

Giving Your Heart

The crowd is hushed as they watch the contestants. It's the World Championship of Poker, and the contest comes down to the climactic point when one of the players says, "I'm all in." He has just declared that he is betting everything he has on the cards he is holding. What must it feel like to go "all in"? All you know are the cards you can see in your hand. You don't know what cards the other players are holding. There is fear, excitement, anticipation, but most of all, there is risk.

Isn't this a bit like building new relationships or renewing old ones? Have you ever gone "all in" with someone? Or, are we like Ananias and Sapphira and holding something back? When we make the decision to go "all in" in a relationship, we want to know all the reasons why we should, and what will happen if we don't. But isn't that what Paul urged the Corinthian church to do in II Corinthians 6? In verses 11-13, Paul essentially tells them that he has gone "all in" with them, but they have not. "Go all in, too." he urges them. We start thinking about how scary it is to just let go and give our hearts, especially if we need to give our hearts again. We want to list all the reasons why we should continue to protect ourselves. Human nature tells us to not trust. Satan reminds us of all the things that happened the last time we decided to trust. So it's easy to emotionally keep our distance so that we don't get hurt.

The funny thing about distancing ourselves; we can't pick and choose what we distance ourselves from. When we make that decision, it affects our entire lives. We think that we can keep friends and even God at arm's length but be close to our families. We certainly can spend time with them and work on our relationships, but when we wall off our hearts emotionally, we wall them off from everything and everyone. A physical wall separates consistently. Our protecting ourselves emotionally protects consistently from the hard things in life, as well as, all the great things in life.

Past hurts, fear, lack of trust and even not knowing all the facts about a situation can cause us to hold back our hearts. So, what do we do? In II Corinthians, Paul faced a group of people to whom he had given his heart, but they had rejected him because they didn't have all the facts. Again, in chapter 7 he asked the Corinthians to make room for him in their hearts. Paul first set an example. He, in spite of their criticism, gave his heart to them. Secondly, he called them to do the same. But how is it that Paul was able to set them such an example? Paul had first gone "all in" with God. He continued to be close to and rely on God. He didn't rely on his own opinions or give in to his emotions. The Bible doesn't discuss how much time Paul spent in prayer, but it does discuss in detail the hardships he had to endure. Paul knew his only hope in surviving those situations with his faith intact was to cling to God. God wants us to deepen our relationship with him and allow him to heal our hurts, give us courage to face our fear and be the One we trust in again. Are you holding back your heart from God?

Is there a risk going "all in" with God? If you go "all in" with God you don't know the direction He will take you. You trust that you will live the abundant life, but if you've given your heart to God and you haven't liked where God is taking you, what now? Living the abundant life doesn't mean there won't be hardship. The promise we have from God is that he will be "all in" with us. He may take us on a journey that we would not have chosen; God knows that the journey may be difficult, but the destination is beyond anything we can imagine.