



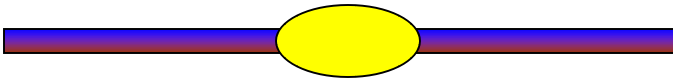
*Seeing
Through
The Eyes
of A
Stranger*

*Written By Rev.
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Introduction

Have you ever heard of the, “*Innocence Project?*” It was a 2006 study of convicted killers. Come to find out that 358 people had been convicted and sentenced to death since 1989. 71% were convicted through eyewitness misidentification and had served an average of 14 years in prison before exoneration. (Pew Report)

In every case, the respective jury’s decision was based on eyewitness testimony. They all were

“Seeing Through The Eyes of A Stranger,” The stranger being the eyewitness.

We all see and experience life through the eyes of others. Sometimes we are fortunate to be the eyewitness but most of the time we ride along by what others say is true and accurate.

71% of the eyewitnesses were mistaken and people ended up on death row as a result. How much more is the damage of lives because of so called eyewitnesses that gossip and tell lies about the innocent? How much more damage is done when folks believe the lies and become judge and jury over the innocent?

I am going to attempt to dramatize this problem and offer some Biblical solutions in several True or False stories so you can see with your eyes and hear with your ears and determine if you are one of those that misidentifies others and passes judgment based upon fake news or lies.

We will follow the lives of several people and intertwine them into a mix of truth, lies and gossip. It might even be a mystery as to who is really guilty and who is really innocent.

Chapter 1

Mistaken Identity

Betty was in her early 20s. She had many girl friends. They were all single working girls that liked to have fun.

One night all the girls decided to visit a popular nightclub where they could dance and have fun with some guys from the same neighborhood. However, Betty was not feeling good and stayed home.

The next day, one of the girls called Betty and began calling her a liar, saying, “I thought you were sick. We saw you dancing with a guy from another neighborhood. You didn’t even say hi to us.”

Betty said to her girlfriend that she was sick and didn’t go anywhere. She even said they could ask her mother...but the girls still felt betrayed and judged Betty as a liar.

As you can imagine, feeling were hurt on both sides and relationships broken. Judgments were

made based upon eyewitness testimony. The facts that Betty presented were ignored.

The eyewitness accounts ruled over everything else. Betty was guilty and now unworthy of any further friendship.

Was Betty a Liar? Was there a mystery girl, a look a like? Was Betty really sick or did she really just reject her friends?

What does it say about friends that will not accept your facts about a mater in question? Are they really friends?

The eyewitness account was enough to condemn but not enough to seek out the truth.

Needless to say, the friends became enemies and the enemies became Judge and Jury. The sentence was death...death of a friendship and reputation.

Is this eyewitness account True or False?



Chapter Two

Lies And Rumors

What happens when an eyewitness tells his or her story to a group of people? It could be a Jury, co-workers or just a few friends.

What I have noticed is when that happens, a rumor is born and it can spread like wildfire. It can burn hot through the minds of church folks, schools, colleges, friendship circles and even extended families. You don't have to be a part of the group to be confronted with a rumor or face down a lie.

The sad part is that when you try to explain or justify your actions, you generate even more hostility.

This was the case when Bubba was walking his dog one night. He passed over near Mary's bedroom window as he cut through a field on his way home.

Mary saw a shadow in the woods and a face staring at her in the moonlight. It was just for a

split second. She screamed and her dad called the police. They had a “Peeping Tom” situation.

Mary called her boyfriend who was the captain of the football team. His best friend was in the area looking for a run a way horse when he saw Bubba. He became the eyewitness that saw Bubba peeping. His finger pointed to Bubba as the “Peeping Tom”

Bubba was arrested and fined \$250 and a restraining order slapped on him to keep him away from any further contact with Mary.

Obviously the news made the next edition of the local paper and all the kids from school turned their faces away from Bubba. He even got in a few fights after school. He was immediately judged and convicted in the court of public opinion.

The eyewitness pointed the finger at Bubba and that sealed his fate. He was lower than scum in his own hometown, left with no friends, no trial and no chance of redeeming himself.

Was there a peeping Tom? Did someone lie and start rumors on purpose? Did Mary really see someone? Was the eyewitness telling the truth?

Chapter Three

The Blame Game

Have you ever been falsely accused? I mean caught up in a silly argument over nothing and made to look like it was all your fault?

