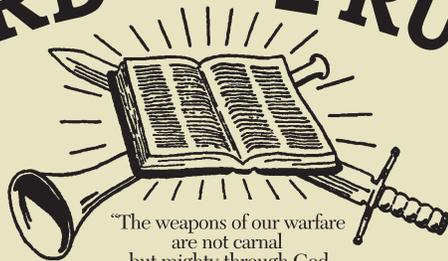


The SWORD and TRUMPET



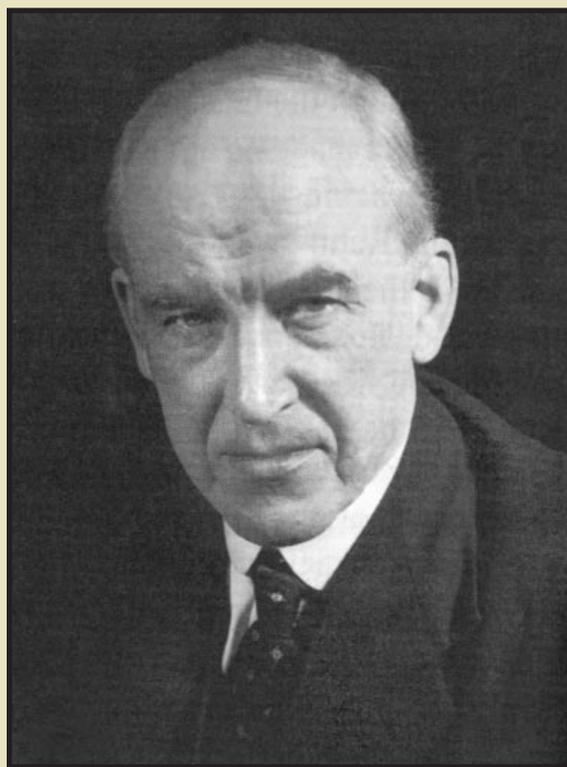
"Blow ye
the Trumpet
and warn
the People."

"The weapons of our warfare
are not carnal
but mighty through God
to the pulling down of strongholds."

"Take the Sword
of the Spirit
which is
The Word of God."

Guidelines

SPECIAL ISSUE: Counseling



DAVID MARTYN LLOYD-JONES

OCTOBER 2005

\$1.50

The Sword and Trumpet

Founded in 1929 by Geo. R. Brunk I

Vol. LXXIII

OCTOBER 2005

No. 10

SWORD AND TRUMPET GUIDELINES monthly magazine is a faith ministry directed by a Board representing various constituencies of the Mennonite Church. It is committed to defending, proclaiming, and promoting the whole Gospel of our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. It emphasizes neglected truth and contends for “the faith which was once delivered to the saints.” This publication exposes and opposes doctrinal error which compromises that faith and leads to apostasy.

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THE SWORD AND TRUMPET (USPS 615-540) is published monthly by *The Sword and Trumpet*, Inc., P. O. Box 575, Harrisonburg, Va. 22803-0575. Periodicals postage paid at Harrisonburg, Va. SUBSCRIPTION RATES: 1 year US \$12.00, 2 years US \$20.00. Bulk rates on the basis of US \$9.00 per year. Add US \$3.00 per year for countries outside USA and Canada. Telephone (540) 867-9419 or 867-9444. FAX (540) 867-9419. E-mail address: fcm@shentel.net.

Person of the Month:

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1900-1981)

Lloyd-Jones was born in Wales and lived there until he was 14 years of age, at which time his family moved to London, England.

When he was 16 he entered medical school at St. Bartholomew's Hospital. A brilliant student, David graduated in 1921, and the following year became the chief clinical assistant to the Royal Physician, Sir Thomas (later Lord) Horder, David's former teacher.

Although a fine physician, Lloyd-Jones did not feel fulfilled in his medical work. As a doctor he only dealt with peoples' physical problems. Since coming to faith in Christ, David felt called to preach the gospel and wanted to minister to the spiritual needs of men and women because people's deepest problems are in their souls. His methods of diagnosis and fact-gathering learned in medical school later helped in preparing him to minister to people effectively.

At the age of 27 he was called to be the pastor of the Bethlehem Forward Movement Mission Church in Sandfields, Aberavon, Wales, near the town of Port Talbot. At this time in British pulpits the preaching of the gospel was rather vague and indefinite. Lloyd-Jones had a passion to preach the true, life-changing gospel as presented in God's Word. He had made up his mind that he would preach Christ, not use social avenues to "attract" people to the Gospel. The congregation was made up of ordinary working folk but Lloyd-Jones challenged them to wrestle intellectually with the reasonableness of the Gospel of Christ—rightly believing, and therefore preaching, that Christ is our only hope. His aim was to make people think seriously about spiritual things to see if they were really in the faith. Before long he was ordained to the Gospel ministry. Although he made no appeals people began to be converted to Christ—seventy the first year and one hundred twenty-eight more the second. During David's twelve years at Sandfields the church membership grew from just under 100 to a little over 500 people, with attendance on Sundays around 850. All this was accomplished without gimmicks or programs, etc., but by the pure preaching and teaching of God's Word through the power of the Holy Spirit working in people's hearts and lives. As a preacher, he became well-known in his country of Wales.

In 1935 he was asked to address the annual conference of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship (IVF), a fellowship of Christian college students. He accepted the assignment reluctantly because of the tenor of the organization at that time. Lloyd-Jones was committed to serious study and thought concerning the Scriptures and the issues of life while IVF seemed to be more concerned with sports and other pursuits that mitigated against real intellectual inquiry into spiritual things. However, in 1939 he agreed to become president of the organization. His leadership helped turn IVF around. He challenged the students to think seriously about their faith and its relation to all of their studies. He encouraged them to serve the Lord regardless of their profession—not to limiting themselves by serving the Lord in just medicine or Christian ministries. He was able to increase their vision because

he had laid a firm doctrinal foundation for them on the Scriptures which equipped them to serve God wherever He should lead. His association with this organization lasted for the rest of his life.

The name, David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, however, is most commonly associated with London's Westminster Chapel. In 1939 he became joint minister with the aging G. Campbell Morgan. Then, in 1943, he became the pastor when Morgan retired. World War II had caused damage to the church building as well as reducing the size of the congregation, but by 1945 the church began to recover and soon was having an attendance of 1,500 on a Sunday morning and 2,000 in the evening. At Westminster he was referred to by everyone, including his wife, as "the Doctor." He preached systematically through a text, and in some instances, verse by verse, consistently expounding the Word of God. His messages were not dusty theological discussions but were relevant to the people and their present situation. He got his people to think but he also worked at meeting their spiritual needs. People were invited to meet him in the vestry to talk about spiritual matters after a service. Many took advantage of this and waited in line for an opportunity to participate in the "Doctor's office hours." Pastoral counseling was also done by appointment throughout the week. He befriended students and pastors giving them good counsel as well. He always had time for those who wanted to visit and fellowship even though he had a busy schedule. In addition to preaching every Sunday morning and evening he would hold a Bible study on Friday evening. Many who worked in the city and those who lived in the suburbs of London would attend. He was not only concerned about people coming to faith in Christ but that they would be nurtured and brought along in that faith.

In addition to his work at the Chapel, Lloyd-Jones chaired a fellowship of ministers, known as the Westminster Fellowship, that was hosted by his church. This was a way for ministers to meet once a month for encouragement and interaction. He actually pastored pastors, as it were. By the early '60s, 400 men were members of the group. This was one of the activities he greatly enjoyed.

In 1966 David gave an address to a larger church body at which he presented the Scriptural view of the true church. This address stirred up controversy since the World Council of Churches had been making inroads into the larger church. He felt that churches should not belong to groups which denied the basic doctrines of the faith but should be willing to separate themselves from such apostasy rather than staying with the status quo. Westminster Chapel left that group and joined with another that held to the doctrines of God's Word.

In 1968, due to failing health, Lloyd-Jones retired from Westminster Chapel and lived out the rest of his days busily writing books and speaking in small churches, seeking to be an encouragement to them.

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones was a giant of a man, although small of stature. He saw himself primarily as an evangelist, zeroing in first of all on those in the pew who may have been "professors" but not "possessors" of Christ as Saviour and Lord. When he preached he conveyed a deep sense of the reality of God. He had a great mind and was an avid reader. To other pastors he gave support and encouragement and God used him to rightly influence the minds of many of his colleagues. He believed that the Church was at the center of God's gracious plan. God dwells in His people in local congregations and uses the local church to accomplish His purposes in the world and to bring praise to Him. He was concerned that the Church be unified within the local body, as well as the larger body, but only by means of confessions of faith based on God's Word and sanctification accomplished by God's Spirit. He believed in purity of doctrine, worship, and living. He desired to see the world changed, beginning with changed hearts and changed churches. Although he never used humor or levity in his preaching, Lloyd-Jones had

(continued on page 6)

Teaching the Truth So Others Will Know and *Live It*

by Josh McDowell

If any faith is based upon real and relevant truth, it is the Christian faith. Jesus said, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). When the truth is no longer made real and relevant to people's lives, we gut the true faith of Jesus Christ.

This is why I am so concerned about the issue of truth in relation to young people, which is the area of my ministry and heart. I want you to hear the responses of professed "born-again" church youth to several essential doctrines of the Christian faith, and then I want to talk to you about what you can do to reverse this trend, both as parents yourselves and as

Josh McDowell once considered himself a skeptic, believing Christianity was worthless. While a student at Kellogg College in Michigan, he accepted a challenge by a group of Christian students and professors to intellectually examine the claims of Christianity. During his journey to discredit the resurrection of Christ, Josh discovered compelling historical evidence for the reliability of the Christian faith and became a Christian. Now an internationally known speaker, author, and traveling representative with Campus Crusade for Christ, Josh has authored or co-authored over 90 books, has spoken to students on thousands of campuses around the world, and has touched the lives of more than 10 million young people in 84 countries. For more information about Josh and his ministry, visit www.beyondbelief.com. This article is taken from Josh's commencement address to the 2005 graduating class of Dallas Theological Seminary on May 7, 2005.

those who will be teaching families in your ministry.

The survey I'm quoting from defines born-again church youth as those who say that they personally have trusted Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord and that if they were to die today, they would go to heaven because Jesus is their Saviour and has forgiven them of their sins. In 1991, 52 percent of these young people agreed with the statement that there is no such thing as absolute truth. In 1994, that number jumped to 62 percent, and in 1999 it escalated to 78 percent of self-described born-again church young people.

Right now this figure is the most staggering statistic in the history of the church, with an amazing 91 percent of professed born-again, church-attending youth saying there is no absolute truth. Sixty-five percent of these same young people also say that we cannot know whether any religion is true or not, including Christianity. And today, fewer than 4 percent of these youth agree that the Bible is the infallible Word of God and true in every situation.

Statistics like these reveal that our young people's behavior is out of sync with what they have been taught to believe. As people who are committed to teaching the truth and who have had the benefit of one of the finest seminary educations in all the world, you need to know where the church is today so you can do something about this slippage in

OUR BELIEFS
ARE
ENGENDERED
BY OUR
RELATIONSHIPS.

the commitment to truth on the part of our young people.

Our Relationships Drive Our Beliefs

Our behavior is driven by our values, and our values are formed by our beliefs. But for nine years I had been struggling day and night with the question, What engenders our beliefs?

About 11 months ago the light came on, and it wasn't what I had anticipated. What I discovered is that our beliefs are engendered by our relationships. Let me show you how this works.

In Psalm 86, David wrote, "Teach me your way, O LORD, and I will walk in your truth" (v. 11). Isn't that what you as graduates want, to be able to take everything you have learned here and to teach people so that they might live according to the truth? Do you know what the key to that is? In verse 13 David said, "For great is your love toward me."

John 1:14 says of Jesus, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." And then John said that Jesus was "full of grace and truth." Grace is God's unfailing love. It's speaking of relationships. Three verses later the Bible says, "Grace [unfailing love] and truth came through Jesus Christ" (v. 17). Paul emphasized in Ephesians 4:15 that we are to speak the truth. This is what you have been trained to do, and no one can say they have been better trained to do that. But how do you do it? Paul said it right there in Ephesians. You must teach "in love." Beliefs are engendered by relationships.

We Are Hard-Wired to Relate to Others!

Dartmouth University Medical School released a study called "Hard-Wired to Connect," in which it was reported that all scientific research now shows that

from the moment a child is born, that baby's brain is biologically "hard-wired" to connect in relationships. Here are two conclusions the study drew from this evidence that are very relevant to us as Christians today.

First, you must develop loving, intimate relationships with anyone to whom you hope to impart information in a way that it will impact that person's life. Second, you need to model the truth you want to see ingrained in another person's life. You future parents and grandparents, please hear me. What this means is that you may be able to

**YOU NEED TO
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PERSON'S LIFE.**

expound and exposit truth to your children, but unless your children know deep down in their heart that you love them, they may very well walk away from the truth.

Jesus said in the Upper Room after washing the disciples' feet, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you" (John 13:15). Paul said, "Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you" (Philippians 3:17). In 1 Corinthians 11:1, he said, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." The study from Dartmouth confirms what the Bible has been teaching for more than 2,000 years. Beliefs must be taught in the context of relationships if we want our own children and the people we teach to follow Christ.

After the tragic shootings at Columbine High School in Colorado, the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse wanted to find out how family structure influences a child who is into drugs, alcohol, and violent behavior. What they found is that a child raised in a single-parent home in which the mother is the head of the home is 30 percent more likely to go into drugs, alcohol, and violence.

