

Date: 6/25/2019 7:37:38 PM

Subject: Blog

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June 25, 2019

On Being Cynical

The dictionary defines "cynical" as "distrusting or disparaging the motives or sincerity of others" and "bitterly or sneeringly distrustful, contemptuous, or pessimistic." Lately, I've noticed that I'm becoming quite cynical. Not a general, broad-based cynicism but rather a specific, targeted sort of criticism.

I am extremely cynical of any DOC official. So often I hear wonderful platitudes issuing out of the mouths of DOC bureaucrats while I believe the reality to be entirely different. I've experienced it so many times that now my reflex action when I hear any DOC employee speak is to disbelieve whatever is said.

I do not want to be that kind of person. I do not want to be cynical of others. I don't feel that way about other people, why should I feel that way about DOC officials?

Is my cynicism a logical reaction to previous experience with DOC officials? Or am I unjustifiably losing my objectivity?

When I attended the seminar conducted by Buck Blodgett (see previous blog on love is greater than hate), I sat there with a closed mind. I was more focused on finding discrepancies, inconsistencies and logical fallacies than on hearing his message of hope. I was hypercritical, as if I was just looking for a reason to discount what he had to say. Guilt by association - since DOC officials brought him to talk to us, then he can't be trusted.

Buck Blodgett had to come to grips with one of the worst things that could have happened - his daughter, his only child, was raped and murdered in her own bedroom in his house (to clarify, she was an adult when it happened). He forgave the perpetrator. He did not let anger or bitterness consume him. He did not become cynical toward everybody else because of one man's acts. He chose to start an organization to spread his daughter's message of love and hope.

Every day I get to choose who I'm going to be. I decide how I'm going to relate to the world. I can let my circumstances define me. I can sink into bitterness, despair and self-pity. Or I can be like Buck Blodgett and rise above my circumstances. I can remember who I am and who I want to be: I am a child of God. I am made of love, of compassion, of forgiveness and of empathy.

I will no longer allow myself to be cynical. I will accept people for who they are, choosing to believe that they are sincere, honest and ethical until I am shown otherwise. I will no longer let preconceived notions cause me to prejudge people.