

Dime Store Shades

When I was a kid, I loved going to the dime store. There were enough items on just one aisle to occupy a young imagination for hours. I remember looking at paper dolls, sticker coloring books, and playing with the paddle balls. One thing, though, that I thought was so cool were the sunglasses with colored lenses. There were yellow, orange, blue, green and pink shades and the world appeared different when viewed through each pair. We would get tickled as we looked at people with blue faces or green hair. Those shades did little to actually keep the sun out of the eyes but they sure were fun to play with.

As an adult, I've come to realize there is a valuable lesson that can be learned from those old dime store shades. As a child, seeing people in a distorted way was a game and was quite humorous. Seeing people that way as an adult isn't very funny. You see, we can still wear those tinted shades in the spirit and it causes us to view ourselves and others wrongly. It brings heartache and will damage and ultimately destroy relationships.

Consider this. Your co-worker is having a bad day and snaps at you with an unkind word. It hurts your feelings and quite honestly, ticks you off. It's amazing how quickly you are able to forget about all the good days you've had together. All you can think about is the unkind word that has been implanted in your mind. When you see them or think about them now, you're seeing them through the tint of unkindness. It doesn't matter if they never have a tacky moment with you again, you've put those tinted shades on and to you, they are unkind. That will be the only way you see them until the shades are removed. The relationship has been damaged, whether you realize it or not.

You've had a busy day at work and the last thing you want to do is come home and fix dinner. Maybe your spouse will 'discern your thoughts' and suggest eating out. Unfortunately, it doesn't take long to realize that isn't going to happen so you drag yourself out of the chair, sighing all the way to the kitchen just knowing if you sigh enough they'll catch the hint. Nope, they're still sitting in front of the television. Next thought...if you bang the pots and pans so loudly that they can't hear the game they'll have to get up and help. You peek around the corner and they're still in the chair, totally unresponsive to your subtle hints. That's it!! You married an inconsiderate, uncaring, lazy person. If they loved you, they would have jumped when you banged! On go the shades. Now

that sweet one you fell in love with and married is impolite, lazy and thoughtless. Even when you're no longer angry, if you've not removed the tinted shades you will continue to see your spouse in that light. The enemy will be sure to remind you just how inconsiderate your mate is the next time things don't go the way you'd like. He will make sure that seed that has been planted will be watered at every turn.

On the flip side, that same evening your spouse comes home from work and is just dog tired. What they want is a few minutes to unwind, relax and let the cares of the day melt away. Instead, they are met at the door...not with a kiss...but a to-do list a mile long. You know, the "Honey, do this" and "Honey, do that". Worse yet, they get the "Honey, did you do?" questionnaire to see if they've checked off all the duties of last week's list. You just want the necessary things to get done so that life flows smoothly. You just want help with dinner. But as for your spouse, the shades have been put on and you are nagging and all you want them around for is to carry out that never ending list. Much like the dinnertime scenario, that sweet little thing he married has now become an unappreciative slave driver and if the shades aren't removed, those thoughts will quickly return the next time there's even a slight opening for frustration.

Many times we can wear the tinted shades for people we don't even know. Perhaps someone new has moved to town and you 'heard' that they have a shady past (no pun intended). Having never even met them, you've put on those glasses and are now seeing them tinted with the gossip you heard about them. Whether the past is true or not doesn't really matter. They'll never have a fair shot with you as long as the shades stay on.

Did you know you can see yourself through those tinted shades as well? Take a look in the Word and see who the Father says you are in Him. Is that how you see yourself? If it isn't, you're seeing yourself through tinted shades. Many times we are our own worst enemy. We see ourselves through the shades of past sins and regrets...through the shades of failures and dead dreams. Those things of the past may have long been put under the blood of Jesus and we've been washed clean, but the glasses are still on our face causing us to see ourselves as unworthy sinners instead of heirs and children of the King.

Those tinted shades are actually shades of judgment. I wonder how we would feel if, just for a few minutes, those shades that we wear in the spirit could be seen in the natural? What if you were speaking to your spouse and they could see the shades of inconsideration on your face? What if that new neighbor

introduced themselves to you and became aware of the 'past sin lenses' you were looking at them through? I believe we would be shocked and hurt if we could see the shades others wear as they look at us. Matthew 7:1-2 says, "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." (NIV) This scripture describes those judgments like a boomerang. You throw out that judgment and it comes right back at you. You see someone through a distorted tint and before long they are seeing you the same way. The consequences of these judgments have damaged and destroyed relationships of every kind. Judgment and offense are tools the devil loves to use on us and they can be so very subtle. We can even feel justified in believing what we believe about a person.

How do we remove the dime store shades? First, we must realize they are there. Ask Holy Spirit to reveal to you the shades you're wearing. Matthew 7 goes on to say in verses 3-5, "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." Jesus gave a very strong rebuke when He said to them, "You hypocrite". The rebuke isn't just to 'them', it is to us. "Do not judge" doesn't mean that we ignore the things that are truly at work in our co-workers, friends and family. We are never to ignore sin because it is a deadly poison and we want it gone both in ourselves and others. It does mean that before we can help them with their stuff, we have to remove ours. It may just be that when our shades of judgment are removed, they aren't nearly as messed up as we thought they were. In order to be free from this cycle, we must lay our hearts wide open before the Lord and ask Him to search us. That's submission. As He reveals to us where we've been in ungodly judgment, we confess. Confession means that we agree with God that we are guilty and then we must be willing to remove the shades and see through them no more. That's repentance. Repentance is simply changing the way we think and in this case, we agree to forgive the person and change the way we think about them. As we begin to see them through the eyes of Jesus instead of through dime store shades we can truly love them. Then, if an issue or problem remains, we are at a place ourselves where we can help them see more clearly. To try to fix them with our vision distorted is not only dangerous it is what Jesus calls hypocritical. When our vision is messed up, it is a sure sign that our heart isn't right. To try and 'fix' someone while our heart is unclean will result in harsh condemnation of that

person. That's the ungodly judgment. When we are free, our heart is clean and we can truly come to the rescue in love.

Jesus gave us a beautiful picture in these verses about having our vision restored so that we could help our brothers and sisters see more clearly. I think it is interesting that He adds verse 6 in the context. "Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces." One lesson that can be learned from this verse, I believe, is that not everyone is ready to take off the shades. There will be some that, when you get free, don't want your help. They are happy and content where they are, still enjoying the dime store shades and playing the dime store games. Release them fully to the Lord. Holy Spirit is the One in charge of drawing their hearts. Forgive them, love them, pray for them and move on

The opportunities for us to pick up those shades will arise daily so don't be discouraged thinking it is a 'one and done' thing. It is a process and while getting rid of past judgments, new ones will want to rear their ugly head and lure us. Remain steadfast. Stay alert. Take comfort in knowing that He will sanctify us if we allow Him.

As a child, those dime store shades were worth just about as much as we paid for them. They seldom survived the trip home. Unfortunately, as an adult they are much more costly and last as long as we allow them to. Valuable relationships will be the price we pay if we continue with the game. The Father speaks to us in many ways. Who knew that those dime store glasses would come with such a big lesson?