But listen to this finding. A child raised in a two-parent home who has a fair to poor relationship with his or her father is 68 percent more likely to go into drugs, alcohol, and violence. Now here's the good news. A child raised in a home with both biological parents who has a good to excellent relationship with his or her father is 94 percent *less* likely to ever get into drugs, alcohol, or violence. In other words, it is possible but totally improbable. It is not just the structure of a home, but the *relationships* within the structure of a home that impact children the most.

Johns Hopkins Medical School commissioned a study of 1,377 medical students who graduated from their school over a period of 30 years. The study was seeking a common factor for five major diseases in a person's life. After 30 years of study, the Johns Hopkins researchers found one factor: not diet or exercise, but the lack of closeness to the subject's parents.

I was astounded by that, so I called Johns Hopkins and talked to the people who did the research. They said that stress is a major contributor to disease, and a child raised in a very loving, intimate home environment, especially where there is a very intimate relationship with the father, is able to handle stress so much better.

I was in Phoenix on one occasion speaking at an outdoor high school assembly to about 1,700 students. I had been warned that a group of Gothic students, the ones who dress in all-black clothes and have all the piercings and everything, was going to come and try to break up the meeting, and throw me off campus, as they had done to every other speaker. I stood on top of some huge boulders to hold the students' attention as I spoke and had just started when six Gothics came up and stood there with

menacing looks on their faces. I knew I had to do something, so without the audience knowing it, I switched my talk to speak on intimacy, the capacity to be real with another person.

When I finished speaking, I brought it down to how Christ can help us be real.

I stepped off the boulders, and as soon as my feet hit the grass, the head of this group of Gothic students literally leaped toward me while 1,700 students gasped. He came within six inches of my nose, but what the students didn't see were the tears just rolling down his cheeks. And they didn't hear him respectfully say to me, "Mr. McDowell, would you give me a hug?"

Before I could even lift my hands, he clamped my arms to my side with a tight hug, put his head on my right shoulder, and cried like a baby. He said, "Mr. McDowell, my father never once hugged me or told me that he loved me." All this young man wanted was the love of his father.

Molding Our Children Through Relationships

My wife, Dottie, and I have raised four children. I found that I could mold them like clay in the hands of a potter in terms of imparting truth and impacting their moral behavior as long as they could answer yes to three questions without hesitating. Those times when they hesitated or said no, trying to mold them was a tough job.

Here are the three questions: "Do you know that I love you?" "Do you know that I love your mother?" "When you get married and have a family, do you want you and your spouse to have the kind of relationship I have with your mother and with you kids?" When my children could say yes to these questions, shaping them was like working with soft clay. Relationships lead our

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children to accept the truth that we live out and teach to them.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13, “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal” (v. 1). If I can speak truth to my child but do not have love, all of my teaching sounds to my child’s ears like meaningless noise.

I learned this lesson one day in my study. I was being pressured by a deadline for a book when my then two-year-old son walked in and said, “Daddy.”

Before he could say anything else, I said, “Son, I’m busy right now. I’ll talk to you at dinner.” He turned around and walked out, and I went on studying.

In about 30 seconds, Dottie came into my study, and I made one of the biggest mistakes of my life. I said, “Honey, not now. I’m busy.”

That was not the right thing to say! She walked over to my desk, put her hands down on top of all of my papers, pointed her finger at me, and said, “Honey, you are a five-ring circus. You are always going to have a talk to prepare and somewhere to go to give it, but you won’t always have a two-year-old son who wants to sit on his daddy’s lap and ask questions.” Then she turned and walked out.

Within about three minutes, I found myself on my knees at my desk, making a pledge before God that I try to honor to this day. I have broken it many times, but I said, “God, from this moment on I will never, ever put my ministry before my wife or my children.” On my knees that day in my study, God showed me something that has been a salvation to me in my ministry. He showed me that my family *is* my first ministry.

I want my associates to be those who encourage not only my walk with Jesus

but also my walk with Dottie and our children: Kelly, Sean, Katy, and Heather. Because if my children see the unfailing love of God being lived out in my life, they will walk according to the truth. If you go out to win the whole world yet lose your family, the entire body of Christ will suffer. But I want to encourage you with this: As you go out and teach the truth to others, teach them how to live it, and they will walk in the truth. ■

Author’s note for parents who have done things rightly and still have children who rebel: Each one of us needs to be aware that there is no guarantee in parenting. You can be the most loving, godly, relational, sensitive, knowledgeable

parent in the whole world, and there is still no guarantee that your child won’t turn away from you, look you in the eye and say, “I hate you,” get pregnant, become addicted to drugs, or end up in prison. There is no guarantee. But for a parent to build a loving, intimate relationship with their child and have that child turn away is the exception, not the rule.

—Josh McDowell

—Taken from *Veritas*

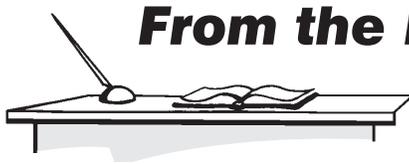
AS YOU TEACH
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TRUTH.

DAVID LLOYD-JONES . . . cont’d.

a great sense of humor. God had worked mightily in his life. He did not speak much about what God had done within him but it was evident by his life that God had transformed his heart from the works of the flesh to the fruit of God’s Spirit. He did much to influence Great Britain for the truth.

He died peacefully at home on March 1, 1981, after a battle with cancer. He was buried in the cemetery of his wife’s family in Newcastle Emlyn, Wales.

—Gail L. Emerson



From the Editor's Desk

Paul M. Emerson

Special Issue Editions

With the blessing of the *Sword and Trumpet* board we have tried something different over the past four editions by devoting an entire issue to a subject of extreme urgency to the church today. This is the fifth in the series and concludes this set of emphases. In an earlier editorial, we called these “the big five,” by which we meant that in our view, these are the biggest issues the church faces today. It is not because they are the biggest issues of all time, but rather these are the ones that reveal the erosion of Biblical positions at the present time. Our enemy does not always attack from the same direction, but rather presses the battle in different ways and against different issues as time goes on.

This edition concerns the issue of counseling. In recent days counseling has become a very stormy subject among Anabaptists. Some would oppose all counseling, believing that Christians in dependence upon the Holy Spirit should keep a “stiff upper lip” and live above personal and relational struggles. At the opposite extreme, there are those who feel they must emote over every-

thing and thus involve themselves in all sorts of introspective psychobabble. The Bible calls true Christians to full transparency. Through the Apostle Paul we are urged to openness and the admission of brokenness. We are commanded to walk with one another, support one another, and share deeply with one another. The counsel we give and receive is to be Biblical. That is, the Bible is God’s instrument through which the Holy Spirit speaks into lives. We strongly believe in the sufficiency of Scripture.

We question the wisdom of depending upon the wisdom of the world (which is at best distorted) to provide healing for the inner man. It is true that the world has learned a lot through observation about how we humans function, but that should never be compared to the perfect wisdom that is from above.

We submit this collection of articles to stimulate thinking toward Biblical counsel. Our desire is not to be unduly critical of others, but rather to point the way to full peace in the Saviour and with one another. ■

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



A Devotional Commentary



by David L. Burkholder

OCTOBER 2, 2005

***Stephen: Faithful Christian
Martyr***

Acts 6:8-15; 7:54-60

Our study in the Book of Acts continues. We have moved through the formation and initial growth of the church and are now about to see it enter a period of outward expansion. Today's lesson introduces us to the first Christian martyr and the price many subsequent witnesses paid for their stand on the gospel of Christ. It will help to read from the close of last Sunday's lesson (4:31) through Chapter 7.

Our introduction to Stephen comes in the first part of Chapter 6. He was one of seven deacons chosen to assume responsibility for the daily disbursement of material aid to those in need in the young fellowship. (See also 4:35.) Stephen was a man of outstanding Christian character and ability. (See 6:3, 5, and 8.) He was the first miracle worker outside of the apostles (v. 8).

Stephen's ministry brought him into conflict with a group of foreign Jews who engaged him in debate. It is of interest to note that the synagogue of Cilicia may have included a young man by the name of Saul of Tarsus. (See 7:58; 8:1.) When these men were not able to convince Stephen with their arguments they bribed men to bring false witness against him, charging him with blasphemy against the Temple and the Law, both

held in sacred regard by all Jews. They stirred the people to mob spirit and dragged Stephen before the Sanhedrin with their charges.

It is always true that when men close their eyes to truth they must use false or twisted accusations to achieve their purposes. Such was the case here. The gospel message did indeed supersede the Law of Moses, and the Temple was no longer the repository of God's presence. Their charges simply reflect their unwillingness, as was the case with many others, to accept the new path to God's presence through the door of Jesus Christ and His propitiatory work on the cross.

Stephen's face shone with heavenly glory as he began his defense to the Council. Note how he carefully outlined the history of the Jewish people, highlighting prominent individuals: Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, all who pointed in some way to the Messiah. Then Stephen lowered the boom, charging his hearers with resisting the Holy Spirit, failure to keep the Law, and complicity in the death of Jesus, the Messiah.

This was too much for these pious guardians of the status quo. They gnashed their teeth in their displeasure and refused to yield to the conviction brought upon them by Stephen's charge.

Stephen sealed his fate when he gave testimony of a glimpse into heaven and a view of Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father. With one accord they rushed him out of the city and stoned him

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SWORD AND TRUMPET

to death. Stephen was dead. But one of the witnesses soon became a firebrand for Christ, likely at least in part through the experience of witnessing the death of this first Christian martyr. Stephen's death, though tragic, was certainly not in vain.

For thought and discussion

1. Review the situation which brought Stephen to the fore. What was significant about his appointment?
2. What motivates and sustains a person in Stephen's circumstance. Do you, do I, have the strength and ability to withstand accusers as he did? and the willingness to die rather than compromise? It's something to think about.
3. Why do people go to such lengths to deny the truth and destroy those who stand for it? There is a reason. Think it through.
4. Was there some significance to Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father?
5. You have heard it said that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." How is this true? Explain.

OCTOBER 9, 2005

The Gospel to Samaria

Acts 8:4-17

In today's lesson we encounter another of the seven deacons, and witness also another forward step in the advancement of the gospel. Notice in verse one what prompted this expansion. It was persecution. Persecution did not halt the sharing of the gospel—it simply caused the message to be spread into regions beyond Jerusalem. (See Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8.) The church had begun her mission, but it was under the duress of persecution that the believers went out sharing the message of salvation through Christ.

As a result of this scattering, Philip went to Samaria and boldly preached the message of salvation. Philip's message,

though from a Jew to Samaritans, was widely accepted. And his spoken word was confirmed by miracles of healing. The result was "great joy in that city." Barriers of race and animosity were broken down through the leveling message of the cross. Jew and Samaritan became one in the body of Christ.

But wherever the true message is preached there is also often a counterfeit. In Samaria it was Simon. Simon had promoted himself as some great person through the bewitching power of sorcery. The people were taken in by Simon's power and actually attributed his deeds to the power of God.

However, when they heard Philip's message they turned from sorcery to the true God and were baptized into their new faith. They had heard and seen the true power of God at work and turned to it in repentance. Simon the sorcerer also believed and was baptized, accompanying Philip and marveling at the miracles which he performed. (One has to wonder, however, just how genuine his conversion was in light of what follows in verses 18-24.)

The reaction of the apostles in Jerusalem, when they heard that Samaritans had come to faith, was favorable. Which proves that in Christ all barriers are broken down—even longstanding ones such as the animosity between the Jews and Samaritans. However, they did send Peter and John to check out this new happening.

The experience spoken to in verses 15-17 would seem to indicate a special blessing or endowment of the Spirit for special ministry rather than the initial infilling which comes with conversion. Certainly Philip's ministry was not deficient in explaining the steps to salvation and the need and results of baptism. This special anointing was no doubt to give evidence of the inner change and to empower these new believers to carry on the ministry of preaching and healing after Philip's departure. For, as we shall see in our next

lesson, God had other work for Philip.

Note in verse 25 what the apostles did as they returned to Jerusalem.

For thought and discussion

1. Study the effect persecution has had on the church, from its beginning to today. When does the church experience its greatest growth?
2. Verse five tells us some important things. Search them out.
3. How much of a danger is sorcery in our day? Have you seen examples of it defying true religion?
4. Notice how the gospel went from Jew to Samaritan to Gentile (October 23 lesson). As the message spread, it destroyed barriers of race, nationality, and social status. We dare never forget the universality of the gospel message.
5. We believe that a person receives the Holy Spirit at the time of conversion. Does He also still anoint and enable believers for special tasks? Maybe you would want to discuss this in your class.

OCTOBER 16, 2005

Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

Acts 8:26-40

Our lesson text today continues the ministry of Philip and portrays yet another step in the forward march of the gospel. Philip was engaged in a rousing evangelistic campaign in Samaria. Many were coming to faith in Christ. The power of God's Spirit was manifest in many ways—healings, conversions, exorcisms. In the midst of this dramatic spiritual quickening, God called Philip away to what might seem to some a lesser ministry. But nothing in which God's leading is evident should be considered of lesser consequence.

That Philip obeyed, unhesitatingly, speaks well of his character and commit-

ment. He arose and went some 50 miles south to the desert road and again, at the prompting of the Spirit, obeyed, and approached the Ethiopian's chariot. There he found a seeker in the truest sense of the word, a man whose heart God had prepared for the message Philip was prepared to deliver.