Judy had that happen to her last year when she had words with Alice. They went back and forth over who hit Nellie in the belly with a fish.

Judy thought it was Alice but Alice denied it. Judy reluctantly accepted Alice's story when they spoke on the phone.

Then later in the week when we stopped for coffee at a nearby restaurant the two mixed words again.

Alice said that Judy didn't say hello to her when we entered the restaurant but I was there and heard Judy say hello. Thus began the, "*Who Hit Nellie In The Belly With A Fish*" ordeal.

After several bitter words a friendship was broken for good. It was on shaky ground anyway but Alice's attack on Judy to make her look bad

in front of the rest of the gang clinched it for sure.

Alice just would not drop the issue until she got Judy's goat. Now Alice claims Victim status and blames Judy for the entire argument.

Who really was at fault? Did it even matter? Who was Nellie and what kind of fish was used to strike her?

It's all so confusing but this one thing I do know...they are both happy that they do not have to be friends anymore.

Judy walked away happy that Alice lied about her because she does not have to endure being blamed anymore for silly things that she did not do.

Alice found comfort in friends that didn't like Judy anyway. She remained "Queen For A Day."

What are the Spiritual applications of this story?

Chapter Four

Sticks & Stones

Do you remember that old children's phrase we all said at one time or another?

“Sticks And Stones May Break My Bones But Names Will Never Hurt Me”

I don't think that's all true. I don't want my bones broken by sticks and stones. Neither do I want to be called hurtful names.

One hurts the body but the other causes a wound in the soul that may never heal.

Name-calling is a terrible thing because it can destroy one's self esteem, strip away dignity and actually reshape a bright outlook into gloom and doom.

That's what happened to little Tommy when he was five years old. He spilt his milk and his dad's tie got wet.

His dad was so mad that he yelled at little Tommy saying, “Can't you do anything right?”

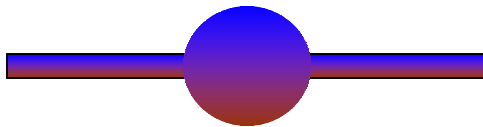
“You better pay attention or you’ll be a “Dummy” all of your life.”

The put down cause little Tommy to cry and further aggravate his dad who then spanked him for not shutting up.

Little Tommy grew up believing that men don’t cry and it is wrong to make a mistake. He closed off his emotions so he would not get hurt which hindered his future marital relationship and his parent/child activities.

The wound in his soul festered for years and dragged him through three marriages, nine children with different moms and he stands alone today, a broken man, with an alcohol addition.

Who’s at fault for Tommy’s dysfunctional life? His dad started the ball rolling with name-calling. Tommy grew up but didn’t seek counsel to rid himself of all the negativity. What about God? Where was He when all of this happened?



Chapter Five

A Blessing Or A Curse

Have you ever been jealous of someone else? Were you ever the object of someone else's jealousy?

Real jealousy rides on the back of envy. People wish they were you. You sing better, are prettier, more shapely or taller. Who knows the real reason?

Men can be jealous too. How come he got that raise and I didn't? What makes him so special? He has a full crop of hair and I am bald, why is that? The envy goes on and on until it explodes into a bitter jealous hate that cannot be extinguished.

This is why some folks reject you or tolerate you instead of celebrating your talents and personality. They just can't stand being second best in their own eyes.

This is what happened to Barb. She was blessed with a great figure. Even in later life, she still looked good. However, all the other ladies in her gated community hated her for looking so good.

I guess it was because their husbands spent too much time looking at her.

Now Barb was not the type to show off what she had. She just had it and it showed off itself, no matter what she wore. That led to envy that resulted in jealousy that festered hate that caused resentment that produced lies and prejudgments and suspicions.

Was she a man chaser? Was she a teaser? Was she a gal that needed lots of attention from men?

Now Barb was happily married for many years and didn't do anything to these jealous women. She just couldn't figure out why there was so much rejection.

It showed up mostly in small remarks and attitudes that were directed at Barb but not other less endowed females.

What could Barb do to correct the situation? How can she change to make things acceptable? What did she do to cause all of this? Why did God create her this way?

Chapter Six

Bits And Pieces

Fake news seems to rule the media these days. Truth is obscured by lies and facts are ignored. The general population is left with deciding which to believe. Is what's being said true or is it a lie? Is it fact or is it fiction designed to push a political agenda?

