Deception

Have you ever thought about how much of the work of counseling has to do with deception—often many layers of it?

Think about all the lies we fight against in the lives of those who come to see us: the lies others have told them, the lies they tell themselves, the lies from the surrounding culture, the lies they have somehow wrapped up in Scripture. Given that the Word of God tells us that our enemy is the father of lies, it would seem that a great deal of counseling is about struggling with the litter of the enemy of our souls in those who come to see us. Of course, part of the problem is that he has littered in our lives as well, which means we are vulnerable to being deceived and then misleading those who look to us for wisdom.

There are many mechanisms for deception in a human heart. I have spent a lot of time recently thinking about one in particular. That is how we split off a very, very small part of ourselves from the truth or the light and let it continue untouched, thinking it is hurting no one (obviously a major deception!). It can start in a seemingly innocuous way and, if left unexposed to the light and transformed, can eventually end up in an out of control sexual addiction, a broken home, or even genocide.

This fallen, unjust, and hurtful world brings us "invitations" to split on a daily basis. We can so easily tuck away a little resentment, bitterness, grudge, bit of envy or greed or lust. We feel justified in feeling it and justified in folding it up in a little corner so we can take it out and look at it every once in a while. This tucking away is the genesis of the split.

It is ever so small, but it is radioactive, and ever so lethal. You see, once you have and maintained a file for something, it is so easy to just tuck "one more thing" into it—she hurt me again, how can they keep doing that, I want that, or just one more look.

According to Webster (one of my favorite resources), the word split means to divide or separate from end to end or into layers. When the previously mentioned "things" are split off, they are hidden from public view and are left unchallenged—not just by others or by new data, but also by the Word of God and the Spirit of God. That Word and that Spirit have a great deal to say about things like resentment, bitterness, envy, or lust.

Certainly that is, in part, because they have no basis in the character of God. I am sure it is also because God knows how quickly the little file becomes big and finally

becomes that which governs us. Little resentments collected over time lead us to conclude that our self-justification is indeed just, and the other is not only bad, but also hopeless and someone we are right to get rid of. **The little cracks become layers and, as time goes on, we split end to end.**

Think about some of the marriages that we were sure were solid and godly, but one day just blew up. Think about some of the Christian leaders that we were certain were godly and then they split end to end. Think about a country like Rwanda where people named the name of Christ, attended church and school together, and then there was genocide.

We think it makes no sense. It seems to come out of nowhere. It did not; it came from a little by little tucking away, hidden from the light process of deception. It came from accepting as true that which was false—my resentment, my lust, or my envy is just, and I am right to hold on to it.

In Psalm 4:2, God says, *"How long will my honor become a reproach (or be insulted)? How long will you love what is worthless and aim at deception?"* We certainly insult the honor of God when we think we can tuck things that are an affront to Him and His loving heart away from His sight. We are blatantly disagreeing with Him and His Word. We are dishonoring His character. We are playing the fool to think we can deceive Him as we deceive others.

If we nurture our own little splits and justify those things that are unlike Him that lie deep within our hearts, we will not work wisely or safely with others. We must remain whole—or beg God to make us whole again. I pray we, as counselors, will be those who honor God in the secret places. Whose hidden "files" are full of His thoughts and, therefore, can lead others into a whole life, full of light from end to end.

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