

Deception Exercise #3

Introduction:

The old German proverb reads like this:

*" We see the faults of another like the light of day...
While our own are obscured like the dark of night."*

The fact is...many of our sins are "obscured" ...sometimes by us willingly and other times just by the nature of the sins themselves.

In light of that old German proverb about "our own faults being obscured in the dark of night", let's take time to look closely this year at the ways we deceive ourselves and others.

Deception #1 – Lust

In Job 31:1, Job says:

"I have made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a young woman"

Then in the 7th verse he says,

"...if my heart has been led by my eyes"

The human heart is often led astray by the eyes. Yes, we often excuse ourselves in this area, believing that "just looking isn't actually 'doing' – deception.

Exercise: We want to now examine this area closely...recognize our sin, confess it, and develop (make sure we have) a plan of repentance.

A few questions are sufficient for meditation/examination: using my retreat journal (and writing in order to slow down my meditation) I ask myself:

- a) Do I use my eyes to look at others in a way that I know is inappropriate?

- b) How often do I find myself doing this?
- c) When I do it, is it a fleeting thing (do I do it and then quickly avert my eyes) ...or do I find myself dwelling on it, taking time, etc.?
- d) Where are the places I find myself doing this?
- e) How long has this been an issue for me?
- f) Does it seriously upset me when I recognize what I am doing? Am I regularly confessing it? (Job considered this a very serious thing)
- g) What specific plan(s) have I made in times past to rid myself of this sin? Has it helped?

I PRAY...asking the Lord to help me come up with some specific steps/plans that I can make right now to assist me in getting victory over this.

Deception #2 – Greed

Greed is such an insidious sin. Nobody said it better than Gandhi:

*“There is sufficiency in the world for man’s need...
but not for man’s greed”*

Quite simply greed exists whenever we find ourselves **wanting more** of anything than what we actually need.

Exercise: I want to now examine myself in terms of the greed existing in me with regard to the 10 following areas of greed most often cited in the Bible. (Journal in hand, I slowly meditate on each of the following...looking for my sin. I confess and look to the Lord to help me develop a plan to rid myself of each area of greed that I see in myself.

1. Greed for Food and drink (and drugs)
2. Greed for money (as distinct from what money will buy)
3. Greed for how I use my time.

4. Greed for sexual pleasure.
5. Greed for worldly/material things.
6. Greed for comfort.
7. Greed for righteousness (and to be seen as righteous)
8. Greed for power (most often reflected in a desire to control others)
9. Greed for entertainment.
10. Greed for the acclaim of others.

Deception #3 – Excusing the Small Stuff

“A common perception among people, including Christians, is that God doesn’t really care about the little things. In fact, God has become the excuse for many sins because we make the assumption that God doesn’t have a problem with smaller things as long as we are not out committing big sins. I have even heard people say with one breath that sin is sin both big and small...and in the same thought they will convince themselves that God doesn’t really care about the smaller ones or that the smaller ones are not really even sin at all.”

Craig Tanner

The fact is, it’s the so-called “small stuff” that makes for holiness or the absence thereof...

And there is no better place to recognize...and work on the “small stuff” than with those who are the closest to you...

- ⇒ first your spouse
- ⇒ then your children
- ⇒ then your closest friend, your other family members, colleagues, and members of your congregation, etc., etc.

For you see, the ones we can most easily take for granted (due to familiarity) are the ones where we will discover most of our “small stuff” sins.

Exercise, Step #1:

Again, with journal in hand, imagine that your every waking moment since last Saturday morning was on videotape. Now...rewind the tape and begin to watch it carefully. Look for every instance of the “small stuff” sin...where you either said or did...or failed to say or do what Jesus might have said or done were He in your place.

Step #2: Examine yourself with regard to the people below: what are the instances of your “small stuff” sins that routinely occur with each of them?

- spouse
- each of your children individually
- a close friend
- colleague(s)
- Church family

What we really are cannot, in the end, be hidden. When we pretend to be better than we are, we become worse. But when we face the worst that is in us, something marvelously merciful happens. We become better than we are, better in fact than we ever hoped to be.

Eugene Peterson