

WALKING IN THE LIGHT

While in Slovakia a few years ago, I had the opportunity to take a tour of a cavern with an underground river below. As we hiked deep into the mountain, our tour guide turned on lights in each chamber that revealed stalactites and stalagmites that were awesome. Eventually we beheld the beauty of the underground river. Where the river exited the mountain and flowed onto the land was one of the richest, most lush areas of Slovakia and produces the finest of vegetables and fruits.

When questioned as to why this particular river was able to produce such life-giving qualities, the tour guide responded that it was because of the mineral content in the water that came from rich mineral deposits inside of the mountain. She then asked everyone to stand still, and she turned out the lights. For ten seconds, we stood in utter darkness. When she finally turned the lights back on, she explained, "This water is pure enough to drink—no bacteria, no impurities live in the river as long as it flows in darkness. It only produces life as it flows out of the mountain and into the light!"

Revelation began to break forth as I thought of how many Christians have deep encounters in the presence of God's love, but remain hardened in spirit and can't seem to sustain an intimate and healthy relationship with God, their spouses, or others. I realized that dwelling in a place where the Father's love is constantly renewing and restoring you to intimacy can only take place when we are willing to walk in the light of God's love. God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. (1 John 1:5-7)

Unconditional love is never based on the performance of the person who is receiving it. It is based on the nature of the One giving it. But God's nature is also light and by His very nature God is against any darkness that lies within us. He is not against us. He created us for love; therefore, He is against any darkness that may hinder us from His love producing life and intimacy with Him and others.

Darkness is not just a place void of light. Darkness is a moral state where you hide things, have secrets, and give the enemy ground to traffic in your life. The fallen angels have been turned over to darkness and darkness is also the dominion of Satan (Jude 6; Acts 26:18). Anywhere we allow darkness to remain, it can be an open door for the thief to come and drain away our sense of intimacy with God and others.

Many of the problems that I have had are because for many years, I despised the light. Light is rooted in humility - a willingness to be known for who I really am. But I loved darkness! Oh yes; how easy it was to hide, make believe, to be unreal and be more concerned with what man thought than with what God thought (pride). Men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. (John 3:19-21)

For many years, I struggled with intimacy

and making God's love real with my family. Then in November, 1995, I was radically humbled by experiencing the Father's embrace. I was motivated to repent to my family for being more committed to ministry than to love and for my inability to walk in tenderness and nurture at home. But within a few weeks, the sense of God's presence began draining away and I ended up right back in the place I started - struggling with intimacy and love. I felt as if I had lived in a womb of liquid love for those weeks; I had seen my children risk opening their hearts to me, but then I felt it slipping away. Oh, the despair and shame I felt as I saw the hopes and dreams of my family shattered once more!

Then January 3, 1996, in the early hours of the morning, God placed a key to intimacy in my hand that I had been seeking for many years: 1 John 1:5-7 exploded in my heart. Lasting fellowship and intimacy are only possible when I am willing to walk in the light. I had been hoping for darkness to be dispelled through some great dramatic encounter. But freedom began as I became willing to be honest with my inward darkness. This brings us to the first area which may open the door to darkness.

There was much about my secret thought life that my family really did not know. I'm not speaking of the outward, but the inward motives of my heart: competition, jealousy, envy, and the aggressive striving to be somebody and to be seen and known. These were the hidden sins of pride and self-love with which I had often struggled. My darkness gave the enemy ground to traffic in every area in which I chose darkness over light, and thus made it difficult for me to dwell in the Father's loving embrace. But light is an armor that would protect me from temptation and burn away my flesh and its lusts (Romans 13:12-14).

So one morning in January, 1996, after our children had left for school, I opened the deepest, darkest areas of my thoughts to Trisha. She broke down crying, and started opening up and confessing the darkness that was in her. Both of us began to weep uncontrollably as God's love rolled in like a wave of warm oil pouring upon our hearts (Romans 5:5). For three hours, we lay on the floor like innocent little children in the arms of a comforting Father.

That night, I repeated the process with our three children. I asked each one to forgive me for specific areas where my self-love had misrepresented the Father's love to them. For months, I would just look into my children's eyes and begin weeping again and get on my knees before them seeking forgiveness for some act of harshness that I had committed years before. For four months, I dwelt in a womb of humility and love and God began restoring the hearts of my children to me.

