

Exposing (and Overcoming) the Deception in Your Mind

For many years of my life, I believed that I was damaged goods and could only have a second-rate life.

I thought that the sexual and emotional abuse I endured as a child was somehow my fault ... that it had happened because something was wrong with me. And I felt a false sense of responsibility to fix my circumstances. Of course I couldn't make that happen, so that caused more self-condemnation, and as a result, I didn't like myself very much.

I went through so much of life believing this terrible lie about myself. And that's a very easy thing to do, because when you're deceived, you don't know you are. The lies we believe become our reality because they are truth to us.

After I became a Christian, I thought that the only way God could love me was when my actions were good and spiritual. That was just another lie that had me striving to do "worthy" and "impressive" things to earn the approval of God and people. I really thought I was something special when I was on the church board and in a leadership position. I believed the lie that *that* is when God loved me.

Another result of this deception was that I found it easier to see what was "wrong" with other people. I was so critical and judgmental of others. But seeing the faults in them just kept me from seeing what was wrong with *me* for a long time. And that was exactly what the enemy wanted.

Face Truth. In John 8:31-32 (NKJV), Jesus says, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

It's so important for us to know the truth, because the lies

we believe, especially about ourselves, can cause many other problems in our lives. That can mean trouble in relationships, in our work, even in our health and everyday life in general.

But when we pursue a relationship with God and finally face truth—and that ultimately means the truth about ourselves—we grow spiritually. God is looking on the inside, in our heart. He is concerned about our motivation. He's more interested in *why* we do the things we do than in *what* it is we're doing.

I've learned to ask God on a regular basis, "Show me truth. And help me to face the truth You show me—especially what You show me about myself."

Once God shows us the truth about ourselves, we can no longer hide from it. That is a call to action. The Bible tells us the Holy Spirit leads us into all truth. He knows just how and when to guide us to move the way He wants us to. He is gentle and always does what is best for us.

It's not always easy, but I want to encourage you not to reject God's guidance just because it may not feel good at the moment. Just because it doesn't always feel comfortable doesn't mean it's not good for you. Remember, God always has His best plan for your life in mind.

Be real. I remember when God prompted me to give away a dress a long time ago. It was a brand-new red dress that I'd bought and just hadn't worn yet. I really liked that dress. Well, I was praying for a friend of mine one day and asked God what I could do to bless her, and He spoke to my heart to give her the red dress. Well, I didn't *want* to give away my dress.

Immediately, I began to reason with God, "But it's new!" He told me once more to give her the dress. I tried again, "But God, I bought these really nice earrings to go with it." He said to give her the earrings too! And again I tried, "God if this is *really* You ..."

Finally, I realized that red dress had too much of a hold on me. I had to face truth in that moment:

Did I want to obey God or be selfish? I eventually humbled myself and gave my friend the dress.

You know, it really wasn't about the dress ... it was more about my heart. God was teaching me how to be a steward and not an owner of things. He may want to use you to bless someone in some way. If your motives are pure, it won't be so hard to do whatever He asks you to.

Have you experienced a similar situation? How did you handle it? What was your first, *honest* response? Did you have to face some truth about yourself at some point?

Remember, we are created in the image of God. To be like Him, we will need to learn to examine our motives often. We must be honest with ourselves when God shows us something that needs to change, because it is always for our good.

Pray and ask God to show you the truth so you can be set free from deception. And then face the truth He shows you—about *you*. Make use of each opportunity to grow and become more like Him.

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