Little is known of this dark-skinned official of the Queen of Ethiopian's empire. Was he a full proselyte to Judaism (somewhat doubtful), or simply a God-fearing proponent of the Jewish religion? (See Acts 10:22.) We don't know. What we do know is that he had been to Jerusalem to worship and was passing the time on his way home reading aloud from the scriptures.

The Ethiopian's reading was at a God-ordained juncture, one which made it easy for Philip to "open his mouth and preach unto him Jesus." The Ethiopian was perplexed as he read Isaiah (Chapter 53), and he was curious to know of whom the prophet was writing. Was the prophet expecting these experiences for himself, or was it referring to someone else? He begged for help in understanding. And Philip was ready with a satisfying response.

It's obvious that we don't have all of Philip's teaching recorded, nor how long the conversation went on. However, as light dawned upon this seeking soul, the Ethiopian came to the point where he was ready to embrace the full message of Christ and pledge himself to His cause. He saw a body of water, and he asked for baptism to seal his commitment.

Following this expression of genuine repentance, the Ethiopian went on his way, rejoicing in his newfound faith, and undoubtedly reading the Scripture with new understanding. We can only speculate as to the effect his testimony had as he returned home to his duties as treasurer of Ethiopia. Certainly he was in a position where his Christian influence could reach out and touch many of his countrymen.

Philip's ministry to the Ethiopian was finished, but his work for the Lord was not done. The Spirit caught him away and deposited him at Azotus, some 20 miles from Gaza. From there Philip preached his way north 50 miles to Caesarea.

For thought and discussion

1. Philip could have argued with God that he was doing a great work in Samaria and it would be detrimental for him to leave at this point. But he didn't. Think through the deep implications of obedience to God's promptings and the often unexpected results.
2. Take special note to the new southward direction the gospel message took in today's lesson. Further affirmation of its universality, bridging race, nationality, social status, and geography.
3. This lesson emphasizes the need for qualified and equipped teachers of the Scripture. Are you preparing yourself to be so used?
4. Opportunities for witness are often found in unexpected places or situations. Discuss some ways we can turn various situations into opportunities to witness.
5. This lesson teaches us that God honors the truly seeking soul, and uses obedient followers in His program. Are you willing to be a Philip?

OCTOBER 23, 2005

The Gospel to the Gentiles

Acts 10:1-20

Here in Acts 10 we have portrayed the awakening of the church to the universality of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Though difficult at first to comprehend, the Jewish Christians came to realize that the "whosoever" of Jesus' statement to Nicodemus in John 3:16 included men of all races and nations—even Gentiles. Read from 10:1 through 11:18 for the full story.

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Cornelius was a God-fearing man, but even though he exhibited many Christian qualities, he was not saved. (See 11:13, 14.) But his devotion to God and interest for others fitted him to become the forerunner of a new segment of believers in the emerging church—the Gentiles. To this point the message of salvation had been preached primarily to Jews and Jewish proselytes, as well as to the Samaritans (October 9 lesson). Now a new era was dawning in the ever-broadening outreach of the gospel, one that was to have even more far-reaching implications.

One day while at prayer (v. 3), the centurion Cornelius had an angelic visitation. He lost no time in following the instructions he had received to obtain further help in his spiritual quest. He immediately sent trusted servants and a devout soldier to Joppa to find the man Peter, whom the angel said would guide him into fuller understanding of spiritual things.

Meanwhile, Peter himself was going through an eye-opening and heart-changing experience. While waiting for lunch to be prepared, he went to the housetop to pray. He also was treated to a vision, in his case to break down a long-standing prejudice against those thought outside of God's favor.

As a Jew, Peter would have been very careful to maintain the restrictions of Moses' Law. So, when confronted with a mixed horde of animal life and commanded to "kill, and eat," Peter was aghast. "Not so. Never!" The vision was repeated three times with the concluding statement, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common."

This experience caused Peter to do some deep thinking (v. 19). What did it all mean? Though not comprehending, Peter was obedient and willing to follow instructions, one step at a time. The Holy Spirit told him to go with the men who were at the door seeking him. He also gave him the assurance of His presence and blessing (v. 20).

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As we read on through the account, we see how Peter's obedience led step by step to fuller understanding, both of the vision, and of God's purposes. It is certainly to Peter's credit that he didn't allow his prejudices to get in the way of God's working. As events unfolded there in the house of Cornelius, Peter witnessed a demonstration of God's power and accepted it for what it was.

With the witness of the Holy Spirit and the phenomenon of tongues Peter came to the clear realization, as did his fellow Jewish believers, that "God hath also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (11:18). A new door was opened. A new era began. The gospel was now being made available to Gentiles.

For thought and discussion

1. What attributes of character in Cornelius' life qualified him for special attention?
2. This lesson should lay to rest the idea that good works can get one into the kingdom of heaven. What is the means to salvation?
3. Change is usually difficult, at least for most of us. What are some guidelines we should use to evaluate potential change? Discuss with your class.
4. Does prejudice still rear its ugly head in Christendom today? What steps should we take to overcome it?
5. Obedience plays a key role in this story. Be sure to examine its ramifications. There are many.

OCTOBER 30, 2005

Peter Delivered From Prison

Acts 12:1-16

Persecution was building against the church. To this point it had come from Jewish leaders and their disciples (8:3; 9:1, 2). However, here in Chapter 12, King Herod got into the act, in a move to ingratiate himself with the Jewish leadership. He was a cruel man from a cruel

family and played events to his political advantage. Noting the animosity of the Jewish leaders to this new countermovement to the established religion, he set about to put himself in their good graces by attacking the leadership of the church (verses 1-3).

Herod had James beheaded and when he saw how it pleased the Jews, he grabbed Peter, intending to deal him the same fate. However, in deference to the Passover, he threw him into prison under heavy guard until the feast and days of unleavened bread were over. Peter was guarded around the clock by a squad of four soldiers—chained to two, with two standing guard at the door of the cell.

Things looked bleak for the young church. One of her leaders had been killed, another imprisoned. This brought the group to earnest and constant prayer. What would become of them if God did not intervene? Who would be next? They were troubled and so turned to God, their only source of strength and courage.

At night, while the church was at prayer, Peter had a heavenly visitor in his jail cell. Imagine his surprise to be awakened to a bright light and the presence of God's delivering angel. Peter had likely met this angel before (see Acts 5), but his appearance startled him. Nevertheless, he obeyed the angel's commands, got up, dressed, put on his sandals, and followed the angel through the open door, past the unseeing guards, to the main gate which swung open to allow their exit.

Once the angel had done for Peter what he could not do for himself, he departed, leaving Peter on his own. When Peter came to his senses he realized what had happened. It was not a dream; it was a reality. The next move was up to him.

That Peter knew just where to go may well suggest that the house of Mary, mother of John Mark, served as headquarters for the group of believers. Here a prayer meeting was in progress, though it must have been late at night. What was the gathered group of believers praying

for? One wonders, in light of their disbelief of Rhoda and their surprise at seeing Peter free.

After rehearsing his deliverance (v. 17), Peter left, likely to go into hiding until the furor over his escape had subsided. (Read verses 18 and 19 in this regard.) It is of interest to note the concluding events of this chapter. King Herod met an ignominious end, but the “word of God” which he fought against by attacking its leaders, “grew and multiplied.”

For thought and discussion

1. There are a number of lessons to be learned from today’s text: God’s protecting care of His church; God’s sover-

eign power; the efficacy of prayer; the need for faith; man’s cruelty. Be sure to see how they relate to today’s lesson.

2. What motivates man’s cruelty? Discuss your answers.
3. What was the church praying for—Peter’s release, or . . . ? What do you think are some possibilities?
4. Are angels still at work on man’s behalf? Have you encountered an angel? Perhaps your class could share experiences. (See Psalm 34:7.)
5. Do we at times fail to see the hand of God at work in today’s world, preserving His people, protecting His church? How can we be more alert to His sovereignty? ■

Newslines . . .

by Rebecca Good

incidents events occurrences facts illustrations episodes committees vignettes proceedings problems
experiences crises adventures transactions meetings tragedies scoops reports conferences happenings
bulletins questions reports affairs dramas encounters personages actions tidings et cetera

Be Happy

Joel Osteen is pastor of Lakewood Community Church in Houston, reportedly the largest church in the U.S., with 30,000 attendees. Besides this, millions watch “the smiling preacher” on television. Osteen also has a book on the *New York Times* bestseller list: *Your Best Life Now: Seven Steps to Living at Your Full Potential* (Warner Faith), which tells the reader how to achieve the success that

he has attained.

Osteen believes that no Christian should be content with a mediocre life. You should visualize your desires and eliminate negative thoughts; then good things will start coming your way. You should desire the sort of mansion the Osteens live in (his example). You should expect others to go out of their way to help you, then they will. Forgive, let go of the past, and move on. Reach out to others and bless them with help,

encouragement, and money. Giving money is especially a sign of trust in God. If we help ourselves, God will help us.

The book is full of good advice that will undoubtedly help people to live better. But it is not the gospel of grace in which God acts in spite of us. Traditional Christian theology teaches that God comes to us in Christ when we are without merit, without ability to please God, and without reason to think we can be saved or helped. Osteen's is the gospel of "ifs." If we do our part and act positively, God will bless us with everything we want. God will reward us if we get our act together.

Osteen pays little attention to humans' vast capacity for self-deception regarding their desires.

On another facet, Osteen appears as an unreflective exemplar of temptations all ministers face. He tends to water the Scriptures down to vague religiosity and self-improvement. His perpetual smile reminds one of the temptation to rely on charm, a positive attitude, or a desire to please others rather than the hard truth of the scripture.

Yes, the gospel does promise our "best life now," but that life is patterned after Jesus' life, which always includes a cross and unexpected resurrection.

—from *The Christian Century*

Mere Christianity

Evangelical historian Mark Noll and freelance writer Carolyn Nystrom have written a new book called *Is the Reformation Over? An Evangelical Assessment of Contemporary Roman Catholicism* (Baker Academic). The work discusses the present-day relationship between Catholicism and Protestantism.

Fifty years ago, observers would have been shocked by the mutual respect Catholics and Protestants enjoy today. In 1960, when Catholic John Kennedy was running for president, he tried to distance himself from the Catholic

church. As Gary Bauer put it in 2004, "When John F. Kennedy made his famous speech that the Vatican would not tell him what to do, evangelicals and Southern Baptists breathed a sigh of relief. But today evangelicals and Southern Baptists are hoping that the Vatican *will* tell Catholic politicians what to do." Also in 2004, evangelicals gave a higher approval rating to Pope John Paul II than to Jerry Falwell or Pat Robertson. That same year, a Catholic reviewer said of Luther that he simply could not "have foreseen that the Church of Rome would some four centuries later, at Vatican Council II, adopt many of the reforms that he championed."

Vatican II was certainly the most important event in this change of attitude. Since then, there have been other steps to bridge the chasm between Protestants and Catholics, including *Evangelicals and Catholics Together*.

Noll and Nystrom present a unique view of the differing branches of Christianity: each branch, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Greek Orthodoxy represent a different "language family." "What we see today may be described as an incarnation of Christ in Catholic form and an incarnation of Christ in evangelical form. Since there is only one Christ, these incarnations are pulled toward each other. Since they constitute different cultures, different traditions, and different languages, the incarnations retain the differences characteristic of cultures, traditions, and languages."

For those concerned that ecumenism leads to watered-down doctrine, Noll and Nystrom argue that today's ecumenism is not shallow compromise, but a desire to more fully know the truth. In 1964, Billy Graham said that he felt "much closer to Roman Catholic tradition than to some of the more liberal Protestants." Is the Reformation over? It will be interesting to observe in coming years if these two Christian

branches will grow even closer to one another. —from *National Review*

All We Need

“Liturgical is not enough, sacramental is not enough, Catholic is not enough, and Orthodox is not enough. Only Jesus is enough.”

—Quote by Sam Torode in *Christianity Today*

More Overworked

According to the Families and Works Institute, in 2001, 28% of Americans said they were overworked. In 2004, 44% of Americans admitted the same.

—from *TIME*

Male Altruism

Competent, capable masculinity has long been defined by three things: fatherhood, providing for a wife and children, and protecting the family and estate. Marriage serves as the ideal entry-point into this realm of masculine adulthood, because marriage confers powerful social expectations on men. Society expects married men to be responsible, generous, faithful, and engaged in civic life. They are expected to achieve, to help others, and to keep their promises.

—from *The Washington Times*

Law Vs. Grace

“When I was still teaching at Goshen College, the dean of students reported that some students disliked being called into his office to discuss the spiritual and moral significance of their infraction of some college rule—smoking or alcohol use on campus, for example. ‘Can’t you just tell us what the penalty is for the first, second, and third violations?’ they asked. They had internalized well our American society’s mental-

ity, so that when the office of student affairs wanted to deal with them in a Christian way, the way of achieving righteousness through grace, they preferred the way of the law.”

—Quote by Marlin Jeschke in *Christianity Today*

What Is Radical Orthodoxy?

Radical Orthodoxy (RO) is a huge theological project that aims to change the way Christians think about modern, secular society. The subject is far too complicated to describe here, but a new book by James K. A. Smith called *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, seeks to explain what the movement is all about. Here is a quote from Smith: “RO is advocating a distinctly theological engagement with the world—and the academy that investigates this world—undergirded by the belief that the way to engage the contemporary world is not by trying to demonstrate a correlation between the gospel and cultural values but rather by letting the gospel confront these [apostate] values. . . . The true *telos* [goal] of the RO project is not simply a theology but a comprehensive Christian account of every aspect of the world—a properly and radically Christian account of social relationships, economic organization, political formation, aesthetic expression, and so on, engendering a radically Christian sociology, a radically Christian economics, and so forth. . . . Because of this conviction, RO had (in)famously eschewed ‘dialogue’ with secular disciplines. Unlike correlationist strategies that defer the ‘truth’ of the natural sphere to secular sciences . . . RO claims that there is not a single aspect of human existence or creation that can be properly understood or described apart from the insights of revelation.”

