



Addiction & Denial

Denial has a few different meanings according to Webster, but the one that relates to addiction is this one: “A defense mechanism in which confrontation with a personal problem or with reality is avoided by denying the existence of the problem or reality.”

When I was active in my addiction, I was also active in denial. For me that didn’t mean I knew I had a problem but refused to admit it, it meant I really couldn’t see I had a problem. It was so obvious to everyone else, but I could not see it at all.

But there is another kind of denial that happens with addiction and that is societal denial. Society knows very little about addiction and how it really works and continues to hold onto old ideas that are simply not true. The facts are readily available, but nobody seems to want to know what they are.

In Genesis chapter nine, there is a story about Noah getting drunk and passing out naked in his tent. His youngest son, Ham, points it out to his brothers and for this he gets seriously cursed by Noah. The older brothers don’t want to see their father like this, so they take a blanket, avert their eyes, and walk in backwards to cover up their father’s shame.

Wow, here is this 3,000-year-old story that reveals so powerfully denial in action and how the majority of family members (and a majority of society) just doesn’t want to look at it. They cover it up.

Denial is the reason I believe that after working for 30 years to raise awareness it’s been so difficult to get the church to pay attention to the seriousness of the addiction crisis. The church (and society) seems to dismiss addiction as a choice, a matter of bad people doing bad things who get what they deserve rather than understanding it as a bonified health issue calling for understanding and compassion. The church and society both continue to turn their eyes away and cover the problem up rather than deal directly with it.

On the board of the Center of Addiction & Faith we keep asking ourselves, “What is that we do? What do we have to offer?” And the answer is, plenty. We have a ton of resources for faith communities, including our podcasts, webinars, annual conference, free phone app, book studies and more. But really the most important thing we do is keep drawing attention to a very serious issue that keeps wanting to be ignored. Ours is a prophetic voice saying over and over again, “Addiction is real, it impacts every one of us, there are solutions, when are you going to wake up?”

This is our most important work--Continuing to bring addiction to the attention of a world that doesn’t want to see it. We are one of very few working in this space of addiction and the church. We think the church should be leading on this rather than helping to ignore it. So, this is what we will continue to do. We will continue to relentlessly point out the naked man in the tent who has a drinking problem.

Today is Giving Tuesday, a day to support those doing good in the world. I am asking for your help to keep pointing out the problem and offering solutions, ways for the church to better respond. Ignorance is not helping. We can do better. I hope you will join the efforts of the Center of Addiction & Faith. Please make a donation today and help us continue to proclaim so that more and more lives can be saved.

God bless you,

Pastor Ed Treat