

Wings

*"Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles."
Isaiah 40:31*



June 27, 2010

Evil Suspicions

We should hate evil. But ironically, Satan can use that hatred of evil to create even more evil, by leading us to suspect wrong where it does not exist.

"If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wrangling . . ." (1 Tim. 6:3-5).

"Let none of you think evil in your heart against your neighbor; and do not love a false oath. For all these are things that I hate," Says the Lord" (Zech. 8:17).

There is no doubt that the Lord expects us to use discernment in choosing our friends, following spiritual leaders, and making moral judgments. We have to be careful not to give sin an opening in our lives.

But ironically, there is an equal danger that we will see evil where none exists. We can become so conditioned to spotting wrong that we will question the motives and intentions of others on the flimsiest of evidence. These "evil suspicions" play as great a role in interpersonal conflicts as the real evil we're trying to avoid.

A marriage, for example, can easily descend into conflict when the spouses fixate on past mistakes and different perspectives on current issues. The suspicions that are aroused in these disagreements become grounds for questioning one another's commitment to the relationship. The problem is not the issues; it's the distrust underlying the conflict.

Among brethren (especially preachers, the subject of Paul's warning to Timothy), evil suspicions poison efforts to study and resolve issues. If a brother hesitates to accept the same conclusion we do in studying a passage or issue, we assume he is prejudiced or close-minded and treat him accordingly.

There is no end to where we can extend these evil suspicions. If someone tries to enlist our help in doing a good work, we may suspect him of being greedy for fame or profit. We can even see sinister motives behind an apology or a confession ("he's just trying to get sympathy"). Once we are determined to find fault with someone, we are sure to find it — even if we have to manufacture it in our own mind.

Unity cannot survive in an atmosphere of distrust. Evil suspicions will take minor disagreements and turn them into major crises. Evil suspicions will create differences where none existed previously. And once these wedges of division have been driven, evil suspicions will make it impossible to remove them. Evil suspicions will drive friends apart, destroy marriages, split churches, and turn political differences into open warfare. Even if the antagonists somehow manage to maintain a state of peaceful co-existence, evil suspicions will prevent a close spirit of companionship and cooperation from ever developing.

How can we prevent these evil suspicions from creeping into our heart and poisoning our relationships? Paul summarized the cure in one word: "Love thinks no evil" (1 Cor. 13:5 NKJV). Differences will often arise among people who care for each other, but if the relationship is based on a genuine love for each other, they will work together to resolve them, without injecting imaginary wrongs into the relationship.

— David King