—Quote by James K. A. Smith in *Christianity Today*

Off and Running With Self-Esteem

by Jim Owen

If ever there was a word that could cast a spell of enchantment over the eyes of the evangelical community, *self-esteem* is that word. And cast a spell it has. Perhaps it was inevitable, considering “Christian” psychology’s preoccupation with pathological man. The result is that preoccupation with self-esteem has become the norm for far too many Christians—a condition that is less than inspiring. So let us focus for a bit on the Christian and his or her self-esteem.

However, before I begin my analysis, let me take a few paragraphs to make sure we both understand the situation. I want to be careful here; I don’t want to beat the air or box with shadows.

First, most Christian psychologists are one with most secular psychologists in embracing the idea that a person’s opinion of himself—that is, his level of self-esteem or self-worth or self-love—determines how well that person will function and what kind of contribution he or she will make in life.

Second, most Christian psychologists accept, as do most secular psychologists, the premise that low self-esteem is the cause of most human behavioral problems. The state of California appointed a commission that spent \$735,000 unsuccessfully trying to verify this very thing. Is one sexually promiscuous, abusive, abused, codependent, taking drugs, pushing drugs, having marriage problems, or just feeling generally inferior? You name it and low self-esteem will claim it.¹

Third, “Christian” psychology agrees with secular psychology’s unproven assumptions that practically everyone suffers from low self-esteem. Parents, other family members, strangers, society as a whole, and the world in general all supposedly contribute to robbing us of a

proper sense of self-worth. I remember a comic strip in which one cartoon character blamed his ill treatment of another character on a “victimization disorder” caused by his pet dog beating him up.

Self-Worth Invades the Church

Magazines and newspapers, TV and radio programs, seminars and books without number drum this so-called truth into our minds—including, now, the Christian media and publishers. Self-worth is one of the most potent humanistic ideas to invade the church in this century. It is one of the most serious challenges to the Scriptures in recent memory. Of all the areas in which Scripture can be wrongly used, supporting self-esteem is near the top of the list.

A few years ago, I was attempting to recruit students for college outreach ministries. Some students excused themselves by saying they didn’t yet love themselves the way they needed to. If they didn’t love themselves the way they ought to, they wondered how could they love others in obedience to the biblical command.

Where on earth did they get such an outlandish interpretation of the second commandment? I soon discovered they learned it from a Christian psychologist who was teaching the general education psychology course. Using Matthew 22:39 (“love your neighbor as yourself”), he had convinced many students that Christ was commanding us to love ourselves before we could love our neighbor.

The wonder is that just such an interpretation, founded on horrible exegesis, is being enthusiastically embraced by a growing segment of the evangelical church. This ought to cause alarm bells to sound all over. Unfortunately, in too many cases, there is only silence.

It makes me wonder: will an authoritative Scripture, properly exegeted, continue to mean anything to evangelicals? If so, we must take a close and critical look at this teaching on self-love. Is it scriptural? Let's begin with Matthew 22:39 and work to a conclusion from there.

How Are We to Love Ourselves?

Matthew 22:39 reads, "And the second is like the first [commandment]: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" It sounds straightforward, doesn't it? We needn't spend much time deciding whether Christ is instructing us to love ourselves first. If He wanted to make that the main thrust of this commandment, He could have made it clear. I can imagine Him saying something like, "You need to love yourself, and when you have learned to do that, then love your neighbor in the same way." But He didn't!

What He said was, "Love your neighbor as yourself." The Lord knew that self-love already exists in generous amounts. The fact that Christ compares it to the First Commandment, the thrust of the sentence itself (our neighbor's need), and the use of the verb *agapao* (which speaks of other-directed love) all mitigate against the idea that Christ is telling us to learn to love ourselves first.² To interpret Christ's commandment to love others as a command to love ourselves is to openly ignore the intent of God's Word.³

In one of his latest books, *Healing Grace*, David Seamands is willing to concede that "it is technically true to say that we are not actually commanded in these Scriptures to love ourselves." But then he claims Scripture assumes we have a healthy self-love, a proper sense of self-worth, and thus are able to respond to Christ's command in an appropriate way.⁴

Unfortunately, psychology says, we all know that most people have a very poor self-image and some even hate them-

selves. These folks need to learn to love themselves before they can biblically love others (and, one assumes, God).

What an interesting bit of maneuvering! The reasoning goes something like this: we can't give what we don't have. If one doesn't appreciate one's own worth and significance, then one cannot give to others the love they need to make them feel worthwhile and significant. If one is "dysfunctional" because of a low self-esteem, how can one help another who is also "dysfunctional" for the same reason? Thus the need to love ourselves.

The material flowing from the pens of Christian psychologists in this regard is voluminous. It might be profitable, then, to review one of these apologies for self-love in order to clearly grasp the implications of integrating it with Scripture. Is learning to love ourselves a biblical mandate?

Psychologist Raymond Chester believes it is and he has written a self-study booklet, *Do I Really Have Value? A Study in Self-Love*, to help us come to the same conclusion.⁵ Dr. Chester's booklet is typical of the material "Christian" psychology is publishing on self-love. It does have the wonderful advantage of being brief.

Most Christians, Chester believes, consider anything smacking of self to be a sin. He disagrees. He believes an appropriate self-love appreciates the value one has because one is made in God's image. (This is often called our "created value.") Self-esteem results from our recognition of this fact and is rooted in God's love for us.

Dr. Chester also believes "few Christians know how to biblically love themselves," because most believers don't know who they are. This limits their ability to understand who others are and hampers them from truly loving others and ministering to them properly.⁶ The booklet was written to help answer the question, "Who am I?" and from the answer discover a positive (and biblical)

sense of self-worth. Then, presumably, the reader will be able to help others discover their biblical value. But, the Bible never centers on self-understanding of one's worth as a prerequisite for loving others in obedience to Christ's command. Rather, Christ predicates our obedience on our love for Him and an appreciation of how much He loves us (John 13:34 and 14:15).

Using a series of fill-in exercises, combined with encouraging evaluations drawn from what Dr. Chester sees as self-value-enhancing verses, the participant is guided into discovering his identity and true worth. The last exercise is to be "an affirmation statement of 'who I am,' " in light of God's true view of me.

Dr. Chester hopes that we have all "been a part of helping someone else discover that they too have self-worth—and not because of you or me, but because of Christ . . . How much more worth could anyone want . . . *I am*," Dr. Chester boldly proclaims, "*because He is!*"⁷ (Emphasis his.)

Interestingly, Dr. Chester also includes in his booklet—verbatim—a short essay "from a secular source." The essay is titled "My Declaration of Self-Esteem" and is written by Virginia Satir, a secular humanist.⁸ Let me summarize it, for while I find it a fascinating statement on human self-love, I am shocked that it should be integrated into a Christian study on self-worth supposedly grounded in Scripture.

Satir's essay is an exercise in self-exaltation. She owns herself and "everything about me," as she puts it. Whatever she says, thinks, does, or feels at any moment is the authentic Virginia. If she finds something unfitting or unbecoming in who she is, she believes she can discard it and "invent something new for that which [she] discarded." Supremely self-confident concerning her identity and her abilities to negotiate the highs and lows of being human,

Satir concludes by writing, "I own me, and therefore I can engineer me. I am me, and I am okay."

At the conclusion of this essay, Dr. Chester encourages us to:

. . . prayerfully integrate this knowledge of who you are into your everyday life (work, home, play, etc.). As a person of worth and quality you can truly "do everything . . . heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men" (Colossians 3:23).⁹

Considering the nature of Satir's essay, this is an odd request—one I want to return to shortly. But first let us turn to the Scriptures.

The Bible and Self-Esteem

Despite "Christian" psychology's insistence that we must learn to love ourselves, it is difficult, when one considers the biblical depiction of man-the-sinner, to discover someone who doesn't already love himself excessively. For example, Psalm 10 describes man as arrogant, boastful, haughty, and pleased with himself. In reading Romans 1:18-32, one gets the overwhelming impression of a race of beings bursting with self-love and self-worth.

The same picture emerges in 2 Timothy 3:1-5. In that passage Paul warns of what people will be like in the "last days." Among other things, they are described as "lovers of themselves, boastful, proud [and] conceited."

In an unintended way, Dr. Seamands is right. Scripture does assume we love ourselves. But Scripture does not assume (with the exception given in Ephesians 5:28, 29 where a natural desire for physical and mental well-being is normal) that our self-love is appropriate, proper, or God-approved. Scripture assumes we love ourselves because it is the unavoidable expression of our sin nature. By nature we love ourselves above all things, including and especially God.

There is a tragic sorrow in Christ

relating to us the two great commandments, for we cannot obey either one. The reason we cannot obey is not because we do not love ourselves enough, but rather the opposite. We love ourselves too much—so much so that we cannot begin to love another with the same intensity.

Only in Christ are we redeemed from this self-idolatry. For “Christian” psychology to tell us we need to learn to love ourselves properly is to set itself at cross-purposes with what our Lord Jesus teaches. His example of servanthood should encourage us to relinquish our sinful drive to exalt ourselves.

Let’s look at a couple of vignettes from Scripture, which show how God values those who self-consciously hold “appropriate” self-esteem and those who have a “wretched” self-image.

Luke 7:36-50 tells the story of Simon and the sinful woman. Simon was a self-confident man who loved himself so robustly that he had no trouble even putting down Jesus. He felt good about himself. Yet his very self-esteem, based upon his perceived relationship with God, had led him into an insensitivity to his own sinfulness that left him alienated from his Messiah.

The sinful woman, on the other hand, had only a wretched view of herself. She fully realized her sinfulness. Yet she did not come to Christ as one abused and robbed of a proper sense of self-worth. Rather, she came to Christ as one knowing He had come into the world to save sinners, of whom she was among the worst. She came seeking mercy and forgiveness—and she received them. I doubt she left thinking how good she could now feel about herself. Rather, she left with a sense of overwhelming gratitude and a love for Christ that humbled her, that compelled her to become a willing servant and follower.

A similar scenario is presented in Luke 18:9-14. It is the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. The

Pharisee was confident in his relationship with God and exuded a wonderful sense of self-worth. One cannot help thinking the Pharisee believed his relationship with God gave him reason to feel special. Yet this very relational confidence placed him far from God.

On the other hand, like the prostitute, the Tax Collector was devastated by his awareness of what a wretched sinner he was before a holy and righteous God. Knowing well he did not deserve it, he pleaded mercy from God. But I suspect he knew what God had promised in the Scriptures—that He would not despise “a broken and contrite heart” (Psalm 51:17). God, in His unfathomable grace, not only dwelt in “a high and holy place but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and revive the heart of the contrite” (Isaiah 57:15).

People who have truly experienced the richness of God’s undeserved mercy in Christ are not concerned with whether they have “appropriate” self-love. Rather, there flows from their hearts these words: “To God be the glory, great things He has done!”

Great Saints and Self-Esteem

It might also be valuable to reflect on how some of the great saints of the Bible viewed themselves in light of their relationship with God. Did they consciously affirm to themselves an appropriate sense of self-worth because God loved them? Let us see.

Abraham, the friend of God, called himself “nothing but dust and ashes” in the presence of the Lord (Genesis 18:27). Moses, with whom God spoke face to face, begged God to send someone else to lead, because he did not consider himself capable to do so, even with God’s assistance (Exodus 4). God praised Job, but when God confronted him, Job declared, “Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:6). In Psalm 51, David, a man

after God's own heart, pleads for God's forgiveness and restoration of fellowship, admitting that his sin was always before him. Yet he clings to this knowledge: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise" (verse 17). Isaiah, starkly aware of his own sinfulness, could only pronounce his own condemnation when he saw God in all His holiness (Isaiah 6:5).

The Apostle John, a special recipient of Jesus' love among the Twelve, "fell at his feet as though dead" when he saw Jesus in His true ascension glory (Revelation 1:12-17). The Apostle Paul named himself the foremost of sinners who received, not only undeserved grace from the Lord, but a satanic tormentor as well, to make sure he would not become conceited. He consistently spoke of his absolute dependence on Christ's power and grace (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). All his desires and ambitions focused on one thing: "to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his suffering, becoming like him in his death" (Philippians 3:10). To tell himself he could now love himself in Christ seems the furthest thought from his mind.

None of these men seemed concerned about their self-worth. I doubt any of them would have declared with Dr. Chester, "I am because He is!" to justify self-consciously loving themselves. I doubt they would have clamored to participate in his study. Far more important to them were these words of their Lord: "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word" (Isaiah 66:2).

These biblical saints would have little in common with Dr. Chester or a host of present-day Christian psychologists who insist we need to "biblically" love ourselves more. On the other hand, they would have a great deal in common with the father of modern missions, William Carey, who asked that these words be

inscribed upon his tombstone:

William Carey
Born August 17th, 1761
Died June 1834

A wretched, poor and helpless worm,
on Thy kind arms I fall.

This man accomplished tremendous things with his "worm mentality"—all by the grace of God.

Which Direction?

