

Gaslighting

In 2022 Webster's Dictionary named "gaslighting" as the word of the year. This word has taken on great popularity in recent years. We have all witnessed this happening. Gaslighting occurs when someone tells a consistent lie through many avenues and means until a person accepts the lie as something that is true. In the world of politics, we could give a million examples of this happening

But it is not just in politics that we see gaslighting. Gaslighting is also a danger in our spiritual lives. It is a main tactic that the enemy uses against us. The devil is the first "gas-lighter." In the story of the Fall, we see him lying to Eve. Since that first lie – until today - he has never stopped lying. So deeply is lying rooted in the devil's nature that Jesus calls him "the father of lies." I point this out to you because many of us struggle with the lies that the devil whispers in our ears.

I am certain that in my own life, I have believed thousands of lies of the devil. My process of surrender to Jesus and my journey toward holiness has been a journey of discovering the lies of the devil and rejecting them by the power of the Holy Spirit. In moments of trial the devil tells us we are worthless and unredeemable. We are told that our lives are unimportant and we don't make a difference. He tells us that not even God could love us. He repeats these lies again and again until we begin to believe them. The lies then affect the way we interact with our people. These lies often become the foundation of the way we view ourselves and our relationship with other people. These lies stiffen our ability to give and receive love.

As we grow in holiness God reveals these lies to us so that we can reject them and see ourselves as we are in his eyes. While Jesus calls the devil "the father of lies," he says of himself, "I am the way the truth and the life." Jesus reveals the truth and in him we have the real foundation of our lives.

Often the most important breakthrough in our spiritual life is when we finally realize a foundational lie that we have believed from the devil. I have heard millions of examples. Let me just posit a few possibilities:

- A child struggles with academics and so he interprets his struggle by saying, "I'm not very smart. I'm not good enough."
- A young man is not physically gifted or athletic as society may ascribe that he should be and he is ridiculed and so he says, "I'm not a real man because I don't fit the image of manliness."
- A woman experiences abusive or failed relationships and concludes "all men are pigs" and closes herself off from love.
- A young girl may not fit the airbrushed images of people in magazines and so she concludes, "I'm not a real woman. I'm not pretty."
- A person attempts to live virtue but fails (even repeatedly) they conclude by saying, "I can't do it. The Christian life is too difficult." And they stop attending life.
- A person experiences abuse or indifference from people who should love them, he/she concludes, "I'm not lovable."
 - (This is by far the most common lie – which I have seen a million times)

We do not just hear this lie one time. The devil will repeat the lie every time we fail. This repetition of lies causes us to believe that we are bad and useless; that we are unloved and unlovable. These lies then become foundational for our self-esteem and affect every part of who we are.

God, in his love, wants to destroy these lies. He wants the light of his grace to shine into the dark secrets that we carry so that we can lift our heads in freedom. Jesus the truth says that we are loved and lovable. His grace destroys every lie and manipulation of the devil. As I said earlier, the path of sanctity requires us to name and acknowledge the lies of the devil which we have so often believed. Grace requires that we then reject these lies in the powerful name of Jesus and live in the truth of who we really are: Redeemed sons and daughters of God the Father Almighty. Praise to Jesus who is the TRUTH.

Peace,

Fr. Dave