The immediate result of choosing light over darkness was receiving the gifts of humility and repentance (Romans 2:4). Then right out of nowhere, I ran full speed into a second area where darkness may come in.

Darkness also can come as a result of wounding that we have received from others. Darkness is not always a

result of our own wrong moral choice. It can also be the result of our reactions to those who have disappointed or wounded us (1 John 2:9-11). Unresolved conflict in relationships can be an open door to darkness.

With the restoration of God's love in my family, a fresh anointing in ministry began to flow. I then began unconsciously neglecting my wife as I threw myself into ministry. My darkness invaded Trisha's light and her darkness was about to invade me. We began to lose sensitivity to God's voice and no longer saw clearly where we were going, but were being led by the voice of our own need. She needed more of my time, but I was feeding upon the thrill of being wanted and needed in ministry. Neither of us saw what was to come!

In May, I came home one Thursday from a ministry trip and was due to leave the next day for another. The disappointment at my being too busy had been building inside of Trisha, she aggressively poured anger out on me right before I left. I soon found out how quickly the sense of the Father's love can drain away. I stepped out of center of His when, of pride, to be walk in love. I preferred right than intimacy and His love never forsook me. (Isaiah 59:2;

Hebrews 13:5) Trisha was right! No husband should be so busy with his job or ministry that he loses his sensitivity to the needs of his wife and children. I was right! No wife should try to get her needs met or her point across through anger or demeaning her husband. So for six weeks, we hit

the greatest stumbling block we had had in 20 years of marriage.

Have you ever noticed how often God uses your spouse to reveal the unyielded areas of your heart? Conflict reveals unresolved issues of pride, independence, and self-love. It not only applies to family relationships, but all other relationships, too. Let unresolved conflict remain and darkness begins to slowly creep back in, causing you to easily lose the sense of dwelling in the Father's embrace. Do you see how sly the enemy is as he tries to sneak darkness in and destroy intimacy?

Our need to be right became more important than our desire for relationship. Then our nine-year-old son, Joshua, came to us and asked, "Are you and daddy going to get a divorce?" Seeing the fear and insecurity on his face quickly brought us to an awareness of our sin and back toward repentance. As each of us

acknowledged our fault in the matter, we confessed our sin and intimacy began to be restored.

When you allow unresolved conflict to remain in a relationship, it opens a door to darkness and emotional pain. You feel insecure with that person, so you begin controlling your relationship, which can open the door for a third area where darkness may enter.

One of the greatest hindrances to intimacy is when we let our hiddenness hinder our willingness to allow ourselves to be known by God or by others. "Light reveals; darkness hides. Whenever we do anything or say anything to hide what we are or what we have done, that is darkness." (Roy Hession, The Calvary Road)

Light brings warmth and is a necessity of life. But darkness is cold and drives us to hide behind walls of self-protection, where we are unreal or pretend to be more spiritually

mature than we really are. Our general proof of heart-felt sincerity before God and man is our openness and transparency. (Ephesians 5:8-13)

Hiding the truth about ourselves from others, pretending to be more mature than we really are, these are the supreme sins that

ultimately caused the Pharisees to crucify Jesus. The first sin disciplined in the Book of Acts was a sin of deception and cover-up. Ananias and Sapphira pretended before the brethren to be more spiritual, more sacrificial, than they really were.

In a ministers' meeting where I taught on "Walking in the Light", a youth pastor received the revelation he had been searching for as to why he had struggled for ten years in his marriage with sexual issues and a lack of intimacy. He then knew that he had to begin walking in the light with his wife. So when he returned home, he and his wife went outside and sat in their car. He began to tell her of the lifelong struggle he had with sexual issues and how it had affected his ability to walk in intimacy with her since they were married. Certainly it hurt her, but they sat for hours praying through the pain that surfaced.

Months later, I received an email from him telling me how that night transformed their marriage more than any other single event. He told of how difficult it was to be honest with her and to no longer hide his guilt and shame, but the end result had produced a depth of intimacy and security in his marital relationship that he never thought possible.

It is the power of light that dispels years of darkness and shame. This brings us to the fourth area that often opens a door to darkness.

Because you were created for love and intimacy, once you drift off center of God's love, you will feel the need to bond to someone or something. We must bond to something, but when inappropriate sexual behavior or impure lustful passions become object of our search, we

and into darkness.