The issue is this: Which direction are we to face? Where are my eyes to rest? Were these Scriptures, now used as a green light for proclaiming self-worth, really given to us for that purpose? Or were they written to rivet our attention on the all-surpassing wonder of God's grace and, at the same time, increase our confidence in His faithfulness, that we might learn to esteem Him above all else and to feel good about Him?

To use such Scriptures—meant to focus us on God's great worth and value, His majesty, awesomeness, omnipotence, and faithfulness, and designed to create in us an uncontainable sense of joy and reverent worship—to focus on me and give myself permission to build up my self-esteem is inappropriate, even ungodly. It is completely against the intent of the Holy Spirit in giving them to us.

What is lacking in all those who insist we have "appropriate" self-love before we can truly obey the second commandment is an understanding of what it means to be a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:16, 17). Only Christ frees us from that natural compulsion to worship ourselves.

As a result of having been made new in Christ through faith in His finished work upon the cross, every believer has the ability to keep this commandment because:

1. God's love is of such a nature that we cannot contain it. "God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom he has given us" (Romans

5:5). John tells us He has lavished His great love upon us (1 John 3:1). It fills up our lives and spills over into the lives of others. I appreciate the way John Piper expresses it: "Love is the overflow of joy in God that gladly meets the needs of others."¹⁰

2. He has taught us both what love is and how we are to express it. (See 1 John 3:16-18; 4:7-11; and Philippians 2:5-8.) He gave His life that we might have life; He traded His kingly crown for a servant's sweatband. He did not worry about His self-esteem, His acceptance by others, His comfort or His influence. He simply served and served right up to the cross and into the tomb. His Father highly exalted Him for doing this.

3. When we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, it is Christ's love that compels us and makes us able to (a) no longer live for ourselves but completely for Him (2 Cor. 5:14, 15); (b) be ambassadors for Him, sharing with the world the good news of the sinner's reconciliation with God through Christ (2 Cor. 5:20); and (c) continue to pay the debt of love we owe all men, "for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law" (Romans 13:8-10).

It is no longer our love as such that we share with our neighbor, but the love that Christ has given us. His love flows from Him into us and out of us to others. Thus, its expression needn't wait for me to develop "appropriate, biblical self-love." Paul reminds us that we hold "this treasure in jars of clay" [a designation we are to glory in], so that all might understand who it is who makes this possible, "to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us" (2 Cor. 4:7).

Loving my neighbor has nothing to do with my self-esteem and everything to do with Christ Jesus our Lord. The second commandment can only be understood in conjunction with the undeserved love God the Father showered

upon us when we were placed into Christ by the Holy Spirit. It can only be practiced by the Christian as he abides in Christ and as Christ and His Word abide in him (John 15:4-7).

Dr. Chester's booklet on self-worth had us study Psalm 139 for the explicit purpose of instilling in us "appropriate" self-love. But was that the intent of the Holy Spirit when He inspired this psalm? This psalm speaks in awesome tones of the omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence of the Lord of Glory. Doesn't it seem strange that we should put such Scripture as this to the task of building our self-esteem?

For fairness' sake, Dr. Chester might have constructed an exercise that asks us why God should hold us so precious. Sin stands between God and me, not ignorance of my created value. God is not obligated to redeem me because He created me. But He has obligated Himself to love me if I am in Christ. Why? Because He said He would.

Why Does God Love Us?

Jesus Christ. Those are the only two words I can think of to explain why God holds me dear. Or, as Paul wrote to the Ephesians:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the one he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding (Ephesians 1:3-8).

In light of these verses, what compels "Christian" psychology to be so concerned with stroking our esteem? Why is

it so preoccupied with self-absorbed propositions?

The question becomes especially pertinent when we consider Dr. Chester's use of the secular "My Declaration of Self-Esteem," a work that merely restates William Henley's 19th-century "Invictus." That famous poem strutted forth a lying courage that every rebel against God would like to claim for himself. Do you recall this verse from it?

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishment the
scroll,
I am the master of my fate;
I am the captain of my soul.

Henley did not consider it necessary to retain a knowledge of God—and neither did the author of "My Declaration of Self-Esteem."

But what has Jerusalem to do with Athens? What has Virginia Satir in common with Jesus Christ? What have the words, "I own me, and therefore I can engineer me. I am me, and I am okay," have in common with the words, "Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body" (1 Cor. 6:19, 20)?

How can believers "prayerfully integrate" Satir's self-exalting fantasy into their everyday life in Christ? Surely "Christian" psychology has lost touch with the head if it believes this is advisable!

A Skewed Focus

There is something bankrupt about an idea that purports to be scripturally grounded yet reinforces itself with such humanistic materials as Satir's essay. The focus on self-esteem by Christian psychologists has little in common with the focus of the cross. Are believers so spiritually deprived and disappointed by being crucified with Christ, for having died and finding their lives now hidden

with Christ in God (Col. 3:3), that they must scamper about from mirror to mirror until they find just the right one to tell them they can "biblically" love themselves? If so, perhaps we ought "to be pitied more than all men" after all.

Is this "integration with Scripture" an example of how we are to apply the "discovered" truths of behavioral science? There is little to admire in any of this, and even less to praise.

Not too long ago, a friend of mine, a children's pastor, reported an interesting event that took place at his church's winter retreat for juniors. On the last night of the retreat the speaker asked the children to think of one thing that would allow them to feel good about themselves. After consulting with their counselors (knowing perhaps it would be un-Christian to say "because I am handsome" or "smart" or some such thing), they decided they could feel good about themselves because of John 3:16.

My friend was elated with their choices. But my response was to blurt out, "But that doesn't make any sense!" Had the speaker asked the children why they could have good feelings as believers, I would have had no objections. Believers can certainly feel good because God loves them and sent His Son to die for their sins. They ought to experience joy and peace. They ought to be even more overwhelmed with gratitude toward God, deep feelings of love, and thankfulness.

But both of these "feelings" are a continent apart from saying I feel good about myself because God sent His Son to die on the cross on my behalf—an act of love I did not deserve. The point of John 3:16 is **not** about **my** value, but about God's amazing love, that God is rich in mercy toward those who love darkness.

The Parable of Heathen

Let me relate a parable. Once there were two neighbors. One was surly,

boastful, hateful, immoral, and unceasingly self-centered. Let us call him Heathen. The other was kind, humble, God-fearing, and always thoughtful toward others. Christian is his name. Because Heathen was such a loutish boor, he was always in trouble or causing trouble for others. Christian was forever reaching out to Heathen with offers of help and encouraging him to live a better life. But Heathen would have none of it. He spurned Christian's every overture of friendship. Worse still, he cursed Christian and slandered him to others in the neighborhood.

"What a meddling, goody-two-shoes fool he is," Heathen would say, loud enough for all to hear, "with his 'churchianity' and his precious Bible verses. They're all hypocrites, you know, and Christian is the worst of the lot." He laughed at Christian's goodness and went out of his way to make life miserable whenever the opportunity presented itself. All of Christian's offers of friendship were spurned and his encouragements for Heathen to mend his ways before his wickedness brought him to ruin fell on deaf ears.

Finally, however, a day came when Christian's warnings proved true. Heathen was viciously set upon by a group of men as vile and wicked as himself. Powerless to escape and helpless to fend off his attackers (he recognized some of them as those he had called friends), he was beaten to the ground and his end seemed deservedly near. Death and hell, snarling gleefully and contemptuous of his pleas for mercy, greedily reached out for their prize. But suddenly Christian was standing over him, fighting off his enemies, displaying a courage and strength Heathen never dreamed Christian possessed.

When the last enemy had fled, Christian turned and gave his attention to Heathen. Ignoring his own wounds, Christian tenderly bandaged Heathen's, staining the dressing with his own

blood. Then he gave Heathen a cool drink that refreshed Heathen's soul.

Christian paid dearly for his act of selflessness toward his old enemy, however. His own many wounds were deep and mortal. Scarcely had he raised Heathen to his feet, than he himself collapsed and died on the very spot where Heathen had lain a moment before.

Heathen stared in numbed disbelief. Then he turned—weeping, broken in spirit and humbled in heart as never before—and shamefully retreated into his house. He did not pause until he reached his bedroom. Once there he stood before his wall mirror and surveyed his battered but bandaged reflection. Then he spoke.

"Heathen," he whispered through raw lips, "do you realize what Christian just did for you? Do you realize he saved you and gave his life for you?" He paused, then placed his heels together, sucked in his stomach, pushed out his chest, tucked in his chin, and looked straight into his reflected, blood-shot eyes. "Heathen, you have never experienced such undeserved love in all your life. Do you know what, Heathen? I feel good about myself because of it. Yes, now I can have a sense of self-worth and can love myself appropriately because of Christian's gracious sacrifice."

Nonsensical, isn't it? So it is with us, but even more so—vile, wicked sinners, standing at the foot of the cross, washed pure in the blood of the Lamb by God Himself. Oh, see the love of the Father, reconciling Himself to us, not counting our sins against us, even as we nail His Son to the cross and curse His name! Was there ever a more despicable act? Was there ever a greater mercy extended? Shall we now pause, even as we eagerly partake of that mercy, and turn our eyes from the cross to our own reflection and say to ourselves, "Oh, but I feel good about myself because of this"?

How I wish that everyone would see

this nonsense for what it is. Then I would not have to write another word. How can any believer say, "Before I can love another, I must first focus on learning to love myself"?

Have we gone mad? ■

ENDNOTES

1. How far have we gone in this regard? Well, consider the following newspaper excerpt: "Bush's need to move in the mideast came about because of Saddam Hussein. Saddam has a particularly despicable personality, **accompanied by a lack of self-esteem.** (Notice how he rarely appears on public television, but has an announcer with a similar appearance read his speeches.)" (Bill Thomas, "U.S. Influence Emerging From Persian Gulf War," *The Bakersfield Californian*, March 3, 1991, p. 9, emphasis added.)
 2. One only has to read the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) to understand exactly what Christ meant when He taught us to love our neighbor as ourselves. For anyone to turn this into a command for me to learn to love myself first is simply practicing eisegesis, and doing so for self-serving reasons.
 3. After I had first written these words, I came across this statement by David Seamands, one of the leaders in the healing memories school of counseling: "Jesus said
- that we should love God with our whole hearts and love our neighbors as we love ourselves. Love for self is as necessary for maturity and wholeness and holiness as is love for God and for other people. Indeed, loving God and loving my neighbor requires a measure of self-acceptance and self-love in which I hold my selfhood in esteem, integrity, identity, and respect." (David Seamands, *Putting Away Childish Things*, Wheaton: Victor Books, 1982, p. 114.)
4. David A. Seamands, *Healing Grace* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1988), pp. 141, 142.
 5. Raymond H. Chester, *Do I Really Have Value?* (Fresno, CA: Link Care Missions), 1984, p. 1.
 6. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
 7. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
 8. *Ibid.*, p. 22. Virginia Satir was one of the pioneers in the self-esteem movement and was a member of the California Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem. In fact, the task force dedicated its final report to her. She died in September, 1988.
 9. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
 10. John Piper, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1986), p. 96.
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Ready Bible Answers

by Geo. R. Brunk I



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The Brother Less Celebrated: Resenting Reconciliation

by Gary Inrig

In Jesus' story we call the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) the older brother resented his father's lavish welcome when the younger brother returned. In his book, The Parables, Dr. Gary Inrig considers Jesus' message.

Like a teenager picking a fight with his parents before a house full of guests, the older son behaves in a way that is not only hurtful, but humiliating. *This son would rather not have fellowship with his father than accept his father's treatment of his brother.*

The relevance of this to the context of Luke 15 is obvious. The Pharisees would not have fellowship with Jesus because of His treatment of people the Pharisees considered prodigals. Thus they were putting themselves outside the Father's house. Refusal to accept all those whom the Lord accepts reveals our relationship to God Himself.

The father could have ordered the older son with, "We'll talk about it later, but not now. Get inside, smile, and do your job." Instead, the father who humbled himself to run to the returning prodigal humbles himself to appeal to the angry older brother. He "went out and pleaded with him." His love for this son is as profound as his love for his other son.

The older son has contempt for such a response. And his anger unveils attitudes every bit as contemptible as the attitudes that led his brother to leave home. The "Look!" of verse 29 is full of disrespect, as is the litany of complaints. He hasn't stayed home because he loved his father, but because working in his fields was a way to get what he wanted. He has shared his father's house but not his father's heart. At the same time, he is full of *contempt for his brother*. "This son of yours" says volumes.

Despite his protestations, this man is more like his younger brother than he realizes. He is full of *concern for himself*. He cares nothing for his father's longings or

his brother's needs. He is self-indulgent and resentful. Most of all, he is no better than a servant. "All these years I've been slaving for you." He knows nothing of the joy of being a son. The younger brother was willing to become a servant; this son has been one in heart all along. He now stands exposed. This respectable son is, in fact, a rebel, lost in his father's house. He is so close to the father and yet so far from him.

What a penetrating portrait of the self-righteous and the religious! Morally respectable and publicly approved, such a person may be farther from the Father than the one in the pigpen.

The father's grace persists despite this outburst. He says, in effect, "We had to celebrate and be glad; we had no choice. Because of who I am, a father, I rejoice over lost sons who return. Not to rejoice would be to deny who I am."

Neither will the heavenly Father cancel the celebration. His heart aches, too, over the lost son—whether he is partying in the far country or working in the family's fields. What Jesus is doing with tax collectors and sinners is what the Father does in heaven.

