

Waking Up Our Spirits: The Difficulty of Desensitization

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Good Morning. I thank you so much for inviting me to come to speak. I am humbled by the opportunity to come here. I really love Faith Fusion and have even considered applying to graduate schools in this area so that I can connect to this faith community.

I am a student at Worcester State University going into my senior year. I major in psychology with a mental health concentration and a minor in philosophy. Next year I plan to go to graduate school to receive a Master of Social Work so that I can become an LICSW. I would like to pursue

marriage and family counseling because I value family so much.

I am the Youth Pastor in my community back in Worcester so I am familiar with speaking to middle and high school students but it is still a relatively new experience for me to speak with those that are older than me. I know you have so much life experience and wisdom that you can offer, and I thank you for taking time to listen to me today.

I will be addressing some studies done in psychology. The reason I do this is because I like to get into the practice of using empirically based research to support my beliefs about family and love and religion.

“And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues.” Revelations 18:4

I am going to make an inference based on the repeated observations I have made in my environment be it school, work, public events, etc. but I will first tell a story to elaborate my point.

I took a research methods class this time last year, which is all about the research process and understanding what it means to be a good researcher. We did many pseudo experiments or demonstrations in an effort to understand in depth concepts regarding different experimental designs.



During one class we were learning about creating an operational definition which simply is a way to measure what you are going to study. Again, this had no bearing on hard evidence and it was just a demonstration for class to teach us this new concept, but what I gained was a significant realization about the world around me. We were asked to tally down all acts of aggression we found in a cartoon that is popular among many children and adults called Adventure Time. Some of you may be familiar with it.

We watched only a 10 minute snippet out of the episode and were asked to share the number of tallies. My entire class ranged between 5-17 acts of aggression. My score: 30+. We pointed out different areas that could be debated as something aggressive: name calling, violence without blood, etc.

After this class I wondered if my class was desensitized to aggression and violence.

Are We Desensitized?

My answer and what I am going to be addressing today is: Yes. I believe my classmates were desensitized to this aggression, but as a society, I believe we are living in a culture that is desensitized to many important things.

What I mean by desensitization is something that you feel a lessened sensitivity to, or the elimination or reduction of a natural or acquired reactivity or sensitivity.

Desensitization can be seen in the world all around us... and it's scary. Imagine all the children who watch Adventure Time, hours and hours of that show and see violence and mean-spiritedness and fail to

recognize what is wrong with treating others in that way?

There are many correlations done in my field regarding aggression. For example, there is a correlation, or relation between violence in video games and aggressive behavior. The same is true of television and movies. This is not only true for children but adults as well. Although an adult may not perpetuate the aggressive behavior through the use of a gun in the workplace, perhaps they might become more reactive to their coworkers.

What is even more tricky is that oftentimes in movies or games the characters who are doing evil things are given a very likeable character. I don't know about you, but I think that is very deceptive and seems more like the work of Satan than God. We know from the Garden of Eden, Lucifer was very sneaky when he tried to win over Eve. We have to be careful in our own life where this may come to play.

I am going to offer something called the Cultivation Theory that social psychologists have created.

What lens are we looking through?

The Cultivation Theory makes the claim simply put, that the more connected we are to mass media, the more we take what media portrays as the truth.

- Our own reality becomes skewed and we begin to see the world through the lens of media.
- Therefore, whatever the media puts before us, we can become manipulated to see and accept the world in that way.
- While this may not apply to everybody, it can be dangerous.
- Music, movies, video games, news, portray sexualization of women, inequality, stereotypes and prejudices

The media plays out scenarios through movies and the news and shows things like the sexualization of women, inequality, stereotypes, prejudices, and violence.

The Cultivation Theory is saying that as a society, we are beginning to take what the media shows us and accept it as truth and we become okay with it.

Maybe we disagree with what we are being told, but how often do we speak up? How often do we watch movies and blankly stare at the infidelity that occurs or the violence that happens without giving it a second thought?

I'm sure we do not always agree with it... but my question is... do you FEEL it? Are AWAKE? Have we become complacent living in a world that is filled with unhealthy things?

