

“The Familiarity Deception”

The word familiarity means, “Being unduly intimate; too personal; taking liberties; presuming.” To presume means, “To take for granted, assume or suppose; to undertake with unwarranted boldness or to undertake without right or permission; to go too far in taking liberties.”

There was an intercessor that had a heart to pray. She voiced that she had nothing in mind but to pray for the church and the pastor ~ for which she did. Soon, because of a spirit of familiarity, the intercessor began to develop a problem with the pastor. Innocently, she began to gradually see him as her peer. From her perspective, she became sensitive to the voice of the Lord to the degree that she began to feel as though the pastor had, unfortunately, even become subordinate to her. As a result, she began to view herself as the person between the pastor and the Lord. She began to bring direction, then correction, and when the pastor wouldn't do what she advised, she would allow her dissatisfaction to cascade down to her fellow intercessors. The familiarity began to affect the church and when the pastor confronted her on the issues, she strongly reacted. As a result, she declared that she didn't think the pastor was a man of God. The result was that she left the church and is still wandering about pondering what her real purpose is spiritually.

The testimony continues. If you were to ask her (just like all people who are in trouble), she would convey that everything was wonderful and she's never been better. But it is evident by her lack of spiritual sensitivity and holy lifestyle that the spirit of familiarity wreaked more havoc and did more damage than what she was able to admit. The greatest mistake you can make is to say that you would never do this. Remember, the same demonic spirit that overtook her can do the same thing to you. All you have to do is open your heart the smallest amount.

There are five things that I would like for you to see as it applies to familiarity:

1. **People who are familiar are actually equalizers.** They come in all types and shapes. They normally try to pull authority down to their level trying to make them their peers.
2. **People who are familiar are also resisters.** These are people who resist anything no matter how the Spirit of God is moving. They are people who continually scrutinize the decisions of leadership making themselves marshals of the Body of Christ.
3. **Familiarity lays a foundation for doubt and unbelief,** which is a breeding ground for faithlessness. Being negative toward anything that is proposed may be the first entry into operating in a spirit of familiarity.

4. **Equalizers (people who function in familiarity), actually ask questions (predetermined) that seed in the minds of others that your Apostles are no different than anyone else.** They want everyone to feel very comfortable with authority, to the degree the authority has been reduced down to just another “good ole boy” in the church.
5. **Familiarity kills the move of the Spirit and literally stops the Lord from doing what He wants to do in a church, community or city.** We see this Biblically in Matthew 13:53-58. Verses 57 through 58 in particular say; *“And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, “Only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honor. And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.””*

If you take offense to something that is said or ministered, you may be opening a door to familiarity. I am not saying that you don't have a right to ask questions and to approach a situation that has been ministered respectfully. I'm alluding to the toxin that comes out of trying to breakdown or presume you have the right to strip away the meat of what was ministered and reduce it to “how dare this preacher talk to me this way.” Equalizers nitpick and quibble over the pettiest of things. They strain at a gnat and swallow a camel. They're quick to pick at the splinter in their brother's eye, yet can't seem to see the beam in their own. Familiarity is one of the most vitriol (toxic) sins in the Church today. This single spirit has torn apart more ministries than just about any demonically driven spirit I've seen operate in the church.

Apostle Debbie and I have personally witnessed the pain this spirit leaves the people in when it's finished with them. Once this principality is finished with its host, it discards them into the wasteland of emotional pain, sorrow and feelings that you have been spiritually abused ~ when in reality the abuse was at your hands. At its root are spirits of accusation and pride. The individual allowing this spirit an opportunity to use them has an open door to rebellion against authority ~ gaining its strength from rejection, abandonment and past abuse issues.

Read Acts 4:32-37 and Acts 5:1-11

Ananias and Sapphira were New Testament Christians who experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit after the resurrection of Jesus. They were people of good reputation and respected by many as individuals who worked in God's Kingdom and in His temple. However, they got too familiar with offerings and pledging, as well as distributing goods to the widows and the poor. They sold their land and came in to give a portion of it to the church. Peter, however, knew about the sin of familiarity because he had been confronted by Jesus and the Holy Spirit and was particularly sensitive to its actions. He challenged them immediately about their pledge, and of course you know the rest of the story: Ananias and Sapphira both died that day. I believe they died because of the intensity of the Holy Spirit that was in their midst and the closer we get to the Lord the more apt we are to see things like that happen. Nevertheless, this incident happened because of a spirit of familiarity.

The issue that needs to be addressed is ~ have you suffered a type of death (spiritual death) because you have partnered with this spirit as well? Because the Holy Spirit is increasing in our midst, I believe we need to be extremely aware of the workings of this toxic spirit. You should keep in check any areas where you may try to presume that you have the authority to do something without running it by your authority uplink (point leaders, Elders or Apostles). You are going to have to pray and ask the Lord to strengthen your spirit not to open yourself up to this principality. This spirit will use you, abuse you and leave you spiritually destitute.

You will need to learn how to combat this evil spirit. Here are some ways to do that:

1. Stay in a regular mode of praying, fasting, studying the Bible, praising the Lord, submitting and obeying the Holy Spirit and those the Lord has put over you.
2. Stay in close relationship with the Lord. Intimacy is vital and you get there by asking the Lord to help you. Formulas won't work so don't try them.
3. Keep yourself humble before the Lord and those He has placed over you. If you have a tinge of feelings of animosity, bitterness or anger against your authority, deal with it immediately (repent).
4. Watch the company you keep. If you are around people who speak ill of people, get as far away from them as possible. Share your feelings with an Elder and ask them to stand with you as you speak to this person about their toxic speech (this includes gossip).
5. Guard your heart. Disallow anything that is sinful to enter your heart. Stay holy!
6. When you have thoughts of anger about your covering, go to them and ask them to forgive you. Don't let the thoughts seed into your heart.
7. Honor your authority uplink (Apostles, Elders and point leaders) and esteem them as leaders. Being a leader in the Body of Christ can be very difficult. Realize the way they interacted with you causing anger to arise may be just because they have been severely attacked. Rather than becoming angry you ought to go to prayer for them. Learn to honor them rather than criticizing them.

Permissions: You are permitted to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided that you do NOT alter the wording in any way, you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, and you do not make more than 100 physical copies. For web posting, a link to this document on our website is preferred. Any exceptions to the above must be explicitly approved by Arise Christian Fellowship.

Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: By Vance Russell, Arise Christian Fellowship 2007. Website: www.ariseministries.com. Email: ministries@ariseministries.com. Telephone: 512.451.8260.
