

WASP: Defense Mechanisms and Inner Healing

Though they often go unrealized, many people have defense mechanisms that prevent emotional wounds from healing. Holy Spirit is eager and ready to heal, but when it goes unreceived, closer look reveals something blocking or hindering that healing from manifesting. All too often, there is a defense mechanism in place, protecting the wound from further harm, but at the same time, serving as a wall or blockage preventing the light of Christ from penetrating and healing the wound. Once Satan has a foothold in someone through a wound, he seeks to ensure he can keep it. He works with fleshly defense mechanisms to keep a person's wound from ever healing.

Defense Mechanisms

What is a defense mechanism? A defense mechanism is an ungodly reaction within a person designed to prevent the person from further harm. It can be fear, unforgiveness, rebellion, etc. Think of it as a wall which keeps everyone out, both good and bad guys.

Unfortunately, the very thing which rises to defend us, is the very thing which prevents a wound from healing. Holy Spirit is more than eager to heal and restore, but defense mechanisms act as a hand in His face, resisting as He tries to heal. One of the most important steps in the inner healing process is to remove defense mechanisms so Holy Spirit can heal the wounds. Begin to deal with the defense mechanisms, and you will make yourself available for healing.

Defense mechanisms are rooted in human flesh and are not inclined to trust God. This is why a defense mechanism can cause a person to find it very difficult to trust God. They would rather act upon their fears or unforgiveness, trusting them to protect, instead of laying burdens and concerns before Jesus' feet. Defense mechanisms are fleshly ways of dealing with and handling things that God has told us to trust Him with.

How do you recognize a defense mechanism? Struggles with issues of anger, rebellion (blaming others), resentment (rooted in unforgiveness), and so forth, are defense mechanisms. A defense mechanism will "rise up" when it perceives potential harm in an area of a person's life. Be watchful for emotions that tend to rise when facing situations involving possible risk of re-hurt in a particular area of your life. Defense mechanisms can come in a variety of forms, but the two main categories involve fear and unforgiveness. Fear is afraid of being hurt and unforgiveness says, "I will not allow myself to be hurt."

Unforgiveness and fear both have children. Unforgiveness is the root that leads to resentment, anger, hate, and even murder. Fear has a family all its own, including plain old fear, worry, insecurity, dread, panic, and so forth. As an example, a young woman dealing with a spirit of panic received prayer. When the evil spirit manifested, her body began to vibrate and shiver. When not inclined to trust God with something, it is likely a defense mechanism protecting fear of being hurt or suffering loss. Fear is just as much of a defense mechanism as unforgiveness.

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Understanding defense mechanisms

Defense mechanisms usually exist because the person has been wronged (abused, hurt, etc.). Because these mechanisms develop out of pain, they take it upon themselves to protect the person from further wounding. Some people will even make vows such as, "I will never let anybody get close to me again!" Because God gave man autonomous authority and power in their words¹, these vows bind a person's soul and invite demonic bondage. Demons are more than eager to work alongside defense mechanisms to create bondages to anger, resentment, fear, and so forth. In such cases, the defense mechanisms must be addressed, the demons cast out, and the emotional damage healed.

Self-pity can cause a person to hold on to their hurt and pain to gain love and acceptance from others. Self-pity is often rooted in rejection, because the person is attempting to find love and acceptance. Where there is self-pity, there is usually a sense of rejection from others. Somebody who has defense mechanisms built, will often find it difficult to talk about certain things or receive correction about their attitude or conduct. There is often a feeling of, "Do not go there!" that rises from within the person. They want to stay away from addressing the root as if it were poison. At its core, the purpose of defense mechanisms is to protect the person from further harm or pain.

Tearing Down Defense Mechanisms and their Roadblocks

It is important to realize defense mechanisms will attempt to block any outsider from penetrating one's heart. To protect from further harm, defense mechanisms are quite successful in also preventing the light of Christ from reaching the wound so that it can be healed. The goal, therefore, is to address defense mechanisms so Christ's light is not blocked. Emotional healing is a ministry of Holy Spirit and it is our job to simply cooperate with Him to manifest that healing.

Roadblock #1: An Unthankful Heart. Because defense mechanisms are a result of pain and hurt, they are generally unthankful. Holy Spirit has shown thankfulness is an important key to receiving healing for damaged emotions². We must stop dwelling on what was done to us and all of the fleshly reasons why we are unthankful and begin to dwell upon the things which God has given us: life, a wonderfully made physical body, the steep price that Jesus paid for our redemption, perhaps a wonderful spouse and family, etc.³.