But there is a fascinating omission. Did the older brother enter or not? We are not told because that is precisely the issue the Lord sets before the Pharisees and before us. To reject the Father's treatment of the most unworthy of sinners is to deceive ourselves about our need for grace and to forfeit the fellowship with God that is based on grace alone. As long as the Pharisees stayed angry at the grace shown to sinners, they stood outside the Father's house. ■

—Taken from *Kindred Spirit*, Winter 2004, Vol. 28, No. 4

The Silence of the Heart

by Dr. Dan Zink

At times I feel as if I am witnessing a crime and I cannot put a stop to it. It is like watching a serial killer on the loose while onlookers remain in silence. This happens mainly in my work as a counselor, though I see it in other places.

Three situations illustrate the problem I witness. Edward is a man who came to me upon his pastor's referral. His wife found him one day viewing pornography on the Internet. As part of the counseling process, Edward and his wife met with me. During this time together his wife critiqued his behavior. She was very honest, but not mean. He must have felt exposed. As I listened and looked at Edward, I could not see any kind of visible reaction. Finally, after waiting in silence for a long time I said, "Edward, what are you feeling right now?" He finally said with great conviction, "I don't know." It was an honest answer. He did not know. That was Edward.

Then there was Sharon. Sharon made an appointment to see me with her husband because he was a problem in the marriage. When they came in she told me about their situation. And the husband *was* a problem in the marriage. But, Sharon was *mean*. She scared *me*! She was angry and aggressive. When I introduced the thought that they both had something to do with the problems in their marriage, she came after me with both barrels blazing. They did not see me very long because I would not say what Sharon wanted me to. She basically said to me, "You're implying that I have some problems here!" And she said, "No way. I don't. It's all him."

Then there were Joe and Joan. Joe asked Joan a very simple question, slightly disguised. He basically asked her, "Do you care?" And Joan would not

answer. Instead, she said, "Let's just stick to the facts." She would not reveal anything at a deeper level.

There is a common factor between these three people. Edward, Sharon, and Joan have lost touch with their own hearts. So I can ask Edward, "What are you feeling right now?" And he will say, "I don't know." Sharon can say, "It's not me!" And Joan, who will not go there, stays in her head rather than her heart.

It is hard to say out loud some things that really matter. It is hard to look at the stuff of your own heart enough so that you can say it out loud. And when you stop saying it out loud long enough, it gets harder to know what is there to say. It is easier to fall into that trap of silencing your own heart in such a way that you cannot read it anymore. So when a person comes along, such as I did as a counselor, and asks, "What are you feeling right now?" the answer comes back, "I don't feel anything," or "It's a mystery to me," or "Don't look at me." As I have been observing the silence of these hearts, I have seen that it is like a crime that is killing many of us and yet most of us do not see it.

In order to end the silence we must first realize that the challenge to face the heart happens mostly in the context of relationships. We have been created for relationships. When God created He said, "Let there be . . . let there be . . . let there be . . ." And then He said, "Let us make man in our image." We need to see this as a little flag pointing us to the fact that God is saying, "I am relating you to Myself. I am relational and you are too." A big part of being made in God's image is that we are made for relationships.

We are made to be loved, to love, to be accepted, to be known, to be intimate, to feel safe in the context of relationships.

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SWORD AND TRUMPET

In this broken world we have been wounded. And those wounds are wounds of the heart. King David recognized it. He said in Psalm 109, "For I am poor and needy and my heart is wounded within me." Those wounds affect our relationships and help us see our need for redemption in Christ.

Every day we all come to decision points. This very day you will come to a decision point, most likely in a relational context. And at that decision point, you can go one of two ways. You can silence your own heart, ignore it, and go on. Or you can break the silence.

Keeping the silence is rooted in a statement of the enemy himself that we take more seriously than we know. In Genesis 3:5 the serpent and Eve are interacting. The serpent says, "God knows you will not die. God knows you will be like God." In our own lives we can take that statement pretty seriously. We can try to be like God in that we act as if we do not need Him. We try to face life without crying out to God for redemption. Some wound comes at the heart level and we look and say, "I can handle that." I can handle it by avoiding it; I can handle it by ignoring it; I can handle it by being mad at the person who makes me aware that it exists. We may have started doing this when we were small children, unaware. So we decide to handle things in all kinds of ways, but the bottom line is that *I'm* going to handle it. And that is option number one.

Option number one shows itself in our lives a few different ways. It may look like efforts to be good and feel safe. The idea is to have a life that is under control because "I'm handling it" living by the rules. So we hide behind lots of theology and Bible study but do not seek the Lord. Others, rather than being good, say, "I'll be tough. I'll be so tough that no one will get close to me and I will not have to get close to myself. I can handle it because I won't need their love." Some

decide, "I'll just party. I'll just give up because it doesn't matter." Underneath all of these behaviors is fear. Out of that fear is the desire to control, keep yourself safe, rather than recognizing your own heart.¹

In order to end the silence we must first realize that the challenge to face the heart happens mostly in the context of relationships.

What are the implications of the silence of our hearts? There are many. One that I already mentioned is with men in the use of pornography. Most men think it is about sex, but it has very little to do with sex. It has a lot to do with avoiding your own heart. A real relationship with a woman, a relationship with your wife, is risky. To pursue your wife, including sexually, is risky. You have to be a real man. And many of us have that question in the back of our minds, "Am I man enough?" And many men find it easier to pursue sexuality in other ways, though they often do not realize what they are doing. With pornography there is no risk and no exposure. There is no intimacy. A person can get what he wants without giving or risking anything. So pornography use is an issue of the heart.

Another issue that I hear about a lot these days has to do with dating. I used to say jokingly to my daughters, "You cannot date until you get married." Little did I know that it was going to become a philosophy in Christian circles. It is important to think and act wisely in a godly manner when it comes to dating. But I see something disturbing happening, particularly among young men who are scared of their own heart and scared of getting in a relationship where they might get hurt. These men see somebody who looks attractive to them and somehow they decide she is the woman to

marry. So they proceed to let the woman know, saying, "God told me that you are the woman for me." And when the woman says, "Why didn't God tell me?" the guy replies, "Don't be sinful and resist this."

The psalmist shows us the connection between the heart and the way that we live.

It is understandable that dating can be challenging in that it makes your heart vulnerable, but there is no way to avoid that risk. Trying to tell a person that it is God's will for you to marry when you have not been able to take the risk of knowing that person and having that person know you is theologically-based emotional stalking. What is it really about? It is about avoiding the heart. For men, the question that lurks behind once again is often, "Am I man enough?" We would like to structure the relationship in such a way that we do not have to take the risk.

Another way to avoid the heart may not be so readily apparent. We do it in the way we come before God in prayer. Henri Nouwen defined prayer this way, "It's being with Jesus and simply wasting time with Him." I remember the first time I read that. I was stunned, and I knew it was because I was exposed. I recognized that this is not how I pray! I do not pray to be in relationship and "waste time" with Jesus. I pray to try to get Him to do something. It is about me. "God, take care of this, so I don't have to face it." These are the things we do as we say, "I can handle it," and in process ignore the calls of our own heart.

Option two is different and it is for children of God. Option two is living according to the truth of the Gospel. The truth of the Gospel is that everything that really matters was done *for you by* someone else and you never could have done it anyway. So we are secure in a loving relationship with God. In turn we can

love others and receive love.

When we hit those decision points where we must determine how to handle certain situations we can say, "God, help me." We can face that signal coming from the heart saying, "I am afraid" or "I am hurt," and rather than finding some way of coping and covering up the fear and pain we can say, "God, help me." The message of the Gospel is that you cannot handle it, but Jesus has done everything for you that need be done, everything that really matters. And you can depend on Him.

In Psalm 119 the psalmist writes, "I run in the path of your commands for you have set my heart free." Pay attention to the order. In other words he says, "You set my heart free, so I can run in the path of obedience." The psalmist shows us the connection between the heart and the way that we live.

So what might this look like in your own life? First, rediscover your own heart. Be open to the unmet longings of your own heart, to the hurt that is there. Think of an eighteen-month-old child. Developmentally at this point children are in the one-word stage. "Truck." "Book." "Mama." They are putting names to the things in their world so they can relate to them. We need to do the same thing with those things in our heart that we have not yet named in our own sinfulness or stubbornness. We need to pay attention to them.

Will you let people know your heart as you experience it more deeply in dependence on God?

Naming things can make us uncomfortable. It may even be painful. But it is important to recognize that pain is not just a product of the Fall. It existed in creation prior to Adam's sin. Remember the curse to Eve? "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing" (Gen. 3:16). God

was not creating anything new. He just said that it would be distorted. God intends to use the painful things for the growth in our lives. There is a way that pain, sadness, difficulty, challenge, and anxiety are good as the Lord works with them in our lives. We need to stop running and be more open to rediscover the heart.

We need to recognize when we are saying, "I can handle it," and resist that temptation. We need to stop trying to handle it and trust Christ. Ultimately, that is the bottom line. Are you trusting enough to say, "God help me"? Will you take the risk of being real with others in relationships? Will you let people know your heart as you experience it more deeply in dependence on God? Are you willing to grow in saying less and less, "Hey, I can handle this," and saying more, "No, I can't, but I'm going to move forward into this mystery of life as God leads me"? Psalm 62:5 says, "Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him." And likewise Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and

burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30). Can you trust Him enough to break the silence—silence with yourself and silence with others?

Sometime this very day, you will probably hit a decision point. Which way will you go? Will you say, "I can handle it," or will you say, "I can't handle this. God help me." And if you choose the latter direction, will you rest in Him? I want to challenge you to trust Him enough and in the process, break the silence of your own heart. ■

ENDNOTES

1. These categories are adapted from *The Wounded Heart* by Dan Allender and Larry Crabb (Colorado Springs, Colo.: NavPress, 1990).
 2. Robert Durbach, ed., *Seeds of Hope: A Henri Nouwen Reader* (New York: Image Books/Doubleday, 1989), 259.
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Biblical Counseling and the Local Church

by William W. Goode

Almost every week someone asks me how to start a counseling ministry in a local church—a question that, to me, illustrates a widespread misunderstanding of the true nature of counseling. For too long biblical counseling has been seen as an optional ministry in the church. Along with radio programs and homes for unwed mothers, it has been relegated to a growing heap of “frivolous” ministries, the ones we hope to get around to some day.

However, biblical counseling is not an option—a point on which Scripture never equivocates. Our Lord commanded believers to love one another, and to consider counseling an optional ministry is to withhold biblical love at the time it is needed most in the believer’s life—when he or she is in trouble. As the Apostle Paul commanded the Galatian believers, we must be about the business of restoring rather than ignoring such Christians.

The greatest threat to the process of discipleship is the believer who is overtaken by sin. The man or woman with a continual pattern of sin needs help to change and to reestablish a pattern of growth. Thus Paul addressed all church members—not just the pastors and elders—when he said, “We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men” (1 Thess. 5:14). On another occasion, Paul reminded the believers in Rome of their responsibility to counsel and encourage each other, assuring them that they were “able also to admonish one another” (Rom. 15:14).

Believers will never become like Christ if they are not winning the battle against sin in their lives and investing themselves in the lives of others. And there can be no

discipling if there is no plan to help the disciple who gets into trouble. Restoring and encouraging cannot be separated from loving, as we see in the life of our Saviour.

COUNSELING: AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE CHURCH

Counseling must never be thought of as a weekly hour of magic, or an independent ministry conducted aside from the church. Preaching, teaching, evangelism, discipleship, and counseling are all integral parts that make up effective, biblical ministry. The local church is the instrument Christ ordained to help believers grow into His likeness. It is the only organization—or better, organism—He promised to build, sustain, and use. Counseling is an essential part of the local church’s ministry as it disciples and helps believers mature in Christ’s image. Paul had this goal in mind when he wrote: “We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom that we may present every man complete in Christ” (Col. 1:28).

The Pastor’s Involvement and Leadership in Counseling

Counseling is the responsibility of each believer and its only rightful arena is the church. These truths carry a strong implication: the pastor’s involvement and leadership is crucial.

In Ephesians 4, the purpose of the pastor-teacher and the church is described as “the equipping of the saints for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ . . . to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ” (4:12, 13). This includes a plan for believers who are tossed about by

bad doctrine and deceitful philosophies. And so many of the problems we encounter in counseling are doctrinal problems based on an inadequate view of God, sin, or self. God wants these problems solved, and He has raised up pastor-teachers to equip the saints to do just that.

In the next few verses, it is as if Paul anticipated that some would doubt believers could be trusted with this job. So he describes the wonder of the spiritual gifts God has provided, assuring us that “the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love” (Eph. 4:16). In other words, all believers should be using their gifts, talents, and abilities to meet the needs of others. As Colossians 1:28 reiterates, the saints are equipped to use their gifts through preaching, counseling, and teaching.

It goes without saying that the pastor’s involvement must be more than a token once-a-week venture. Paul reminded the Ephesian elders of his ministry to them, of his selfless sacrifice, and his bold, non-theistic confrontation (counsel) night and day as he ministered with tears. Paul dared not abandon his God-ordained duty. When he saw fellow believers in trouble, he did not hide—he counseled them day and night. Jesus said the hireling flees when the wolf comes, but the shepherd cares for the sheep when they are in trouble. This is the picture we see of Paul in Acts 20:31—a true shepherd actively involved in ministry whenever he is needed.

Yet a word of caution is necessary. Yes, the pastor needs to be involved in counseling, but it must be a balanced involvement. If the pastor pursues counseling to the neglect of his sermon preparation and study, his preaching will no doubt suffer, causing more counseling problems rather than strengthening the saints and furthering the maturation process.

