

Merimnao Training Meeting (10/28/10) – Lesson

DENIAL

For the first educational subject of our scheduled training meetings I thought that it might be good to discuss the most common problem that people who are brokenhearted have to face. That problem is called denial.

Let me open it up to ask what do we think denial is?

- Webster's says it is, **"A refusal to acknowledge the truth"**.
- Wikipedia says, **"Denial is a defense mechanism in which a person is faced with a fact that is too painful to accept and rejects it instead, insisting that it is not true despite what may be overwhelming evidence."**

There seems to be three major aspects to denial, and they are:

1. Denying the reality of the fact. This is normally what most people think of as "denial".
2. Admit the fact, but deny the seriousness of it, we call that minimization.
3. Admit the fact and the seriousness, but deny responsibility, that is called transference or sometimes blaming others.

It is denial that is the biggest road block to getting better, it is denial that stops healing from even beginning, and it is denial that puts a hand in God's face saying "No".

For those of you that are twelve steppers, can you give us a generic version of the first step?

- **We admitted we were powerless over our addictions and compulsive behaviors, that our lives had become unmanageable.**

When we look at this step we can see that there are three words here that speak to someone coming out of denial and finally stepping forward into healing. They are, "admitted", "powerless" and "unmanageable". My personal view of step one is that if spoken out of belief it is a powerful statement of freedom.

Tonight I want to talk about what “denial” does to people, how it affects them. This is actually a new and modified short lesson I taught at a celebrate recovery meeting a few years ago, and we are going to use an acrostic to help emphasize each point.

Disables our feelings

Feelings are God given, both positive and negative. They are designed to tell us something. For example happiness tells us we are in a time of joy, and that this time is to be cherished. Resentment tells us that we don’t like something, and that we ought to deal with it. Feelings have a purpose. When we are in denial, are feelings get frozen, our denial has caused us to not believe them, or ignore them, or assume they are misleading us. The great “feeling” response mechanism that God put in us has been shut down by our own actions.

Energy Lost.

One of the problems with being in a state of denial is that the truth still lurks deep inside somewhere. So our internal condition is one of conflict. We have turmoil inside, truth versus a lie. This can cause all kinds of side effects, anxiety, depression and anger to name a few. It is like trying to hold down ten balloons in a pool, it requires great effort and energy. Denial simply sucks us dry of emotional energy, affecting every part of our life. We just don’t have anything to give to the people we care about.

Negates Growth.

Denial seems to put us on “hold”; we get stuck, like we are in a mental and emotional limbo. We make progress in some aspect of our lives, and then our denial drags us back down again. It is as if this denial thing is a sickness, and we never get well enough to really feel good and enjoy life. I tend to think of it as an emotional cancer that is not getting treated, and if we allow this to continue it will eat us up.

Isolates us from God.

God wants our lives to be good, meaningful, joyful and so much more. That picture we use with Jesus standing with His arms open, it is a reflection of God saying come to me, I'm here to help. When we are in denial, we shut God out; we don't let Him shine His light on the truth, removing the darkness of denial from our lives. As I said earlier, it seems that we hold our hand up and say no to Him. We move away from God, and become isolated. God respects us so much that He allows us the freedom to shut Him out. Is it a surprise when we finally realize that our spiritual enemy uses lies to encourage denial and destroy our relationship with God?

Alienates us from our relationships.

Denial ties our insides up so much that to avoid being exposed we back off from our most important relationships. We don't want important people, like our spouses, or our parents, to know our dirty secrets, so we distance ourselves. When it gets really bad, we end up with nobody in our lives we can trust, nobody we can talk to. We blame everybody else, but it is our doing, we have pulled back, we are the isolators.

Lengthens the pain.

This is the big problem. Simply put, denial prevents healing from starting. This means that our denial delays the start of getting better. If we stay in denial for a long time we could end up never being healed. For some seemingly insane reason, we lengthen our pain. The reality is that we believe the lie that avoiding the truth avoids the pain, this is not true! Avoiding the truth allows the lie to become an emotional sore which festers and causes a greater sickness, it often turns into overwhelming guilt or shame. Is this insane?

Ministering to those in denial

Hopefully I'm preaching to the choir as I say all this. Living a lie by being in denial has never, ever, helped heal a person. It is our responsibility as ministers to the brokenhearted to point this out whenever it is appropriate, and to follow it up by identifying two truths if a person wants to be healed of their brokenheartedness:

- Each person must come to admit the truth about themselves, acknowledge their personal inability to overcome their internal problems and that their

personal life has become uncontrollable. They must do a version of step one.

- They must come to Christ for that healing. Here are three scriptural confirmations for us to remember this.

Ex 15:26 - And He said, "If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the Lord your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the Lord, am your healer." NASU

Jer 30:17(a) - 'For I will restore you to health and I will heal you of your wounds,' declares the Lord. NASU

Matt 11:28-30 - Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light. NASU

I would like to add an extra word of guidance here. In some circles, even some Christ centered ministries will say that people can be healed of their brokenheartedness through means other than coming to Christ. This is not so!

What is true is that Christ's healing principles, such as confession and forgiveness, can provide any person, including unbelievers, some relief from their brokenheartedness. However, Jesus reserves complete healing of a person for Himself, as is clear from the three verses we looked at, and this will only happen when God is going to be glorified as a result of it.

And talking of rest, that is where I would like to finish.