

Telling Ourselves Lies

Drs Larry and Lois Dodds (1 of 3)



One of the great mysteries in ministry are the things that sabotage people. You probably all know somebody in your circle who's been doing a great job in ministry—loved, respected, admired. All of a sudden something sort of blows them out of the water. What I think of is that a torpedo has hit them, like ships in the war. The torpedo comes in from seemingly nowhere and blows the ship apart. We see that happen to people in ministry. And it's one of the questions I've pondered a lot—"How does this happen and why does this happen?" I've come to the understanding that there's something hidden in the heart of each of us.

The scriptures talk about things that are hidden in our hearts. Things that happen which we don't understand because we don't even know the depth of our hearts. A passage that I think enlightens us in this is Isaiah 44. You'll probably remember this passage because it talks about how people go out in the forest. They cut down a tree. They make an idol. The maker of the idol takes the other half of the wood and makes a fire and cooks dinner. The writer, Isaiah says, "They know nothing; they understand nothing. Their eyes are plastered over so they cannot see and their minds closed so they cannot understand. No one stops to think. No one has the knowledge or understanding to say, 'half of what I used for bread, I even baked bread over the coals, I roasted meat and I ate. So I make a detestable thing from what is left. Shall I bow down to a block of wood?'" This is the key point, he feeds on ashes. A deluded heart misleads him. He cannot save himself and say, "Is not this thing in my right hand a lie?"

What I think is crucial in this passage is that we can internalize lies which these people did. They didn't have the common sense to say, "You know, if I made this idol myself, it can't be worth much." In another place it says, the people are caring about idols that are burdensome, they are caring about images. An image is an idol; and idol is an image. We often carry in our hearts images that are burdensome. I don't know about you, but if I have a choice between a God that I have to carry or one who is going to carry me, I think I'd rather have the one who carries me, because it is burdensome if I have to carry my own God. And yet, if we have distorted views about God, it's like feeding on ashes or carrying a burdensome idol—carrying a God. That takes all of our energy to keep up a God who's not going to carry his own weight. On the other hand, if we let God carry us, it makes a huge difference.

Another passage I think that really reflects on why people get blown out of the water, why they get sabotaged, is the verse that says, "Out of the heart flow the issues of life." I believe that all of the issues in our lives originate in our hearts. That's talked about in scripture in a variety of places.

Proverbs 25 says, "The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out." So there is more in me than I know and a wise person can draw me out.

Matthew 12, "Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks." Matthew, Jesus words in chapter 15, "But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart and these make a man unclean. From out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, immorality, theft, false testimony, slander." And then back to Proverbs 16:23, "A man's heart guides his mouth and his lips promote instruction."

There are many places throughout the scriptures that talk about what is hidden in our hearts.

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It's my understanding that all of us have messages hidden in us that are buried. I call these hidden heart messages. We don't know they are down there because they are painful. At some point, usually early in life, we bury those messages, but they give rise to pain. What Larry and I find out, as we work with people in ministry who get into depression, or perhaps into affairs, or into despair, or have a crisis about God and who He is, that usually at the bottom of the crisis is a lie. It is something that person came to believe very early and it is just not true. If the lie wasn't about God, it may be about themselves. For instance, I have a friend, her mother told her when she was young that no one will ever love her. She believed this as a little child and that was very painful to live with, so she basically buried it. But even as it is buried there, it has great power in her life. So, when I love her, she doesn't trust it. She doesn't believe it because it is contradictory to the lie that's in her.

I've always been fascinated with Paul writing about sin that makes its home within me. I ponder that a lot because I think, "What exactly is it and how would I know it is sin?" I've now come to believe that the sin that makes its home within me is really a collection of lies. So if I'm acting selfish, I call that sinful behaviour. Behind that selfish behaviour is some kind of lie, like I have to have things my own way. Or I have to be beautiful in order to be loved. Or I have to be right in order to be loved. So, a lot of our behaviour, well all of it really, arises from the lies that we believe or the truth that we believe.

I have a long collection, which you could write for, of the kinds of messages we discover in people's hearts. One of the messages I found in my own heart when I went through a big depression, was that I should not be, that I should not exist. You say, "How could you grow up with an idea like that?" Well, it actually started in church because right there in the Bible, the pastor read to me the verse that said, "In sin you were conceived, in sin you were born." And I thought, "Oh no, I didn't want to start out in life that way, especially not the way my father treats my mother." It was a very shameful idea. Then because I saw my mother suffering, and also being her eighth child, I added to her suffering; I didn't want to be. Now that's a lie learned very early in life. I don't think anyone ever told me that, but that's what I came to believe. That is one example of the kinds of lies we believe.

When we grow up and we get into ministry, we usually have forgotten the hidden heart messages. But under all of the stress of ministry, under all the trouble, under all the difficulty, they begin to come up. And we start believing them. We believe them to a greater extent because Satan uses them to create distress in our lives.