

These Ideas Are Fueling Your Destructive Behaviors

The flesh is hard to explain, but you definitely know when it shows up. How many of us have been at a store when some man who obviously has made bad choices in his life is expressing his anger toward a clerk or waitress? The flesh usually stinks when it shows up. It's our lower nature, and it's imposing to get its own way or else make others pay.

Again, our lower nature or flesh is ours. It's not the circumstances, your spouse, the world or your history. It's me, and it's you. It's us as humans; we can choose a kind answer such as "thank you" to someone trying to help in a situation, or we can be any degree of unkind that our nature will allow us to be.

Regardless, we still choose how we will respond to others and life. I know this radical idea of being responsible flies in the face of the victim mantra our culture expresses through the media and through politicians, but they are just wrong. I am 100 percent responsible for me, my choices, good or bad, kind or unkind, patient or impatient, fleshy or spiritual—they are still all my choices.

Our culture and every culture for that matter is full of ideas. Since humans generate these ideas there are really good ideas all the way to really bad ideas.

Let's take the idea of marriage. There is the idea that marriage is between a man and a woman for life exclusive of all others. Then there is the idea that cheating on your spouse is acceptable. Both ideas float around in a culture.

There is an idea that we should exploit others and there is the idea we should serve others. There is the idea we should judge others and the idea we should love others.

Ideas are made everywhere around us. Some ideas are really good and healthy for us. These ideas are like our vegetables; if we eat them, they are good for us and give us a healthier life. Other ideas are just really bad ideas. These ideas are the junk foods. They look like food but a regular diet of them can damage us and those around us.

Ideas are important because our ideas shape our behaviors. My wife Lisa has the idea that she only needs to eat what she will actually use that day. This is a good idea that produces behaviors like eating meat selectively, not eating late at night (hot tea only) and eating few desserts. This idea and behavior have caused Lisa to stay in the same size clothing and not gain any weight in the many years I have known her.

I have the idea of eating almost anything and celebrating with food. This causes behaviors of eating unnecessary foods, not regulating my intake on any regular basis, and if I want a snack at night, I almost feel entitled to eat one. My bad ideas have caused me, shall we say, not to weigh the same as when Lisa and I met.

Ideas are insightful as we get control over what is controlling us. We choose an idea of entitlement for our out-of-control behaviors or other ideas that can help us.

Let's suggest an idea of entitlement to be angry toward people. We have pain, so we are entitled to give pain away at our whim. The person who chooses this terrible idea will be explosive, easily frustrated and will demand that others serve them or they have the right to deliver a chiding outburst. This person will damage their spouse, their children, coworkers and neighbors and will usually end up alone at the end of their life.

The other idea is that I have been given pain, so I am 100 percent responsible to heal from this pain and not give pain to others as much as possible. The person who chooses this

wonderful idea won't be prone to outbursts or controlling others but will be more patient with other flawed people. This person will have a better marriage, be kinder to their children, coworkers and neighbors. This person, at the end of their life, is more likely to have friends and actually be loved by those significant to them.

We can blame or scapegoat ideas as to why we have our out-of-control behavior, or we can allow our ideas to be our servants. We can accept that we are the masters of our ideas, which produce behaviors that produce a lifestyle, which produces our relational destiny. {eoa}

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