The talking points are different and the back and forth accusations many. What's a body to do?

This was the dilemma that Anderson faced last summer when Mary told him a secret she knew about Bubba.

Mary said that Bubba was a felon and on parole for taking and selling drugs. Now she had no 1st hand knowledge of this but claimed it came from a very reliable source.

Of course, Bubba knew nothing of the gossip that was being spread around and had no idea that it was in his circle of friends. All he knew was that some friends were acting cold towards

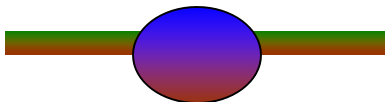
him and finding excuses to not hang out with him on weekends.

As the gossip worked it's way through Bubba's friends he found it harder and harder to get a date, be included in weekend activities and carry on phone conversations with long time buddies that now snubbed him.

No one knew the full story and no one had all the facts. Judgments were made from bits and pieces of information that surfaced from various sources.

The terrible thing about this was no one was brave enough or caring enough to ask Bubba and get the truth. They just backed away, turning a cold shoulder.

What would you do in the same circumstance? Why wasn't the unknown reliable source named and verified by Mary before telling others? Did the reliable source have 1st hand knowledge or was it hearsay like what Mary received?



Chapter Seven

Victim or Victor

When was the last time you realized that you are living a defeated lifestyle? Do you get mad when something goes wrong?

Most of us feel that we are a “Victim” of some action in the past that caused us to be the way we are today.

If it wasn't for the Vietnam War, I would have gone to college and become somebody but the war messed me up and I just couldn't get my act together.

That boss of mine didn't like me and never promoted me. He always favored other employees. If it weren't for him, I'd be somebody today.

My parents put me down all the time. They called me stupid and lazy. I never could overcome their criticism.

The expectations of others are driving me crazy. I just can't please them. As hard as I try, I just miss the mark. What's the matter with me?

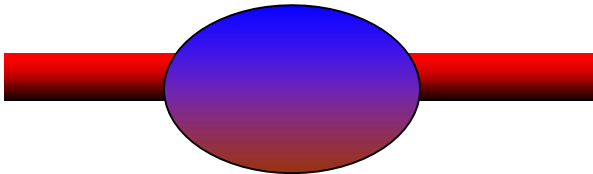
So it was with George. He always felt like he was a victim of everything that didn't go his way. He blamed anything and everything except himself for the bad things that came into his life.

This posturing took him down a road of anger, depression and victimization at the hands of every negative experience whether under his control or not. His favorite expression was,

“If something bad is going to happen, it will no doubt knock at my door first.”

George is now retired. *Grumpy old George* is what they call him. He lives alone except for a stray cat that he found along the roadside.

Was George really a Victim? Can events or attitudes of others shape out future? The world is a negative place, isn't it? Was George right to have blamed others or even things for his own life experiences?



Conclusions

Let's reason together and draw some conclusions from the seven scenarios presented.

Chapter #1 was a story of a single girl being rejected, betrayed and judged as a liar. It was a matter of a mistaken identity. This was a true story. It really happened.

What no one knew was that there was another girl, the same age, the same hair color, the same general build that was in the nightclub that night. It was a true mistaken identity

The experience showed the shallowness of friends and a general lack of loyalty. It also revealed how truth can be crushed by a willful neglect of the facts.

The Bible says....“ Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.” Proverbs 22:24-25

Good friends are a treasure from heaven. They will always give you the benefit of the doubt.

Bad friends are not friends at all. This story brought to light how enemies can disguise themselves as friends so they can feed on your misfortune. We can know which is which by their actions.

True friends applaud us and seek our best interest. They encourage us and support us in our life endeavors.

The best way to gain a friendship is to be a friend but be careful because the enemy of our souls hides himself like a wolf in sheep's clothing.

(A wolf in sheep's clothing is a dangerous person who is pretending to be harmless; an enemy who is disguised as a friend.

This idiom is a warning that you cannot necessarily trust someone simply because they appear to be kind and friendly.) **Matthew 7:15**

Chapter #2 was the story of Bubba and how an eyewitness fingered him as a “Peeping Tom”

The truth of the matter was that he was just in the wrong place at the wrong time. The “Peeping

Tom” was really the boyfriend’s best friend. He became the eyewitness to cover up his own sin.