Roadblock #2: Blaming others (including Self and God). Defense mechanisms are generally prone to blame one's self, others, or even God for what has happened. Blaming self opens bondages of self-hate, self-resentment, self-unforgiveness, self-rejection, etc. Regardless of who the defense mechanism is blaming, it is enforcing a wall that is blocking healing. It is keeping our eyes on the problem, and off the

¹ Proverbs 18:21; Matthew 16:19, 18:18

² Psalm 28:7; Colossians 1:12; Philippians 4:6

³ Psalm 7:17, 9:1, 28:7, 52:9

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solution, which Christ has provided in Himself. It is imperative for someone to accept personal responsibility for ungodly and hateful reactions (in their heart) for what was done to them.

Roadblock #3: Fear. In many cases, defense mechanisms are afraid of being hurt again, therefore they are operating out of fear. Fear will cause the person to dodge situations which may expose further pain, rejection, and so forth. This type of fear is ungodly⁴ and leads to the person failing to trust God with certain areas of their life. God's Word instructs to cast all fears upon Him because He cares⁵. Not knowing the love of God will make it difficult to trust Him. It is difficult, if not impossible, to trust somebody whom you don't really know loves and cares for you. Therefore, an important key to overcoming these fears is to understand the love of God and meditate on His goodness. Fear also draws someone inward, which makes them dysfunctional in genuine relationship building and can even render them useless in ministering to others.

Roadblock #4: Unforgiveness. Unforgiveness is rooted in a distrust of God's justice. When a person refuses to forgive, they are afraid no one else, including God, is going to do anything about the wrong done against us. As a result, they hold onto the hurt and offense and see to it that the person receives justice in their heart. They do not believe God is going to ensure justice. Forgiveness is a form of trusting God to handle the situation and bring justice. God's Word tells us to give place to His wrath, for He will repay⁶.

Did you know that we can actually prevent a person from receiving God's justice? If we fail to give Him that place, then we can't expect Him to act on our behalf and bring justice. One of the keys to living a life of forgiveness, is fully believing God truly cares for you and what is done against you, and He will bring justice to those who have wronged you, if you trust Him with those situations.

Roadblock #5: Incorrect perceptions (Strongholds). A very important key to inner healing, is the tearing down of strongholds. Strongholds are incorrect thinking patterns or perceptions that have been burned into our way of thinking. When we perceive God as a cruel, distant, and unloving taskmaster, then it makes it very difficult for us to trust Him and cast our cares upon Him. When we perceive that we are dirty and shameful failures, then we will not be confident in our relationship with God, and our faith is severely crippled. We draw away from God, rather than to Him (where the flow of healing is). Properly perceiving who we are in Christ, the nature and love of God for us, and our relationship with Him, is important to drawing near to Him so that we can freely receive the healing light of Christ to our emotional wounds.

⁴ 1 Timothy 1:7

⁵ 1 John 4:18

⁶ Romans 12:19

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Knowing the true loving, forgiving, and accepting nature of God, and obtaining confidence in our relationship with Him, (because of Christ, we can enter the holy of holies with boldness⁷) creates an atmosphere where the walls of defense mechanisms can be lowered. Once you begin to see God as a concerned Father who is loving and caring and is eager to heal wounds, defense mechanisms are lowered, and the light of Christ begins to shine and bring healing.

Trust vs. Forgiveness

Many times, these two things are confused and misunderstood as being one and the same. That is not true. Extending forgiveness is always required of us⁸, but trusting the person who has offended is another story. For instance, in the case of rape or abuse, while it is vital to forgive the person who has done this terrible act, it may also be very unwise to allow the victim to be alone with them again. While we are required to forgive the person who has wronged us, we may or may not reconcile or trust them again in that area, and that is perfectly acceptable. While we are not required to reconcile or trust those who have harmed us, we need to trust God with every area of our lives. Trusting God requires a knowledge of His love for us. God's Word tells us that perfect love casts out all fear⁹. This is because when we truly know His unconditional love, we are free and even inclined to trust Him with every area of our lives!

Another factor that hinders our ability to trust God, is not feeling very confident about our relationship with Him. Many Christians are plagued with guilt, shame, and feelings of condemnation. The devil tries to make Christians believe their failures are greater than the Blood of the Son of God, which was shed for the forgiveness and removal of sins and failures¹⁰. In fact, Christ came to destroy these very efforts of the enemy¹¹. Remaining problem focused (sins and failures), instead of solution focused (what Jesus did about it) keeps one in bondage. It says the Blood of Jesus, which was shed for the sins of the whole world, is so weak that it cannot wipe away the failures of life.

One must make a choice to verbally confess the choice to tear down ungodly defense mechanisms. *"I now take down the ungodly walls meant to protect me. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me and can endure whatever is necessary that lies before me."*

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God [defense mechanisms], bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

2 Corinthians 10:4-5

⁷ Ephesians 3:12; Hebrews 4:14-16

⁸ Matthew 6:14-15

⁹ 1 John 4:18

¹⁰ Matthew 26:28

¹¹ 1 John 3:8