In addition, if a pastor allows counsel-

ing to take the place of caring for his family, his health, or his own spiritual needs, he will not only be unprepared to counsel when the time comes, but his overall ministry will suffer dire consequences. Counseling is important, but it can only be effective when counselors understand correct spiritual priorities.

THE CHURCH—INCOMPLETE WITHOUT COUNSELING

Counseling and the Pastor’s Effectiveness

When a pastor neglects the ministry of counseling others, crucial areas of his ministry suffer. For example, his preaching is dramatically affected. Paul said the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but spiritual, empowered by God to tear down the mental strongholds and arguments that have been raised against God. But when a pastor is not involved in the lives of his people, he loses touch with their difficulties and the thought processes and habits that lead to problems. Thus he is not prepared to provide the spiritual weapons they need to overcome those problems.

To illustrate, let’s imagine a noncounseling pastor who preaches about drunkenness. Yet the people listening in the pews get drunk regularly for any number of reasons. They may succumb to peer pressure because they want to please people rather than God, or perhaps they are not able to communicate with their spouse, so they hide from their problems by drinking. It is possible that they worship possessions and material success, so they will do anything—including drinking with clients—to get what they want. They may drink to drown their guilt, or for the sheer pleasure of the drinker’s high. The reason they drink may even be something as simple as gross irresponsibility. These are all reasons for drinking—reasons a pastor who does not counsel is likely to miss, but reasons he will readily realize if he is involved in counseling those in his

congregation. Unless the issues of sin are seriously and properly dealt with, the preaching from the pulpit is merely a Band-Aid solution. Jesus said that what defiles a person is not what goes into the body, but what comes out of the heart—that is what drives the person to sin and that is what he or she must deal with (Matt. 15:17).

The Apostle Paul spent a great deal of time counseling people. As he wrote to believers he would pause and state, “You will say to me. . . .” He cut to the heart of the matter because he knew the people he counseled intimately and was able to anticipate their response. He also knew God’s Word and always appealed to it for the answers to their problems. Paul understood the fuzzy, confused thinking caused by sin, so he taught clear and specific principles for Christian living. Neither Christ nor Paul coddled those they were helping. They said, “Do this” and “Do not do that,” because both knew well those they counseled and saw clearly the walls of excuses they hid behind. They preached with a mind to tear down those barriers.

The pastor who counsels, preaches not merely to inform but to bring about change, which is precisely what growth and progressive sanctification is all about. A pastor who is true to the Word must come to grips with the Church’s one mission to believers: to facilitate growth in Christ. The pastor’s job is not to thrill his congregation, nor should his goal be to stimulate emotions or intellect—his job is to preach God’s Word for the purpose of change.

The pastor who counsels will long to be used of God, to preach and teach the Word, to show forth the worthiness of His holy Son, and to lead His people in growth. Why? Because he sees the results of a hard heart that refuses to deal with problems biblically—the shattered lives, the ruined marriages, the soured relationships, and the stunted spiritual growth. He understands the inextricable

link between the failure to understand and apply God’s Word and failure in the Christian life. With burning conviction, growth and change become the goal of his preaching.

One of the most tragic reasons pastors do not counsel people and help them understand progressive sanctification is because the pastors themselves do not understand the doctrine. These pastors easily get caught up in the fuzzy, meaningless jargon of pop Christianity. They encourage people to read the Bible for the sake of reading it, to pray for God to pour out a mystical zap to cure all their ills, or to pray for revival, all without a clear understanding of how God works in lives and how He changes hearts. Unfortunately, they are likely to be more a part of the problem than the solution.

That is why the pastor who desires to counsel biblically must become saturated with the truths of progressive sanctification and must come to terms with the sufficiency of Scripture. He must realize that when used correctly, God’s Word can identify sinful thought processes and habits and replace them with biblical ones. If he is not counseling from the Word of God alone, he will often fail to differentiate between special revelation and human opinion, theory, or general advice.

Counseling and Evangelism

Biblical counseling can also benefit the local church in evangelism. While many evangelistic tools are effective and worthy of attention, it is important to notice that the scriptural model always began by addressing the challenges, sins, or trials that a person was facing. Thus the biblical counselor who follows Scripture will not simply dispense the Word but will endeavor to listen and ask questions, and then will present the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Over the years, this method of counseling has been a highly effective tool for evangelism in our church. There are

many fine couples in our church today whose marriages were once broken, or who were living together before marriage. Yet through counseling they trusted Christ, resolved their problems, and are now effective, productive disciples. Others, who initially came to our church with deep depression and difficulties, not only found the answers they needed through biblical counseling but have become effective evangelists and counselors themselves to both believers and nonbelievers.

THE CHURCH—ESSENTIAL TO COUNSELING

While counseling is a necessary part of the local church, we must remember that it is only one part. An hour of counseling once a week for the hurting people in the church is not God's complete plan for their spiritual growth; it is only part of the plan. In God's blueprint for ministry, counseling is meant to be a synchronized part of the whole.

Indeed, the most effective use of counseling is when it is part of the local church. Counselees need the help of all church ministries: they need the pulpit ministry to teach and motivate growth and change, the love of the collective membership to assist and encourage, the fellowship of the church body for interaction and relationships, the authority of the Body for church discipline, and the example of leaders who are growing and changing. Above all, counselees need the decisiveness of a church committed to following biblical principles in practical areas such as communication, finances, and dealing with problems. There is nothing quite as compelling to a counselee as a church committed to leading by example.

DEVELOPING A BIBLICAL COUNSELING MINISTRY IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

Before we discuss the nuts and bolts of developing a counseling ministry in the church, let me make a rather bold statement: I believe there are only two ways to begin a counseling ministry. One way,

unfortunately the pattern that is most often followed, is superficial and ultimately leads only to greater problems. It involves a counseling ministry that is developed hastily where the counselee is given direction from the Scriptures in the counseling center, but the same principles are not modeled in the church that is sponsoring the center. In these counseling situations, where progressive sanctification is not the biblical method of growth and church leaders are not committed to the Bible as the only sufficient standard of authority for daily decision, the counselee will be confused.

The other way, a biblical alternative, is actually rather uncomplicated. It begins through careful efforts that mold church leaders—pastors, elders, deacons, teachers, staff, and lay leaders—into a pattern of growth that people who seek counsel can follow, and it requires a church ministry that is built upon the biblical concept of progressive sanctification, which produces a God-centered model for growth and change.

Now the obvious question is: "How does one develop a biblical counseling program that is a *natural* part of the church's ministry—a program that moves beyond the superficial remedies adopted by the world and so many churches?" There are several steps to consider in developing a counseling ministry.

Leaders Must Be Dedicated

If a church is going to strive for spiritual growth and make earnest, spiritual change a priority, the pastor's life must exemplify that same kind of growth and change. If the Word is not effecting change in the pastor's life, he will have trouble teaching it with conviction and inspiring confidence in its sufficiency—and rightly so!

The pastor must also develop a relationship of mutual concern and loving encouragement with other leaders in the church. He must be willing to receive admonition as quickly and with as much

grace as he administers it. His conviction that iron does indeed sharpen iron must be far more than mere lip service; he must believe it and rigorously and openly practice it. His relationship with those who serve with him must be marked by sincere encouragement and, if necessary, firm confrontation.

If a church is to grow spiritually, the pastor and leaders must be growing spiritually. The leadership team is the model the counselee will invariably look to as an example of Christian living. That is why a pastor does well to follow God's qualifications for a counselor when he selects teachers and leaders for the church (see Rom. 15:24). He must look for believers who are growing in their knowledge of the Scripture and who are applying it consistently to their lives.

The choices and decisions the pastor and church leaders make are also critical to the development of a biblical counseling ministry. For example, if the pastor admonishes counselees in the congregation to follow biblical principles, he and his leadership team must demonstrate obedience to those same principles. If he counsels a couple on the wise use of their finances, his decisions with regard to church finances must model wise stewardship. If he teaches a counselee about biblical principles of communication, his own communication within the church must be a positive example for that person.

Leaders Must Understand and Observe Progressive Sanctification

All biblical counseling and change must be accomplished through progressive sanctification: God's sole plan for spiritual growth. This truth must be clarified in the church through an articulate, written doctrinal statement. In addition, it must be taught clearly, because it is a truth that so often is poorly understood by counselees. In fact, it is often a major part of their problem. Many people are confused about how a believer grows and

realizes positive change. They want spiritual growth and development on their own terms, easily and quickly. Some come for counseling expecting an instant solution from heaven, even though the Apostle Paul, when teaching about spiritual growth, spoke not of mysterious, emotional experiences but of hard work. The growth process requires action. That is why Paul spoke of racing, wrestling, and fighting. In 1 Corinthians 9:27, he wrote, "I buffet my body and make it my slave . . ."—hardly the words of a man who expected spiritual growth to come through a heavenly zap!

Still others, confused about progressive sanctification, turn to morbid introspection and unwittingly take their eyes off Christ. This is not to say that people who are confused about sanctification have wandered from that path on their own. Countless books, seminars, and lectures have passed along quasibiblical (sometimes antibiblical) advice that has only served to create more problems. Advice like, "Feel good about yourself," "Turn it all over to Jesus," "Read the Bible seven minutes a day," and "Talk to the dead to heal your memories" has created an environment hostile to biblical solutions. That is why a church's counseling ministry will only be biblical and successful if the church is committed to the Scripture's patterns for growth, and if it instills that same commitment in those who come for counseling.

Leaders Must Have a Clear Sense of Direction

Before a church begins a counseling ministry, it must establish a clear purpose for its program. Lloyd Jonas, of the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors, emphasizes that "in starting a counseling ministry there must not be anyone either higher up or close by in the chain of command who is not completely sold on nouthetic counseling" (presidential address, NANC conference, 1987).

All staff members must be equipped

theologically to counsel others; they must demonstrate both the desire and the ability to counsel; and, ultimately, they must be willing to exert the time needed to train other lay counselors. When training counselors initially it can be helpful to use a counseling program that is approved by the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors. This will ensure that the church's trainees are taught counseling properly, both by observing counseling firsthand and by examining case-study situations.

Leaders Must Be Learners

All biblical counselors must be learners. Without a thirst for God, an appreciation for His Word, and a hunger to know it more deeply, counselors are not likely to have an interest in continuing their counseling education. They must constantly remind themselves that God said, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways" (Isa. 55:8). A firm grasp of that concept compels the counselor to further study and development. The counselor who feels adequate for the job and satisfied in his or her understanding of God's truth is likely to be, of all people, the most ill-suited for the task.

Counselors must never forget the noetic effect of sin that demands continual nourishment from God's Word. The Apostle Paul, a talented and industrious church planter, never boasted of reaching a great spiritual plateau but was ever pressing on. With an attitude of awe and a sound hermeneutical approach, the biblical counselor must regularly study the Word and desire to learn from others who study it.

Leaders Should Be Trained Within a Biblical Church Ministry

Just as church members need to be trained in evangelism, so they need to be trained in counseling. In what context should that training take place? This question is the watershed for the whole

issue of counseling. For the biblical counselor, the training ground must be the local church. While some training takes place in counseling classes, most of the training of the biblical counselor comes through normal, active involvement in the church. If we believe the Word of God can bring genuine change, solutions, healing, and growth, then counselor preparation must focus more on the biblical responsibilities of pastoring and less on counseling as a separate, para-church skill.

In our church, although we offer several classes on biblical counseling, our lay people receive most of their training by simply becoming active participants in worship, ministry, and fellowship—all natural parts of every believer's life in the Body. The believer who clearly understands the spiritual-growth process of progressive sanctification and understands the heavenly resources that are at the believer's disposal is a long way down the path of not only realizing that growth but also of helping others along the way. The heart of biblical counseling is not the form but the substance: God's Word.

The mainstay of our training program for deacons, their wives, and church laymen consists of an eleven-week course. Trainees meet for eight hours each Monday, and in the process of the three-month period, receive forty hours of lecture and twenty-two hours of counseling observation. We also require that trainees complete extensive reading assignments, often between one- and two-thousand pages. We also occasionally offer short courses, consisting of two one-hour evening sessions combined with a pared-down schedule of counseling observation.

SOME HELPFUL DO'S AND DON'TS

- The church should clarify that its counseling ministry is based on biblical counseling principles.
- For legal protection, we feel it is wise to have nonmembers sign the following statement: "I understand that the

counsel I receive will be according to the counselor's interpretation of the Bible." As a word of caution, this statement has not been tested in court. We are simply committed to being honest with our counselees about what they can expect from our counselors. In addition, we insist that each staff member who counsels nonmembers must successfully complete NANC certification.

- The church should not sacrifice the needs of its members to meet the counseling needs of those outside the church. God's plan for change is not based on one isolated hour each week. It is most effective when carried out within the context of a church's full range of biblical ministries. When counselors must choose between counseling someone from within the church—a church that teaches, encourages, and cares for its members biblically—and someone who does not benefit from that setting, they must make the choice that demonstrates the best stewardship of their time and love. Inevitably, there

will be a need to make exceptions, but a basic principle to remember is that counselees need the ministry of the entire church.

CONCLUSION

A counseling ministry in a church can have profound, far-reaching effects in the lives of its congregation. In our church, each pastor counsels. As they interact with Scripture in the counseling setting, their understanding of the Word and its practical value deepens, and that, in turn, enters into their teaching from the pulpit. As a result, the members of our church have learned many of the biblical principles that are applied in counseling. Thus a ministry of counseling provides practical, relevant help based on sound principles from God's Word that enables believers to be adequately equipped unto every good work (2 Tim. 3:17). ■

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Separated Unto God

by J. C. Wenger



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A False Gospel

by Gary Almy and Carol Tharp Almy
with Jerry Jenkins

Are we dealing with a minor variation in theology when we integrate psychology and Christianity? Many say it is simply expressing the same faith in a different way, that traditionalists are unable to accept expressing the faith in terms relevant to our culture.

