

Sin Hinders Our Relationship with God

by Norma Dearing

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After coming to the realization of who God is, what is it that prevents us from communicating with Him? What things keep us from talking to Him or listening to what He might want to say to us? The first and foremost thing, I believe, is our own sinfulness. The second is the guilt and shame we feel because of this sinfulness.

Sin is always the barrier that separates us from approaching God or feeling connected to Him. God knew this and understood it. This is why He tells us over and over in Scripture to bring these sins before Him so we can be cleansed. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9).

Not only does God forgive us our sins, but He forgets them, as well. Isaiah says He drops our sin into a sea of forgetfulness and remembers it no more. I heard someone say once, "Hey God, you remember that sin I confessed a moment ago?" God responded, "No!"

My husband, Peter, had a very powerful experience with God along these lines when he attended Cursillo, a spiritual renewal weekend retreat. One night while Peter was lying in his bunk, God began to speak to him about his life and how he wanted them to become closer. Intimacy is always something God longs to have with each of us.

Peter felt a certain alienation from God because of his sinfulness, and God knew this. God spoke to his heart and said He longed to be closer to Peter, and for that to happen, there were some things they needed to get out of the way. God gave Peter an image in his mind that he was standing before a chalkboard with a piece of chalk in his hand.

Peter felt God was saying, "Write your sins upon this chalkboard and I'll leave it on the board for as long as it takes me to forgive them." Peter didn't want to shock God with anything too enormous, so he began by writing a few minor sins upon the board.

He said after writing these, he saw a hand with an eraser come along and erase the words of the sin. He started writing more of his sins upon the board, and the same eraser came along and wiped these away, too. This exercise continued for over an hour, as he felt cleansed and purified.

Peter said as fast as he wrote, the eraser followed behind the words, and he was amazed because the eraser seemed to move at exactly the same speed regardless of the degree of sin. "Repent then and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send Christ, who has been appointed for you — even Jesus" (Acts 3: 19–20).

It is important to remember that Satan, the enemy, will do everything within his power to keep us in sin and bondage. He continues to remind us of our sin using two of his little underlings, shame and guilt. He hopes we will feel so bad about ourselves that we will be embarrassed to call on the Lord. He tries to convince us that God is alienated from us because of our sin.

God never moves from us. We are the ones who move from Him. I remember once in my prayer life saying to the Lord, "I don't feel as close to You as I once did." He responded, "Well, who moved?" This helped me to realize that I had moved away. It was I who moved.

When a person falls into sin, shame and guilt discourage him from going to church, spending time with other Christians or time with the Lord. A vicious cycle emerges beginning with sin, then withdrawal from God and others, and finally a deeper entry into the sin. A sense of both hopelessness and helplessness begins.

For Christians, the problem is compounded by an overlay of guilt when they recognize this sinful pattern. At this crucial point, a person needs the Lord, as well as the healing hand of friendship and not condemnation.

This is a prime time for us to become the human face of God to each other, to show His love and compassion.

Sin is like the static you experience on a CB or a ham radio. It prevents a person from hearing clearly or being able to communicate effectively. Repentance clears up the static and allows for a clear and open channel to God.

I suggest a very in-depth period of repentance in the beginning, similar to what Peter experienced. There are a number of ways this can be accomplished. One way is to start chronologically by age and look at the areas where you feel you need forgiveness or may need to forgive others. You might want to start by remembering preschool and continuing with elementary school, junior and senior high, etc. Ask the Lord to help you look at these things.

Another method is to write your sins on one piece of paper and write sins committed against you on another. You could end by symbolically giving these lists to the Lord by presenting them at the altar, or perhaps burning the paper. There are many different methods. Ask the Lord what is right for you. Some people like to do this in two categories, sins of commission and sins of omission.

How you do this is not so important. The important thing is that you lay your sins before God and receive His forgiveness. Think of yourself as a drainpipe with clogs. The clogs are sin. Once repentance and forgiveness enter, the clogs are washed away and the water is able to run freely. Repentance and forgiveness open up the lines of communication between us and God.

As prayer ministers, we must keep very short personal accounts with God so we can minister effectively. We must also help those to whom we minister understand the importance of repentance in experiencing a oneness with our Creator. "But you must return to your God; maintain love and justice and wait for your God always (Hosea 12:6).