

Betrayal

kept from the one my heart loves

Betrayal is an unfortunate experience for which others often have to pay the price even though they were neither the betrayer nor the betrayed. When one is betrayed by another they had trusted and leaned on, barriers and walls are almost invariably built around the heart. It just makes sense. Once you have tasted the bitter gall of Judas' kiss you will do about anything to protect yourself from going through it again; nobody needs to be taught this. There is an innate defense mechanism that springs to life when the heart senses the arrow of betrayal penetrating its tender exterior. The very design of this defense mechanism is to keep others at bay, far enough away that the possibility of betrayal becomes remote at best. Therefore, there is a sense in which others must pay the price for a betrayed heart even when they had nothing to do with it.

If per chance you are one who has never been turned on in a relationship, trust me—you would barricade your heart as well. You only have to lose your windows once in a terrible storm to see the wisdom in boarding up the next time a storm is brewing. Windows, like hearts, are quite delicate and openly vulnerable during one of our infamous Florida storms. You can only push your luck so far before your windows fall prey to driving rain, gale force winds and rocketing debris. Truly wise people never take that chance and board up at the serious threat of a storm. Pretty smart people may let it happen once but only the fool will leave themselves open to a repeat performance.

There are some valuable relationship lessons here, aren't there? Often relationships turn stormy. Sometimes we see the storm approaching and we cannot plead ignorance or act surprised when the storm comes ashore. However, there are times when a storm seems to come out of nowhere and completely engulf us before we realize what is happening.

Salty fishermen know this all too well. Veteran mariners all have stories about the storm that "came out of nowhere." You really can be at sea fishing on a cloudless, beautiful summer day when without warning you begin to feel a cool breeze begin to gently waft around you. Once this breeze captures your attention you turn to see a black sky bearing down on you. At this point you both hunker down and get right with God, or you do your best to run for shore. Either way it will be indelibly marked on your memory.

In my experience, it is this type of betrayal that hurts the most. The unexpected slam of being turned on like the victim of a Pit Bull attack—a merciless mauling. Blindsiding betrayal leaves scars which will forever serve as a reminder that we live in a depraved world. I recently experienced a betrayal which, in hindsight, I should have seen coming. I was blindsided by it. It hit me like one of those fishing storms: just as I started feeling an odd cool breeze, betrayal swamped over me like a monsoon. It both shocked me and caused me to feel like a fool for being so gullible. You see, this was a friend that I had spent so much time with and had grown so comfortable with that I let my proverbial guard down. I know it will sound odd, but we were together so much that it actually seemed unnatural whenever we were not together. Maybe what I am trying to say is that when we were together I felt okay inside, but when we were apart I felt an emptiness which made me extremely uncomfortable. I really want to tell you about this friend. I hope you do not mind.

The shock of my stupidity is not something easy to recover from. I guess I am more gullible than I had ever imagined. However, part of my healing comes from sharing my story with others in hope that they will not feel the puncture of betrayal from this so called friend. His name is Noise. I loved Noise very much. I loved being around Noise every chance I could. We go back a long way with each other. You would think that spending as much time as I have with Noise I would know about everything there was to know about him, but this just was not the case. This is what makes betrayal so hurtful.

When I would awake in the morning I would immediately turn on the TV or radio just to be with him. As I would drive to my office I would bring CDs or crank on the radio again so that his presence would be felt. Once alone in my office, I would again make sure there was some music playing because I even wanted him around while I worked. Generally, I would watch some TV just before going to sleep at night because knowing he was with me helped me drift off peacefully. Usually I would keep the TV on until I became so tired I could barely lift the remote to turn it off.

We had become, as you can now tell, obsessively close. Noise was the kind of friend that I could count on at any time. Frankly, I took Noise for granted. As I look back on our relationship it is obvious now that there was not a time when we weren't together. Really, not at a single moment in my days was there a time when Noise was not present in one form or another. It is funny when I look back on it, how I in fact did not even want any moments without Noise. I think this was true because Noise was a great distraction for me.

Have you ever had a friend who, when you were together, helped you forget about life? The kind of friend who makes you laugh or helps you see the lighter or brighter side of life? This is the role Noise played in my life. If Noise was not with me I almost was forced to live in reality: face myself, God and life itself. I was not accustomed to this and found it quite annoying. In his book The Spirit of the Disciplines, Dallas Willard wrote: *"But Silence is frightening because it strips us as nothing else does, throwing us upon the stark realities of our life. It reminds us of death, which will cut us off from this world and leave only us and God. And in that quiet, what if there turns out to be very little to 'just us and God'? Think what it says about the inward emptiness of our lives if we must always turn on the tape player or radio to make sure something is happening around us."*

The Judas kiss came when I met Silence and found it to be the bridge that connects God to the soul. When you spend that much time with someone, as I did Noise, you start to take on their traits and characteristics. This is what happened to me. Hanging out with Noise had made me noisy inside. Having noisy insides does not mean that God is not with you. You will just find it most difficult (if not impossible) to hear Him, sense Him and live in the kind of communion with Him that is life-changing. There is nothing more than antagonism that exists between Silence and Noise. I am not sure there is greater pain and greater shame than when you find out that one you thought was a friend has never actually been a friend at all.

As difficult as it has been, I have turned my back on Noise and have been trying to get acquainted with Silence. He speaks a language that is a foreign dialect to me. I have to keep asking him to repeat himself because all he says is not just hard to understand, it is also hard to comprehend. Silence is still a bit frightening for me, and as crazy as it sounds, I still keep being tempted to run back to Noise. It's like believing the schoolyard bully when he promises, for the umpteenth time, that he just wants to be friends. You walk back into the

trap you are all too familiar with and he ends up beating you up and stealing your lunch money. When will I learn?

Silence is very interesting and is understood by people in many different ways. What I have learned about him so far is that he is not necessarily present when I stop talking. It is actually not a given that he will show up when I am alone. He requires more effort to be around than anyone else I have ever been with. The effort you have to exert is not because he is annoying or bland. It is like digging for gold; you have to work for it if you want it. I once read somewhere the Silence which brings us to God is a closing off of our souls from sounds. This is where effort must be exerted. I am told that Silence does become more familiar and easier to be around after a while, but I think I have a long way to go before that happens. I really felt like Silence was an unfamiliar stranger to me when I read the words of Catherine de Haecck Doherty: *“A day filled with Noise and voices can be a day of Silence, if the Noises become for us the echo of the presence of God, if the voices are, for us, messages and solicitations of God. When we speak of ourselves and are filled with ourselves, we leave Silence behind. When we repeat the intimate words of God that he has left within us, our Silence remains intact.”*

Maybe some day I will be able to write more about my new friend. I am just getting to know him and my soul is just starting to feel comfortable around him. I do think about him often and I actually attempt to make time for him as much as possible. However, I would only be blowing smoke if I kept writing about him at this point in our relationship. I would like to show you, though, some passages from the Holy Scriptures that I have been pondering:

“Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent.” (Psalm 4:4)

“For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him.” (Psalm 62:5)

“... a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak” (Ecclesiastes 3:7)

“Fear not, for I am with you. Listen to me in silence, O coastlands; let the peoples renew their strength; let them approach, then let them speak; let us together draw near for judgment.” (Isaiah 41:1)

I would like to invite you to get acquainted with Silence with me. I would like us to share with each other what we learn about him. Trust me when I say we need him. I would also like to encourage you to avoid Noise like the plague. He means you harm, not good. I leave you with the words of Teresa of A'vila:

“Settle yourself in solitude and you will come upon Him in yourself.”

Remember, the best is yet to come!

Tony