

THE BALANCING ACT: DETACHMENT

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Do you find yourself battling the same negative emotions over and over? Fighting the same fights? Saying the same words? For those of you who feel your life has become shackled by relationships rather than enhanced, this information may be helpful for you.

Learning to love and respect the uniqueness of others while maintaining a sense of your own uniqueness is a balancing act. It means balancing what you know is you and what God is directing you to do/be. This balancing act is crucial in the development of how you will relate to those around you.

Detachment scares people. They see themselves as having to cut-off contact or becoming very selfish. This is not true. Very simply defined, detachment is the ability to live one's own life as surrendered to the correction, guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit. It is simple to talk about but hard to live.

Relating with a healthy sense of detachment begins with an inventory of your own behaviors and what they may mean. Scripture clearly addresses the need to work out our own salvation (not somebody else's) with fear and trembling. (Phil. 2:12) Choosing to look at your own behavior will feel unfair especially if you see yourself as "nice" or working hard to do things "right". Detachment has nothing to do with desire or motive. It has everything to do with impact. The truth is that our basic nature is not "nice." It is selfish. Because of this, God will first teach us about our impact on others no matter what our intent is.

In an effort to provide a beginning assessment for you, here are some questions originally developed by the Johnson Institute in the pamphlet "Detachment."

1. Do you consistently make decisions based on the actions and wants of other people?
2. Do you consistently react, withdraw, or retaliate when you are hurt?
3. Do you have a pattern of thinking that dictates only one right answer to every problem?
4. Is your behavior so erratic that others complain that they do not know what you are going to do next?

These questions are challenging. When answered honestly, they are designed to help identify or reveal distorted beliefs and behaviors. Please do not be discouraged. We all have distortions because we are all sinners.

Jude 20-23 speaks to this initial phase of detachment focusing on the necessity of his readers to maintain their life in God. He says "But you, beloved, building yourselves

up in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

- Build yourselves up in your most holy faith. Detachment begins with you doing your own work. Keeping track of your own beliefs and behavior patterns. Studying God’s handbook on relationships-His Word and staying accountable to those you trust for feedback does this. (Col. 2:7, I Thess. 5:11)
- Praying in the Holy Spirit. Detachment means there will be times we are off base yet not know how or what to pray for. The Spirit will express it for us. These times place us in a position of surrender and humility. Humility prepares us to receive His idea of how we are to be and allows for us to pour out our innermost concerns (Romans 8:15, 26)
- Keep yourselves in the love of God. The goal of detachment is not “winning”. “Winning” has an emphasis on power and position. Detaching with love requires the realization and acceptance of equality in sin and in grace. His death was for ALL. His Love is toward ALL. Maintaining this attitude keeps us equal with all we come in contact with. Our reward becomes what author Brennan Manning describes as “living in the wisdom of accepted tenderness.”
- Look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. The mercy of God will not always look like what we think. Don Nori, in his book entitled-“The Power of Brokenness”- defines mercy in this way. “Mercy is the ability to see the end that is required and to do what is ever necessary to bring it about even if it appears to be unmerciful to our unbroken sense of reason.” God’s mercy will pursue us relentlessly to face our selves-not define how others are wrong or unhealthy. God will insist on being our source of self-definition. Identifying the faults in others rather than our own is pride not mercy.

Why is any of this important? Exodus 19:5-6 expresses the vision that God has for each one of us. It states, “...you will be a special treasure to me...a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” (NKJV) Healthy detachment creates space emotionally and spiritually for each one of us to fully realize how ‘treasured’ we are. Detachment allows for God to develop in each of us the purity and ministry he has always determined for us to have.

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