“And be not conformed to this world: but be you transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” – Romans 12:2

When I took another step back I asked myself, what else are we possibly desensitized to? What areas in our life are there red flags but we cannot recognize the danger of the territory we are walking into? What can we no longer feel the importance or value of?

Then a terrifying thought hit me: Are we desensitized to the love of God? Are we desensitized to God's existence in our lives and the importance of having Him with us?

Just as the Cultivation Theory shows, it is not often that the songs on the radio portray the love of God, or the things we see on the news, sadly are not things that convey the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth.

My answer, sadly, is that yes, there are many people in the world who no longer feel the pain of not living close to God. Many people do not feel the urgency of connecting to God. And what is so very sad is that some people are removed in a way that they cannot feel God's love for them even though it is unconditionally being poured into them by our Heavenly Parent.

REsensitizing ourselves to God

What I want to point out is that we are filled in a world with that has lots of garbage...and it can be hard to recognize if we become jaded, but we have the choice to REsensitize ourselves to God. To become sensitized or to spread the love and truth of God to others...to take a step beyond ourselves and share this understanding of the Truth around us.

“But you, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. 12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto you are also called, and have professed a good profession before many witnesses.” Timothy 6:11-12

On the contrary, what is a world that is SENSITIZED to God, what would we be seeing? What would a world sensitized to the love and grace of God look like?

- true love: love between a husband and wife raising children in love
- peace/unity: understanding that instead of fighting with somebody because we disagree, recognizing we are all on a journey to find happiness... so we can work together and support each other
- purity
- empowering others



I am going to offer you some of my thoughts regarding the matter of sensitizing ourselves and our spirit to God once again. I will be using an analogy to exemplify what I am going to share.

I recently decided that I need to make some changes to my diet because although I eat tons of vegetables and have replaced a ton of my meat protein with tofu etc. I still wasn't feeling great. I realized that I was consuming insane amounts of sugar especially through drinks. I became proud that I do not drink soda but the number of

smoothies I buy each week and hot and cold beverages rack up tons of sugar.

I decided I would stop adding sugar to my hot tea and iced tea and that anytime I ordered a smoothie I would ask them to put in half of the amount of sugar they normally would, or just one fourth of it. I became acclimated to this and become used to the flavor. When I had a regular drink again without any reduced sugar I was shocked at how sweet it was. What I once felt tasted and felt good became something repulsive.

My point is that it can be really hard to recognize that our spirits are not healthy. Until we make changes, even if they are done out of blind faith we may not understand the need for God in our life, or the need to strengthen our spirit. This can be a challenge. What I am proposing to you is that one way to resensitize ourselves to God and refuel our spirit even if we can't feel the importance is to find ways to connect to God. You may be surprised at what you find.

It's been a challenge for me to remember that my spirit needs food and nourishment too. I always wished I could feel a sense of hunger the same way my physical body feels hunger. I decided that even though I cannot feel it I could still do things that would strengthen my spirit, so I decided to start reading religious texts. I did it for a few days and the day that I stopped I felt a reminder in my mind that was pointing out that I wasn't studying God's word. It hit me that this was the hunger that I wasn't recognizing before. In my conscious I can find out what my spirit needs.

“When you pursue your original mind, you should be able to hear moral laws and see divinity in your mind's eye. You should be able to feel and touch the heart of God with your mind.” -SMM

So once again I suggest that we find the ways we feel closest to God and everybody is different!

There's a really amazing tool on the faith fusion website that we can use to figure out what our style of connecting to God is. It is called the *Spirituality Styles Quiz* [below]. This quiz can be a game changing tool to finding out how to connect to God. We are all unique individuals and therefore our connection to God will come through different mediums. What connects me to God most: prayer in the car, Youth Ministry, praise and worship.

When we continue to connect to these positive activities that break AWAY from the things that desensitize us from God, we begin to refuel ourselves with positive energy that uplifts our entire being physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

This week I will challenge myself to engage in activities that sensitize me to God and look for a new area in my life that I maybe don't recognize is unhealthy for me and work towards stopping that behavior.

I invite you all to do this with me and thank you for listening to my message.