Evil people always blame someone else for their actions, especially if there is a chance of being caught.

The Bible tells us who the enemy really is.

Ephesians 6:12 - *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*

Evil people are motivated by evil forces that seek our harm. They are like paper people, cutouts that have no soul of morals. They are used at the whim of the enemy to steel, kill and destroy. *1 Peter 5:8*

Chapter #3 relates to a struggle for power. Who will be the leader and who must follow.

Blaming someone for things they did not do is wrong. But worse is calling yourself a friend when you do it.

The “Who Hit Nellie In The Belly With A Fish” thing was used to show how silly the entire thing was. However, this story is true and it has several spiritual truths we can learn.

1. A willful attempt to embarrass a friend shows you that your friend is really an enemy.
2. Going through such an ordeal can be considered a blessing from God to rid you of wolves in sheep’s clothing.
3. Sometimes it is better to have no friends at all than to have bad friends that take potshots at you every time you are together.

The Bible tells us, “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. I Corinthians 15:33

Chapter #4 is about being hurt by someone else’s words. Words are like tiny capsules that carry good or bad medicine. If the word is good, it enriches the soul. If it’s bad, it destroys the soul.

Name-calling can hurt you and if you are the name-caller, you can hurt others as well.

Everyone but God was at fault in this story. The dad was overbearing and cruel. The son, little Tommy, suffered for many years but did not seek help as an adult to rid himself of a poor self-image. He had to have known that he had issues but ignored them.

Then there was God. He could have stepped in and saved the day but He did not. He allowed man to have his own free will to make life choices even though He knew it would be damaging in the end.

For man to be a free moral agent, capable of mastering his own destiny, he must have the freedom to live life as he so chooses. To do otherwise would make man nothing more than a robot.

The Bible tells us that man was made in the very image and likeness of God, not a robot.

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”

Genesis 1:26-28

Chapter #5 deals with expectations of others that you cannot attain. It's all about being blessed by God only to realize that folks around you are watching and are critical of you because of it. What was meant for your good has become a curse because of the jealousy of others.

This was a true story. However Barb has realized that the attitudes of those around her are petty jealousy and now ignores them. She thanked God for her blessings and moved on to bigger and better things.

Those that are jealous of Barb are still there being jealous and fuming inside because they didn't get the same blessing.

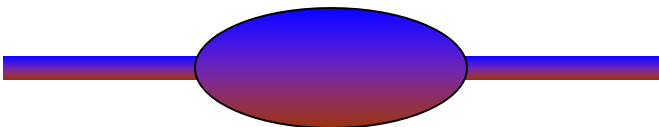
The Bible says “For jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare (That Man Who Is Jealous) in the day of vengeance.” Proverbs 6:34

Chapter #6 Bits & Peaces of information are not enough to make an intelligent decision.

This is the story of ”False News”, “Gossip” and “Lies.” They are like fiery darts that pierce the soul. They are being directed at you for who knows why?

This story is true. A reputation was ruined and someone’s self esteem was diminished because no one looked for the truth and instead jumped to conclusions based upon bits and pieces that were no more than hearsay.

There is, however, a lesson to be learned. It is, not to be dismayed by what others think or say when you know what is being said is false. You do not need to even justify yourself. It’s not worth the hassle. You don’t have to through yourself to the wolves to be accepted.



The Bible says,

“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.” **Romans 12:19**

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” **Galatians 6:7**

Chapter #7 is a matter of choice between two perspectives. One is positive and the other is negative.

George was not a victim. He saw himself as one but he could have just as easily seen himself as blessed and favored by God. It is not necessarily what happens to you that shapes your life but rather how you react to it that makes or breaks you.

If you believe God’s word, you will read **Romans 8:28** which says,

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

The man or woman of faith knows that all things will work together for his or her good because God said it would.

This one scripture sets the victim on a path to being a victor, a winner and not a loser. Life takes on an entirely new perspective that elevates God into His rightful place as Lord and Savior.

It is important to realize that even an eyewitness account can be wrong because all the facts may not be revealed.

The Bible says

*“God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart”***1 Samuel 16:7**

We should always try to see through the eyes of our Lord. If we do, we will see others through the eyes of compassion, love, kindness, and much more. Anger, envy and jealousy will not invade our souls or rule over our lives.

***May God bless you
as you discover His will for your life.***