

PK's Perspectives... Hypocrisy

No doubt God has an inexhaustible supply of teaching methods. Some of His approaches are rather pleasant; others can be somewhat abrasive. As concerns my absolute LEAST favorite of God's teaching techniques, it's not even a close contest. I don't like it when God uses me as the illustration to expose – to me - the error of my behaviors and point me in the direction of His truth; I much prefer for God to use someone else's blunders as the cautionary tale for my spiritual instruction.

Bear with me as I relate an example of how God bared my heart by exposing me to me. I don't like litter and I don't have much tolerance for people who litter. Seeing someone flick a cigarette butt out of a car window is akin to pushing my righteous indignation button; seeing someone fling their McDonald's bag onto the side of the road infuriates my sensibilities. I stake my self-righteous tent on the moral high ground that littering is against the law/codes/statutes, I don't litter and neither should you.

But I do litter. And prior to writing this article, no one other than God knew about my littering. Because I'm crafty when I litter and my litter is inconsequential when compared to the volume of litter produced by genuine litterers. Maybe I have a wad of bubble gum in my mouth that has lost all flavor and is slowly transmuting into rubber. I need to chuck that piece of gum out my truck window...but I'll wait until I'm on an undeveloped stretch of road, I'll check front and back to make sure no other vehicles are around to see what I'm about to do...and when all the conditions are in alignment, I will do the very thing that unleashes my condemnation when I see someone else do it.

Yet I rationalize that I am NOT a litterer in the truest sense of being a trash thrower and my littering is certainly not in the same category as the litterer who throws his or her empty Gatorade bottle into my front yard. Yep, that is exactly what I rationalize. Just so you know, the definition of "rationalization" is the action of attempting to explain or justify behavior or an attitude with logical reasons, even if these are not appropriate. And the unfiltered, un-rationalized truth is this: I'm a litterer, too. Secreting my occasional littering does not change the verity of my littering. I am a litterer (albeit a crafty one) in need of redemption.

The Lord showed me some dangerous parallels between my attitude about littering and my attitude toward personal sin. When I rationalize my sin, I tell myself "rational lies"... my mind tries to excuse what my heart knows is wrong. I'm the fool when I excuse my sinning by telling myself that it does not match the enormity of someone else's debauchery. I'm the hypocrite when I feel justified in excoriating someone else's very public sin simply because my sin is a private thought...a hidden attitude...or a previous indiscretion misplaced in the miasma of personal history and memory. If I feign to think myself a higher class of sinner than the unrefined sinners I see all around me then I have strayed so far from God's grace as to be unlikely I ever truly experienced grace at all.

Jesus boldly says that fantasizing about adultery is the same as the physical deed; harboring hidden anger will be judged right alongside a murderous urge appeased. To the religious upper crust keen on stoning a woman caught in adultery, Jesus said, "Sure. Go ahead. Whichever one of you guys have never littered, throw the first stone." Okay, not exactly Jesus' words, but you get my point. Dietrich Bonhoeffer notes, "Nothing that we despise in the other man is entirely absent in ourselves." D.B. is spot on in his observation. Cya in Sunday School & Worship, PK.