Sexual sin, more than any other type of sin, can wreak havoc in our lives, because it is a sin against our very own bodies. (1 Corinthians 6:13, 18-20) The way we treat our bodies, our earthen vessels, will determine whether we will have a sense of value, honor, and self-respect in our lives, or whether we will live with feelings of uncleanness. (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8) When we feel unclean, it becomes difficult to love ourselves rightly because the darkness has released a sense of impurity and shame and we end up rejecting God. Even after you have received forgiveness and placed the sin under the blood of Jesus, there can still be a residual sense of shame that affects our ability to walk in love and intimacy.

A lack of intimacy can influence us to become dissatisfied with our spouse. Our minds then begin to wander, and we start looking for love in all the wrong places. Men may become involved in pornography, struggle with the lust of the eyes, or even fall into an affair. Pornography and lust give a false sense of intimacy. We are seeking comfort in our flesh because darkness has hindered us from walking in intimacy with our spouses and with God. Women may begin to compare their husbands to other men or even to their pastors/ministers.

Sexual bondages are often the most difficult from which to be free. You feel too unclean to abide in God's love, and then in an attempt to regain that lost sense of love, you may fall further into impurity. When you repent of these sins, the Father forgives you and remembers your sin no more (Psalm 103:12). But the feelings of shame and uncleanness may remain if you are too ashamed for these sins to ever be known.

You can be forgiven, yet battle oppression for the rest of your life. The blood does not cleanse what we leave hidden in darkness and refuse to uncover. If we walk in the light... the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. (1 John 1:7) We can confess our sin to God and He forgives us the first time we ask, but we can still carry the shame of our sin because of guilt and the fear of anyone ever finding out about it. This has the power to steal years of intimacy from our lives and relationships.

My wife and I ministered to one woman who told us how, for 15 years, her marriage was filled with anger and pain because the shame she carried hindered her from fulfilling her husband's sexual needs. She shared how they were both Christians and virgins before they were married and were saving themselves for the wedding night. But one night, she got mad at her father and went to a bar only to end up drunk for the first time. In a drunken stupor, she unwillingly ended up in a car in the parking lot having sex with a man. The next day she felt so ashamed. She asked God to forgive her and He did, the first time she asked. But she was too ashamed to tell anyone, especially her future husband (darkness).

A few weeks later, she learned that she was pregnant. The shame increased and so did the darkness,

even though she was already forgiven. Forgiveness of sin and cleansing of sin are two different things.

Out of desperation, she had an abortion. She asked God every day to forgive her, and He remembered her sins no more. But because she chose to hide everything, the enemy had grounds to traffic in her life with accusation, self-condemnation, and shame. The wedding day came, and the husband who had chosen purity expected one of the best nights of his life. But her darkness invaded his light. The shame kept her from the wonderful joy that God had intended for that night. All through their marriage, the sexual relationship suffered terribly and became the point of daily contention in the life of this sincere Christian couple. She was totally forgiven by God, but the power of darkness stole the intimacy and love for which God had created them.

After 15 years of pain, she brought her past sin and present shame into the light with us. The love of God wondrously washed over her and she went home with the hope and faith to be open and honest with her husband. Late that night, she shared the experience with her husband and he broke down weeping, pleading for forgiveness for not understanding and for the pain he had caused. He took her in to the bathtub and washed her from head to toe and anointed her with oil, praying that God would cleanse her from every sense of shame and uncleanness. Then they had one of the greatest nights of their lives, just a few years late. The power of light dispelled the darkness and gave them a new marriage, and they began being used in ministry to help others who had been through similar experiences.

I believe that intimacy can only be built upon openness and transparency. But I also know that you cannot drive a 10,000-pound truck across a 5,000-pound bridge. Walking in the light and restoring intimacy in marriage may need to begin with an experienced pastoral counselor or a professional Christian family therapist. Others may want to begin walking in the light by sharing their inward darkness with a mature and trusted prayer partner and friend. When you walk into a dark room, you do not cast out the darkness, you turn on the light. Light dispels the darkness and releases the river of God's love to produce healing and the restoration of intimacy in your relationships!

Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much... How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (James 5:16; Hebrews 9:14; 10:22)

In the Father's love, Jack & Trisha Frost - Shiloh Place Ministries www.shilohplace.org

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