"LIVING WITH CONNECTED HEARTS"

EMPTY ROOMS

Recently one morning while sharing a cup of coffee with Denise, she said to me, "Close your eyes and let God put a song in your heart." My immediate response, to my surprise, was resistance to her request. Nonetheless, I went along with it, and within a few seconds the Lord began to share something with me that I didn't expect. I didn't hear a song, but I saw a picture of the inside of a room that was very empty. I knew that this room represented my heart, and the Lord immediately began to show me additional "rooms" that were just as empty or barren. This brought tears to my eyes and I could feel pain in seeing my heart this way.

THE GOOD VERSUS THE BEST

What the Lord was allowing me to "see" was that I had allowed my heart to become disconnected—I had gradually lost my ability to feel. Instead of a "house" filled with signs of life, this house (my heart) was quite sterile. How had this happened and why? As I shared this with Denise, the Lord continued to open up more revelation to me. He began to show me that over the past week or so (it doesn't take long to disconnect from our hearts!), I had become more involved in doing various things rather than resting before Him and allowing Him to keep me connected to Him. Ironically, many of these were "good" Kingdom-type things. What I had not realized, however, is that I had gradually drifted away from staying connected with my heart, and had exchanged the "good" (God/Kingdom activity) for the best" (God Himself) (Lk. 10:42). I had done what John Eldredge speaks of in his book, "The Journey of Desire," -- I had "left my heart by the side of the road" [and headed off in another direction].

THE PROBLEM WITH FEELINGS

I know that the problem of "disconnecting from our hearts" is not new, as I have struggled with this in the past and will likely have to deal with it again in the future. I have seen it in many people to whom we have ministered (We men are particularly slow learners in this area!). But why do we do this? Why do we tend to run ahead of our hearts? I believe one of the main reasons is that we generally do not want to feel. Not feeling may allow us to stay more focused and keep pain and loss at a distance. We might even have less mental struggle (temptation, etc.) for a while, as we keep ourselves busy and in check.

TRUSTING HIM WITH OUR HEARTS

The Lord Jesus never functioned in His ministry disconnected from His heart, and doesn't want us to either. When we do this, we can't be intimate with Him and He suffers the loss of communion with us. We not only lose in our ability to come close to Him, but we also lose our compassion for others. We function more from our heads than our hearts. So many times during Jesus' ministry He was "moved with compassion" just prior to Him stepping forth in power. Compassion flows from a connected heart, and I believe that the Lord is looking for vessels in the future that can operate in a proper "marriage" of compassion and power. Scripture is filled with

references to our hearts. For example, we are to "love from and with all of our heart" (Mt. 22:37), "forgive from our heart" (Matt. 18:35), and "believe in Him from our heart" (Rom. 10:10). His "peace rules in our hearts" (Col. 3:15), and we "make music to Him in our hearts" (Eph. 5:19). Bad things can also come out of the heart (Mk. 7:21), and cause a "knee-jerk" reaction in us to shut down our heart. Unfortunately when we do this we rely on our own strength to get rid of the bad instead of trusting Him to help us with our struggles.

SIGNS OF DISCONNECTED HEARTS

So how do we know that we might be "heart-disconnected," and if so, what do we do about it? First, ask the Lord to reveal it to you. Be open to however He might choose to show you, as He might use others to help you see it. You might want to step back for a minute and ask yourself a few questions, such as . . . Am I readily moved with compassion for others (as well as for myself)? Can I "rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn"? Do I sense the "heart of the Father" as I relate to Him and others, or am I only comfortable operating with "the mind of Christ" (which is also good and necessary)? Am I able to freely share my heart with others—especially with the Lord and with others in close relationships (i.e., spouse, friend)? Do I sense the Lord's intimate pleasure with me? Am I primarily comfortable with "doing" or can I sit and rest—especially in my relationship with the Lord? Do I function more out of a place of "irritability, discord and anxiety," rather than from a place of "love, joy and peace"?

OUR RESPONSE

When we recognize that there is a problem of "heart disconnection," we must stop and begin to let Him deal with us. Most of us have wounds that keep our hearts disconnected. Ask for His grace to stop, wait, and "soak" before Him (with music, for example), and begin to let Him open up your heart. "Ask, seek and knock" (Lk. 11:9-10) and He will respond—but it may take a while, depending on how long you have been disconnected. Expressing your thoughts to the Lord by writing and writing down what you sense Him saying to you might also help. Be aware that He may speak in ways unexpected (i.e., dreams, having coffee with your wife!). Again, be open to Him bringing others into your life to help you see what you cannot see and also to bring His healing to areas that need to be healed. One thing is for certain—He desires that we be fully available to Him and to others—and that includes our hearts!

PLEASE PRAY WITH ME . . .

Lord Jesus, I am grateful that even when I am disconnected from my heart and feelings, You still move in my life because You are faithful. Yet, I want to be fully connected with You, with others, and with life! I come before You and I ask You to show me the condition of my heart. I know that You love me and You desire the best for me. I know that You came to give me life, and to give it abundantly, without measure. I invite You into the chambers of my heart and I trust You there. Do whatever You feel is necessary to draw me into Your heart in a more intimate way. I thank You for the truth of Your word, and I stand on that truth, but I desire to experience You and life to the fullest. I desire to have more passion for You and the things that You want me to be passionate about. I want to feel what You want

me to feel. Forgive me for the ways that I protect my heart and myself from You and others—even at times that I am unaware I'm doing it. I turn back to You and I place myself and my heart in Your hands. Thank You for hearing my cry to You. I know it's Your cry as well. In Jesus' name. Amen.

From the Father's Heart,

Jerry Basel