

Under the Veil

"I know what I need to do. I just want to do it. I don't want anyone else telling me what to do. I just want to be free."

Whether we are running in our addiction or feeling challenged in recovery, these are words that run through our minds and often out of our mouths. They represent people the Bible talks about who "live under the veil."

People who live under a veil are those who do not see clearly or correctly. Something is blocking their view. Something is in the road. Something is distorting the picture of reality that is before them.

But the people's minds were hardened, and even to this day whenever the old covenant is being read, a veil covers their minds so they cannot understand the truth. And this veil can be removed only by believing in Christ. (2 Corinthians 3:14 NLT)

The Bible teaches us that what gets in the road of us living a free and fulfilling life, the veil that covers our eye, is trusting in ourself. When we think we know what we need and convince ourselves that what we want is better than what we are being advised we are actually living a lie. We are unable to understand the truth.

Movie producers know all about veils. If they want to hide something from view they simply match the colour of the object to the colour of a filter (veil) they put over the camera lens. Like magic the object disappears on a screen. They can cover up your hand or your head or a string holding you to the ceiling while you fly through the air. If you were in the studio you'd see the hand, the head, the string because they are there in reality. But, behind the filter, things do not appear as they really are. They now appear as they are arranged to look.

We grow up in a culture of lies. Our world has a set of information that it applies to our thinking in the same way a filter is put over a camera lens. "If it feels good, do it." "Be your own person." "Lying is only a problem if you get caught." "You've got to take care of yourself first." "Sex is fine as long as you're with someone you love." "Winning the lottery will fulfill your dreams." These are commonly accepted descriptions of life as we know it. We think they are part of the package that will ultimately give us the freedom and satisfaction we crave.

Jesus, on the other hand, clearly tells us, ***"You are truly my disciples if you keep obeying my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free So if the Son sets you free, you will indeed be free. ... My***

purpose is to give life in all its fullness." (John 8:31, 36, 10:10 NLT)

How do we know if we are seeing life through a filter - living under the veil - or not? Jesus tells us clearly, "if you obey my teachings." Freedom to do what we want, when we want, with whomever we want is a veil that clouds our vision and keeps us from freedom. God gives us clear indicators from daily life to help us understand whether we are living under the veil or not. (See inset box.) In contrast to the veiled life, God describes for us what true freedom is:

For you have been called to live in freedom—not freedom to satisfy your sinful nature, but freedom to serve one another in love. For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." (Galatians 5:13,14 NLT)

When we obey God's laws we have energy, live wisely, have joy, and when we are asked, "How's life?" our automatic response is "Sweet!" In fact, we recognize that we have the freedom we sought after for so long.

But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, then the veil is taken away. Now, the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, he gives freedom. (2 Corinthians 3:16, 17 NLT)

Hundreds of years earlier, King David described how satisfying that kind of living was in these words: ***The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The decrees of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The commandments of the Lord are right, bringing joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are clear, giving insight to life. They are more desirable than gold, even the finest gold. They are sweeter than honey, even honey dripping from the comb. (Psalm 19:7-8, 10)***

If we live the free life, walking in obedience to God's commands, not only will we enjoy life much more than we ever have, but our lives will be an attraction to others.

And all of us have had that veil removed so that we can be mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord. And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like him and reflect his glory even more. (2 Corinthians 3:18 NLT)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. What veils have I allowed to cover my eyes?
2. What needs to change so I can live without the veil?

When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, your lives will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin.

But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (Galatians 5:19-23 NLT)