God Languages Inventory

Directions: For each of the questions below, enter the number that best describes how you think and feel in the box. As there are no right or wrong answers, be as honest as possible in your responses. You may calculate the results of this assessment below Question 27.

Rating Scale:

- 4 = Very true
- 3 = Often true
- 2 = Sometimes true
- 1 = Rarely true
- 0 = Never true

1. Taking a stand for what is right in this world and opposing what is wrong causes me to draw closer to God.	4 3 2 1 0
2. I would enjoy having several hours to be alone in silent prayer.	4 3 2 1 0
3. I sense God's pleasure when I am caring for others, e.g., helping a friend who's in need or giving someone without a car a ride.	4 3 2 1 0
4. I would enjoy reading about or talking with someone who knows God deeply so that I could learn how to have a more intimate friendship with Jesus.	4 3 2 1 0
5. I would like to go to a workshop that teaches about worshipping God through dance or praising the Lord at home through music.	4 3 2 1 0
6. I really think it is imperative for Christians to study the essential doctrines of the faith, while letting their feelings and experiences with God remain peripheral.	4 3 2 1 0

7. I usually feel closest to God when I am out in nature.	4 3 2 1 0
8. I find pleasure in worshipping God as I gaze at a beautifully translucent stained glass window in a church where some aspect of my Lord is depicted.	4 3 2 1 0
9. I would enjoy following a Christian calendar with my family during our prayer times, or using the Common Book of Prayer.	4 3 2 1 0
10. The suffering and evil in this world really bother me, and I feel strongly that the apathy of the masses must be challenged.	4 3 2 1 0
11. Praying alone or worshipping God in silence is usually more meaningful to me than seeking him in a group setting.	4 3 2 1 0
12. Being a caring servant of God who puts faith into action is very important to me.	4 3 2 1 0
13. I feel close to God when he speaks words of love to me as if he were my dearest friend.	4 3 2 1 0
14. God is an awesome God, and during worship at church, we need to express our enthusiasm in song, vs. reading the church bulletin or watching others as they sing.	4 3 2 1 0
15. I buy a lot of Christian books because I appreciate thought-provoking literature that challenges me to think more deeply about my faith.	4 3 2 1 0

16. I derive joy from praying or communing with God as I sit beside a brook, walk outdoors, or see his handiwork in nature.	4 3 2 1 0
17. When I enter a stunningly beautiful church, just the loveliness around me increases my passion for God.	4 3 2 1 0
18. The Christian faith—which is rooted in centuries of godly tradition—must continually find its expression in the corporate life, and that must always take precedence over individualized worship.	4 3 2 1 0
19. When I read about someone who is taking positive action to change the unjust conditions in the world, my love for God is stirred.	4 3 2 1 0
20. When I am alone with God, I feel closer to him, since I can most readily focus on his presence in quiet settings.	4 3 2 1 0
21. I am saddened when I see Christians just ignoring a neighbor or a family member in need.	4 3 2 1 0
22. I would enjoy having uninterrupted time each day to sit alone with Jesus, listening to his voice, or simply basking in the warmth of his love.	4 3 2 1 0
23. I would like to learn more about how God uses dreams to speak to his people.	4 3 2 1 0
24. Knowing the truth and having a mind ordered by "right thinking" is very important to me.	4 3 2 1 0

25. I would be thrilled if our church held a service on the beach or in a wooded glen—somewhere outside in God's creation.	4 3 2 1 0
26. A "high church" service with formal communion or the Eucharist is something I enjoy.	4 3 2 1 0
27. I value greatly the idea of having a prayer ritual (or rule), especially as it connects me with other believers who are observing the same practice.	4 3 2 1 0

Now tally the numbers you've recorded for each of the answers to find your spiritual temperament:

				Total
Activist	1	10	19	_____
Ascetic	2	11	20	_____
Caregiver	3	12	21	_____
Contemplative	4	13	22	_____
Enthusiast	5	14	23	_____
Intellectual`	6	15	24	_____
Naturalist	7	16	25	_____
Sensate	8	17	26	_____
Traditionalist	9	18	27	_____