

# Is It Time To Wake The Sleeping Dog? Part Two

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Last time we introduced the concept of self-deception. It seems rather odd that we would or could actually deceive ourselves, but we do. I believe we deceive ourselves very gradually, with tiny steps that are virtually imperceptible. Yet one day we realize we are places we did not really want to be and don't quite know how we got there.

## How do we get deceived?

Self-deception is more common than we would care to admit. Perhaps we can discover some steps in the process that can lead us away from self-deception to self-awareness and living a life consistent with our values. Self-deception is not intentional. It is likely more self-protective and the consequence of many small steps in the wrong direction. Most often, it starts with a growing awareness of pain or unhappiness or unmet needs or some other negative feeling that begins the spiral away from our faith and our deeply held values.

God calls us to a life of pain and struggle but a life full of promise and purpose. We must learn to examine ourselves, to be honest in our estimate of ourselves, to speak the truth in love, to find our life by losing it, to love and serve one another and to not conform to our culture's standards. God calls us to a life of obedience, of struggling with profound issues that tear at the very core of our existence. Deception calls us to a life with no pain-but no growth; with no hassles-but no change; with no risk-but no transformation.

Self-deception, then, is the process of bending our values and beliefs to fit our deeply felt needs, our circumstances and our self-assumed weaknesses. Self-deception offers a cure for our weaknesses and fears. Unfortunately, the cure does not work, and we are left with numbness. It strikes at the very core of who we are, what we feel, what we want from life. Five elements are involved in the self-deceptive spiral. At one time, our feet seem on solid ground, at another, we wonder how we ever got to the place we are. These five elements are: selective obedience, twisting reality, rationalizing behavior, blaming others and despair. We will examine the first step this time.

## Selective obedience

The first step is always to pick and chose those things you will obey. Perhaps you are overwhelmed with the pain of childhood abuse, failures in life, emptiness or the weight of unmet needs. You begin to believe that your pain or needs are unresolvable. Your pride and stubborn will tell you that you should be in charge of your life. After all, you know what is best, and besides, no one really cares or understands. You come to believe that your needs are important and deserve to be met. At first, you take only a few steps toward self-protection; a few steps toward meeting your own needs; only a few steps away from intimacy, community and accountability. Besides, no one is perfect. "It's too hard. I'm not

committing deliberate sin, just exploring possibilities." The door has just been cracked open. "What about my needs and desires?" In order to believe even the smallest lie, you must, at some point, stop believing the truth. Next time we will explore the other steps in this cycle. Live well. *Dr. Jeff Parziale is the Director of InStep Ministries, which provides resources, counsel and support to singles, single parents and remarried individuals and their families.*