

CLARITY OF THOUGHT IN RELATIONSHIPS

By Brenda Spina, M.S., LMFT, LPC

It happened suddenly. The words came out of my mouth with such confidence I almost stopped in mid-sentence. "God has not given you a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. God's presence within will not ask you to shrink back in timidity but his presence within you will give you power, the awareness of personal strength (as well as His strength) and might to see your choices and make them. He will give you His love to express those necessary limits, as it can be an act of love to express to another what something is like for you. He will also use these things to give you stable thinking. He wants your thoughts to be stable and clear as our fight is larger than what we see."

The person opposite of me looked stunned herself as she expressed relief at the realization that God was for clarity in her relationships. She had been allowing numerous intrusive behaviors and statements to be a part of her closest relationships. The result had been to battle with anxious thought patterns and the ongoing feeling of shame about who she was. Like most of us she questioned God's love for her and her confidence in her ability to become like Jesus wanted.

Clarity in relationships means knowing your strengths and weaknesses, being able to see both the positive and negative aspects of any characteristic, expressing what you know to be real, and honoring the process of growth as children of God that we are all experiencing. It does not mean we have permission to be brash under the guise of 'honesty'.

The Lord had Paul write those words in the order He did for a purpose. Our awareness of who we are, good or bad and the choices available to us are a part of the personal strength He has created us to live by. He lived with the same awareness of who He was here on earth. We have been loved by His unconditional love so that we can in turn love each other with the highest sense of respect enough to comfort, encourage, confront, and challenge each other. Just as He did with those He loved here on earth. These two things naturally provide the ability for our minds to think with stability and be free of fear and confusion.

How does clarity look? What follows is a list of behaviors that may help describe the kind of process I am attempting to discuss. It is by no means all-inclusive. Move slowly with these suggestions, as no change in our behavior with one another should take place quickly. Allow yourself much time and prayer with the Lord before you undertake any of the following. Without His Spirit going before you – no change in behavior will bring about the fruit of the Spirit in you or in you relationships.

Asking For Clarity In Relationships

(Author Unknown, Edited By Brenda Spina)

These suggestions provide a format in which you can ask for what you prefer/need in relationships when behaviors become intrusive or offensive.

1. Speak up while your preference/need is current.
2. Object to specific behavior that infringes your preference/need. Avoid over-generalizing.
3. Be brief and to the point making clear concise statements.
4. Avoid bringing up the past; deal with the present.
5. Never apologize for expressing your preference/need; you are responsible for asking for what you need although you may not always get it.
6. When you do not get what you prefer/need, avoid threats and aggressive behavior, as this is an infringement upon others.
7. When someone infringes on your preference/need respectfully tell them how the behavior affects you; be sure to share how you feel.
8. Be sure that your body, eyes, your facial expression and voice tone all say the same thing.
9. Use “I” statements expressing thoughts and feelings openly.
10. Be ready to work at receiving criticism and compliments comfortably.
11. Let your yes be yes and your no be no without feeling guilty. This is especially true when you feel others are making unreasonable requests.
12. Take time to identify and respect not only your preferences/needs, but also, those of the others around you.
13. Express yourself firmly yet friendly initially. If necessary, increase your intensity or seek assistance from someone with greater authority.
14. Remember that unless you have made a contract that say otherwise, your preferences are equal to the preferences/needs of others. Check yourself as well as trust the Holy Spirit to check you when this becomes unbalanced.

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