

Material from *Quieting a Noisy Soul* by Dr. Jim Berg, BJU Press 2006 used with permission.

The Beginnings of Despair

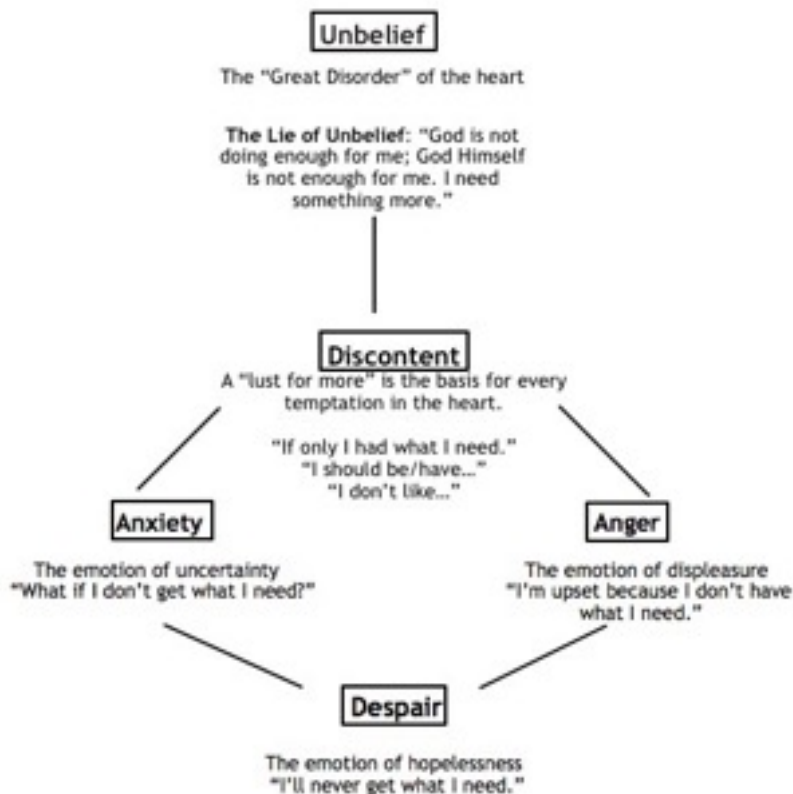
Romans 1:21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

The way down to despair is always predictable and preventable. Just as there is a way down, there is also a way out!! We don't have to live in despair. We need to understand where despair begins so we can stop it at its source.

Rom 1:21 - When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God. Though Rom. 1:21 is referring to the unsaved man, it is still the natural bent of all of our hearts.

We think up vain imaginations about our God that are not true of Him. Then we try to live in the world He created and we wonder why we struggle with the truth.

Isa. 55:7-9 - We exchange the truth of God for a lie. "Let the wicked (speaking of God's people who have sinned) forsake his way" ... (note God's disposition toward us) .. "He will abundantly pardon." God is waiting like the Prodigal Son's father, looking down the road, wanting us in fellowship with Him.



It all starts with Unbelief. Unbelief is hard to see sometimes. God did not give this truth to us in the form of a chart, but the flow of thought comes from the Word.

For example, Moses did not get rebuked for his anger when he struck the rock (Num. 20). God said the he did not believe God and that is why he disobeyed (Num. 20:12). God connected his action to unbelief.

Disciples in the boat “Carest thou not that we perish?” Christ - “How is it that you have no faith” (belief)... that I care for you (Mark 4:38-40). It was their unbelief that was challenged.

Heb. 12:2-3 Christ endured the cross... consider him (think/meditate about Him) lest you be weary in mind. When Christ is not our focus, our belief, we have problems. It is always a problem with belief. God made this connection.

All of us have belief (spiritual) problems! You do and I. Being humble and admitting it is the first step to the way out of despair.

A. Unbelief—“The Great Disorder” of the Heart

- Unbelief is a “disorder” because it accepts the reasonings of fallen man (“vain imaginations” Rom 1:21) over the revelation of God.
- The lie—the fantasy—of “The Great Disorder” is that “God is not doing enough for me; God Himself is not enough for me. I need something more.”

You can't be worried/ anxious/angry if you believe God has given you what you need. Try it! Once your thoughts focus not the truth of

We have interpreted what we know about God from our experience instead of interpreting our experiences in light of what is true about do from the Scriptures.

We think we need something more today ... is a fantasy. If we think these things, we don't know God well.

If we reject what God says to be true, all we can do is live in fantasy world of imagination, because the world as we are choosing to believe it does not exist.

- A world where God does not love does not exist.
- A world where God is not in control of all things for our good and His glory does not exist.
- A world where God is not with me or does not hear my cry does not exist.
- A world where God is overly tough and mean-spirited does not exist.

- These worlds are fantasy world of our imaginations. To live in a fantasy world is to hasten our own disintegration.

This is reality - Phil. 4:19 “But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

God will always meet our genuine need. Always. What we have is what we needed because a loving, wise, powerful, caring God knew we did.

Our God exists, He has spoken, what He has said matters. The world is living a fantasy that will burn up soon. If we are not careful, we will also live in a fantasy world if we listen to our hearts deceptions.

B. Discontent

- Discontent is the dissatisfaction of not having what we have decided we need.

The whining of our discontented heart is familiar.

“If only I had what I need.”

“I should be/have...”

“I don’t like...”

See if these statements of discontent sound familiar: If only my spouse/boss/parents would try to understand me. If only people appreciated me more. If only ... I had more freedom/money/authority/better health/less pain/more answers about what’s going on in my life/ I hadn’t messed up/I had different parents or roommates/ I weren’t married /I was married. All these imply that I would have satisfaction if it had been different.

We might, in our minds, attempt to limit God’s ability to help our problems today because of problems in our past. With a God as powerful as ours, He does not need anything different in your past to make you different today.

Our past does not interfere with God’s ability to use us now.

- Homework: Begin a list of your own “if only’s,” “I should’s,” and “I don’t likes.”

What’s the big deal?

1. God takes complaining personally. Why? Because He is the Provider. When we complain, we are denying the promise of God. Look at Numbers 11-16. God dealt with the Israelites discontent and He called it unbelief.

2. Complaining is dangerous because a “lust for more” its the basis for every temptation in the heart.

Once you think you have to have something, you are open to being tempted by it. You can't be tempted with something that you don't want. (Ever been tempted to pick up road kill for a cookout?)

James 1:14 - Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lusts, and enticed.”

- Legitimate concerns should be turned into prayer while surrendering the results to God.

Conclusion: Learn to look for the roots of unbelief and discontent when you see the fruit of guilt, anxiety, anger, and despair.