and loving others- these two relationships, Jesus says, is what life is all about. So we better get it right.

That reminds me of a tweet I read recently which says; *“Today’s unchurched are not so much rejecting Christ as they are suspicious of Christians.”* So if our climate is dictating the forecast of our relationships; we should want to make certain the climate is one that will not make unchurched people suspicious. Think about that for a minute...

So the good news for us today is that God desires for you and for me to get our relationships right. And that is why we are going to talk about Climate Change! And why I am going to ask you to do one thing that might be the breakthrough of a climate change that will change the forecast in at least one of your relationships.

Getting the relationship right is what God was hoping would happen in our lesson today from Genesis 4, the story of brothers Cain and Abel.

Genesis 4:2-5 (NIV84)

2 Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. 3 In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. 4 But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, 5 but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor.

So the story is we have two brothers, they bring two sets of offerings, one is accepted, one is rejected, and the one that’s rejected is Cain. This is Cain’s response, and as we see Cain’s response we see the emotional and relational climate swirling in him.

Genesis 4:5 (NIV84)

5 So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

Cain was very angry and his face was downcast. So the emotional and relational climate on display here for Cain is he’s very upset and he’s dejected. Then God gets to work in verse six. Watch this.

Genesis 4:6 (NIV84)

6 Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast?”

In fact, God comes to Cain and says, *Can I reflect something back to you? I don’t think you can see this, Cain. You’re really, really angry. You’re really, really downcast.*

That’s in essence what God is telling Cain. Why are you so angry? Why are you so downcast? And he continues.

Genesis 4:7 (NIV84)

7 If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.”

Now, this is such a huge gift from our heavenly Father to Cain and a huge gift from our heavenly Father to you and to me. This is what he’s saying to Cain. Please don’t miss this. He’s saying, *Cain, if you don’t master your emotions, your emotions are going to master you. If you don’t get a hold of this, son, it’s going to lead you somewhere destructive.* In fact, what God says here is great advice. He says, *Cain, be aware of your emotions but don’t become your emotions. Are you aware of how angry you are?*

This explains why many marriages struggle, because over time, if they're not aware of the emotions, the marriage, in essence, becomes the emotion of the moment, and that's terribly destructive. This also explains why so many workplaces are so dysfunctional, because over time they become the emotions that rule the workplace. And God says, *Look, if you've got a relationship that needs a climate change, the first thing you've got to understand is you have to be aware of your emotions.* This is a huge gift from God.

Now certainly if you've got a positive, healthy relationship, this doesn't apply. This applies to relationships that are in need of a climate change. If you've got a relationship (probably all of us do) that needs a climate change, this is probably what's going on. The emotions have manifested and congealed to the point that it's actually become the relationship.

Now, Cain's response to God is fascinating. Watch this, this is amazing.

Genesis 4:8 (NIV84)

8 Now Cain said to his brother Abel . . .

Did you catch that? He's so angry; he's so downcast he doesn't even respond to God. He's become his emotions. His emotions are taking over his actions.

Genesis 4:8-9 (NIV84)

8 Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. 9 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?"

And then Cain responds with the response that has reverberated throughout history.

Genesis 4:9 (NIV84)

"I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Now this is a rather extreme story, but I want you to see that emotions can kill relationships. But we have a choice; because while your emotions can kill a relationship they can also heal a relationship. It is all up to you.

And this leads me to the one thing I want you to do this week. The one thing that I believe could be the beginning of an invitation for climate change.

What I want you to do this week is to ask one question of three people; three people in different areas of your life, maybe family, work and friends. I want you to sit down with them apart from any distractions and with a pen and paper in your hand.

All I want you to do is ask them a question and then listen. Here's the question: "What's it like to be on the other side of me?"

Now it is going to take courage to ask that question because you are going to need to make yourself vulnerable. Some of what you hear will bring encouragement, insight and maybe even surprise. Honestly, it may also bring hurt. But remember your job is to listen. Don't apologize, defend or explain; just listen.

You see we need to ask other people, “What’s it like to be on the other side of me,” because we don’t know, we can’t see ourselves from the perspective of others. We need the help of others to understand our emotional and relational blindspots.

So what are we to do with this information? Well that is what this series is all about. The first thing you need to do with this information is bring it to your heavenly Father and ask him to help you process it. Remember that your relationships are the greatest gift that God has given you and the desire of your heart should be to deal with the climate of your life so that it dictates a far better forecast for your relationships.

So there you have it, one simple task to accomplish this week, ask three people, “What’s it like to be on the other side of me?” BTW, if you want, you can ask a fourth a person. Get alone with God and ask God, “What’s it like to be on the other side of me?” I can assure you that God is as interested in the forecast of your relationship with him, as he is in the forecast of your relationships with other people.