

Your Ability to Withstand Deception Depends on This Crucial Element

We're all searching for answers to how we should live and how to stand strong in these increasingly uncertain, turbulent times.

It seems the world is in the most unstable, chaotic and shakable position it has ever been in—from the economy, politics and global terrorism to the very fibers of morality. I think, for most of us, it's becoming more and more obvious each and every day that our relationship with God—who He is and how He sees us—is the only thing that can't change. However, what is not always so obvious to us is how our moment-by-moment thoughts and feelings become barriers to experiencing the close relationship with God we seek, especially in these times.

We grow in intimacy with God when we think and feel the same way He does about ourselves and others. In other words, when our hearts are "aligned" with His. Did you ever notice that it's impossible to experience intimacy with God when you are critical, accusing, condemning or shaming of yourself or others? That's because you are not aligned with His heart—you are not thinking or feeling the same way He does about you and others.

He would never speak to you in a condemning way, and He doesn't see others that way. He sees us as we were created to be: in His image, holy, blameless and beyond reproach, beautiful to Him even in our weakness and imperfection. His heart is ravished by us and by others. Therefore, if you want to experience a closer, more intimate relationship with God, it's important that in the moment-by-moment of each day, you

are aware of how you are thinking and feeling about yourself and others.

Let me share some personal examples. Lately I have been really down on myself for being so far behind in everything. No matter where I look, there is a bold reminder screaming to me, "You are so far behind. You'll never catch up. You're a loser. You're a bad wife. You shouldn't be in ministry. You're a failure. How could you have let this happen? Everything is your fault. You're going to ruin everything." Those words are lies coming straight from the enemy. They are accusing and condemning, and they result in shame, hiding, shrinking back, embarrassment, fear and paralysis—not exactly what I'd call the "fruit of the Spirit." On the contrary, they are the fruit of believing the enemy's lies, and they end up blocking my intimacy with God.

You see, in those times when I'm believing lies about myself, I'm not aligning my thoughts and feelings with how God sees me. Therefore, I'm not able to experience intimacy with Him. The problem is, sometimes we've been hearing these messages for so long, we actually believe they're true. We don't even recognize that they're lies, let alone how they are blocking us from intimacy with God. So when we end up feeling distant from God, we blame Him and accuse Him of rejecting, abandoning or condemning us. Have you ever felt that way, or is it just me?

Other times, my heart is not aligned with God's heart toward others. Perhaps I'm focused on their shortcomings, weaknesses, imperfections. Maybe I think more about how they've wronged me or hurt me or how they have not lived up to my expectations, appreciated me, been fair to me, accepted me or meet whatever my needs were. When I focus on these things and think negative, critical thoughts about others, talk to other people about them or try to avoid them, I'm not aligned with God's heart toward them.

It's impossible to experience intimacy with Him during those moments of criticism. He desires to bless others, heal them and draw them closer to Himself. He desires to build them up, His heart is ravished by them, and His love for them is unconditional. The problem in this case is that often we feel justified in our negative thoughts and feelings toward others. After all, they wronged us, rejected us, accused us and didn't appreciate us, and so we have a right to be hurt! Maybe so, but unfortunately, whether we are justified or not, in those moments we are aligning with the enemy's thoughts and feelings toward that other person, and we increase the enemy's reign in the situation and block our ability to experience intimacy with God.

I truly believe that God, in His mercy, is giving us time now to become aware of and deal with the moment-by-moment thoughts and feelings about ourselves and others that block our intimacy with Him. It's no longer a nice-to-know message, something you can apply simply when you want to in order to feel better about yourself. Remember, intimacy with God is your No. 1 anchor. I believe your very survival—your ability to stand unshaken, not deceived and able to face persecution in the days to come—depends upon it. Make a commitment now to deal with anything that blocks your intimacy with God, and you'll be able to stand strong—no matter how uncertain the future. {eo2}

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