Is that all it is? Merely the same gospel expressed in different forms?

By now you know that we say without hesitation: NO! Most fundamental is the difference between the truth of God as revealed in Scripture and the so-called truths of psychology. It is the difference between truth and falsehood, and thus, the difference between life and death. The Bible never takes doctrinal error lightly. "If anyone is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned" (from Galatians 1:8, 9, authors' paraphrase).

. . . Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you; they fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD. They keep saying to those who despise me, "The LORD says: You will have peace." And to all who follow the stubbornness of their hearts, they say, "No harm will come to you." But which of them has stood in the council of the LORD to see or to hear his word? Who has listened and heard his word? . . . I did not send these prophets, yet they have run with their message; I did not speak to them, yet they have prophesied. But if they had stood in my council, they would have proclaimed my words to my people and would have turned them from their evil ways and from their evil deeds. "Am I only a God nearby," declares the LORD, "and not a God far away? Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?" declares the LORD. "Do I not fill heaven and earth?" (Jeremiah 23:16-24).

Psychology is a false gospel. Its teachers are nothing less than false prophets. They fill people with false hope and lead them to false peace. They fail to point people to their "evil deeds" and instead point them to "a God nearby" to be used for their own purposes. They do not point to the "God far away who fills heaven and earth." The God nearby and far away as described in Scriptures is clearly not the god of the psychological teachers.

He tends his flock like a shepherd, gathers the lambs in his arms, and carries them close to his heart, gently leading those that are with young. He has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens; he has held the dust of the earth in a basket, and weighed the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance. Who has understood the Spirit of the Lord or instructed him as his counselor? Whom did the Lord consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way? Who was it that taught him knowledge or showed him the path of understanding? (from Isaiah 40, authors' paraphrase).

The true gospel delivered to us from Christ via the apostles is God-centered good news. The gospel delivered to us from psychology is man-centered and appeals to the flesh, our carnal being. It is a false gospel because of its false view of sin. The Bible is clear in its teaching of original sin:

"Surely I was sinful at birth, from the time my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5).

"Even from birth, the wicked go astray; from the womb they are wayward and speak lies" (Psalm 58:3).

“. . . Every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood” (Genesis 8:21).

“All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away” (Isaiah 64:6).

We feel the painful effects of the sins of others; but to imply that we sin because of this is contradictory to the message of Scripture.

“. . . Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written there is no one righteous, not even one” (Romans 3:9, 10).

The Bible says that each of us inevitably sins and that we do so by choice; this tendency is in our very nature, having been inherited from Adam. It is impossible to argue otherwise from Scripture. Psychology teaches that we sin because of what someone else has done to us—our parents, our spouse, our ancestors. There is no question, and it is certainly not unbiblical to say, that we feel the painful effects of the sins of others; but to imply that we sin because of this is contradictory to the message of Scripture. Not one verse indicates that our sin is produced by anyone other than ourselves. Ezekiel 18 is especially clear on this, as blaming parents apparently was one of the excuses Judah used in refusing to accept the Babylonian captivity as God’s judgment.

God explains throughout Ezekiel 18 why blaming the parents is unacceptable to Him. He states in no uncertain terms that “the soul who sins is the one who will die. I take no pleasure in the death of anyone. Repent and live!” Our need today is the same as was the need of the people of Judah: to recognize who God is, and thus to see that we stand

condemned, regardless of what others have done to us. Only then can the real gospel come to us as good news; otherwise, it comes as one more technique to make us feel better. We must recognize the need for atonement, for God says clearly that without that atonement, we will die.

Once the church accepts the psychological gospel that we sin not because of who we are and what we do, but rather because of what others have done to us, then a false view of salvation and sanctification must follow. God tells us that salvation (atonement) is available for that heir to Adam’s sin who cries out to God, “. . . Have mercy on me, a sinner” (Luke 18:13). “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6).

This good news of a redeemer is meaningless unless we recognize that we have turned to our way and are filled with iniquity. When Nathan came to David and said, “You are the man” (1 Samuel 12:7), David did not reply, “Off with your head by the king’s orders! I had no choice. I had felt-needs and my sexual addiction to contend with. If I hurt anyone, it was not by choice. As a child I was neglected, given the lowliest jobs, spending long, lonely days with just sheep—no one to talk to day after day. Who can be surprised at my dysfunction?”

Instead, David, described in Scripture as a man after God’s own heart, said, “I have sinned against the LORD.” In Psalm 51:17, he says, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” Instead of placing the blame elsewhere, David sees the futility of good works canceling the sin, recognizes his guilt, confesses his sins, and asks God for cleansing. David cries out to God for mercy and forgiveness from a broken and contrite heart. We are given no record of his blaming Bathsheba, or his

mother, or anyone else for his sin.

Jesus makes clear in Matthew 5 that salvation comes to those with poverty of spirit, to those who realize they do not have the spiritual resources within to come face to face with God. Any awareness of the true God should produce in us the same cry as it did in Isaiah when he saw the holiness of his Creator: "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips . . ." (Isaiah 6:5).

Any view of the real God should produce in us a mourning over sin similar to that of Daniel (chapter 9): "We have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. We have not listened to your servants and prophets . . . we are covered with shame." It should produce in us a meekness of the sort described of Moses in Numbers 12:3 ("Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth").

True salvation will produce a hungering and thirsting after righteousness as described in Psalm 119: "How I long for your precepts! My eyes stay open through the watches of the night that I may meditate on your promises. Give me understanding according to your Word" (authors' paraphrase).

Salvation produces a humility causing us to show mercy to our enemies, as did David (2 Samuel 16:11, 12) when he said of Shimei: "Let him curse me, for the LORD has told him to. It may be that the LORD will see my distress." Paul reacted to his thorn in the flesh in a similar manner, saying, "It was given me to keep me from being conceited" (from 2 Corinthians 12:7, authors' paraphrase).

Salvation of the real kind makes a peacemaker of us as it did of Joseph when his brothers stood before him "terrified at his presence." Joseph said to them, "And now, do not be distressed . . . because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you" (Genesis 45:5).

Accepting that payment made at Calvary for sins clears our heads related to God's purposes and brings a trust that makes us able to leave vengeance to Him.

However, salvation will also set us at odds with the world around us. Yes, it will bring persecution. Today's "user-friendly" church seems unlikely to reach any point close to Elijah in 1 Kings 19 where "Elijah was afraid and ran for his life," telling God that he was the only one left. Sadly, neither is today's church likely to receive the comfort God gave Elijah in those circumstances.

No one will be driven out of town for teaching that our troubles have come upon us because our innocent inner child was shamed and wounded, for teaching people to mourn the sins of their parents, for teaching self-esteem and assertiveness training, for leading people to hunger and thirst for attention from others, for showing mercy and compassion in the form of group therapy and Recovery programs, for adding to Scripture and thus making followers double-minded, for teaching pantheistic views of peace, and for viewing suffering as something to be eliminated as quickly as possible by whatever technique we can find.

The church today is so permeated by the false gospel of psychology that clergy and hymnwriters of the past seem ridiculous, if not laughable. Surely no one could miss the fact that they were preaching and singing about a different faith than we are embracing today.

John Donne (1573-1631), famous for his statement "Ask not for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee," was an Anglican clergyman, dean of St. Paul's, and a preacher to great congregations in London. He wrote: "Affliction is a treasure and scarcely any man hath enough of it. No man hath affliction enough that is not matured and ripened by it and made fit for God by that affliction. Tribulation is a treasure in the nature of it, but it is

not current money in the use of it except we get nearer and nearer our home, Heaven, by it.”

In John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, Apollyon (Satan) says that Christ’s servants come to ill ends and that “He has never come yet to deliver them.” Christian responds in great contrast to the teaching of the modern church: “His forbearing at present to deliver them is on purpose to try their love whether they will cleave to Him to the end; as for the ill end thou sayest they come to, that is most glorious in their account. For present deliverance, they do not much expect it, for they stay for their glory and then they shall have it when their prince comes in his glory.” Apollyon responds very like the modern church: “As for me, how many times have I delivered either by power or by fraud?”

Adoniram Judson Gordon, minister in Boston in the nineteenth century, wrote of the help he gained from studying the life of David Brainerd, missionary to the American Indians: “ ‘If you would make men think well of you, make them think well of themselves’ is the maxim of Lord Chesterfield which he regarded as embodying the highest worldly wisdom. On the contrary, the preacher and witness for Christ who makes us think meanly of ourselves is the one who does the most good and ultimately wins our hearts. This is exactly the effect which the reading of Brainerd’s memoirs have on one. Humiliation succeeds humiliation as we read on.” Surely today’s church is more in tune with Lord Chesterfield than with David Brainerd or Adoniram Judson Gordon.

The following is written of Jonathan Edwards, that New England preacher so greatly used of God in the time of revival called The First Great Awakening (*Jonathan Edwards*, Banner of Truth, p. 147):

For Edwards, profound humiliation before God and spiritual joy belong together. A sense of sin and real praise

are not opposites; the saints in glory are so much employed in praise because they are perfect in humility and have so great a sense of the infinite distance between them and God (p. 259).

Edwards believed repentance in genuine Christian experience is lifelong. “True saints have mourned for sin and still do mourn. Accordingly, those who lack ‘gracious affection’ (real salvation) have no reverential fear, but are familiar with God in worship. In Scripture, rejoicing is not the opposite of godly fear, but is ever joined with it.”

Timothy Dwight (1752-1817), Edwards’ grandson and president of Yale University, in his poem entitled “The Smooth Divine” wrote of preachers who would not speak the truth:

There smiled the smooth divine,
unused to wound
The sinner’s heart, with hell’s alarm-
ing sound.
No terrors on his gentle tongue attend;
No grating truths the nicest ear offend.
Yet from their churches saw his
brethren driven
Who thundered Truth and spoke the
voice of heaven.
“Let fools,” he cried, “starve on, while
prudent I
Snug in my nest shall live, and snug
shall die.”

Mary Rowlandson (1635-1678) was taken captive along with three of her children in Massachusetts in 1676. One child died and Mary wandered three months with the Indians. She wrote of this in a piece entitled “The Sovereignty and Goodness of God Together With the Faithfulness of His Promises Displayed”:

Before I knew what affliction means,
I was ready sometimes to wish for it.
Scripture would come to my mind,
Hebrews 12:6: “For whom the Lord
loveth, he chasteneth.” But now I see
the Lord has His time to scourge and
chasten. Affliction I had, full measure I

thought, pressed down and running over. Yet I see when God calls a person to anything and through ever so many difficulties, yet He is fully able to carry them through and make them see and say they have been gainers thereby. And I hope I can say in some measure as David did, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted," and to be quieted as Moses said in Exodus 14:13: "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord."

Such thinking is foreign to today's church, among both leaders and laymen. Anyone who would write hymns like Isaac Watts would be labeled as having a severe problem with self-worth. Watts stood in awe at the fact that God would devote "that sacred head for such a worm as I." The modern church knows little of that awe.

Christians have for two millennia seen Psalm 22 as a prophetic description of Jesus. It describes Him: "I am a worm . . . scorned by men and despised." The arrogant church of the twentieth century says, "What an insult for that outdated Watts to suggest that *I* am a worm!" We change Watts' wording to "such a *one* as I" and sing on.

Even Joan Baez recorded John Newton's "Amazing Grace" as he wrote it, but much of today's church won't affirm the truth that amazing grace saved "a wretch like me." We change it to "a soul like me."

What a tragic day for mankind when the church will no longer sing with Cowper:

The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day;
And may I there, tho' vile as he,
Wash all my sins away.

What? Me, vile? What an out-of-date view of this struggling, victimized race! How primitive to suggest that being plunged beneath the blood cleanses "all my guilty stains." How much more comforting to believe that what used to be called guilt is really fear, tension, anxiety, and behavior produced by stored memories.

Charles Wesley wrote:

My chains fell off, my heart was free;
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.
Amazing love, how can it be
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me!

Do our chains ever fall off via our psychologized gospel? No, they bind us only more tightly. Hymnals used as recently as 25 years ago reveal a theology widely unacceptable to today's church. It is more than a change in musical tastes that has brought about the disappearance of old hymns from our worship services and the changes in the wording of those we have retained. The original lyrics are considered relics. How many churches in the '90s would expose their people to such a "humiliation" service?

We heard a Christian psychiatrist tell a caller on a radio talk show: "Remember that old song we used to sing in Sunday school 'Jesus, Others and You, what a wonderful way to spell JOY'? Aren't you glad we no longer are expected to sing that? Now the 'you' no longer has to come last!"

Sadly, such a weak and laughable church makes Karl Marx's famous statement appear true: "Religion is the opiate of the people." Scripture memory has become a mantra for lowering blood pressure; we try to forgive others not because God commands it, but to reduce our anxiety and depression; we sing praises not because God is worthy, but because it will make *us* feel better.

Newsweek magazine, February 17, 1992, said in its cover article on self-esteem: "Churches have discovered that low self-esteem is less off-putting than sin." In its September 14, 1992, issue it covered Christian psychotherapy on the religion page and titled it, "These Souls Are Made for Shrinking."

Christianity Today (May 18, 1992), in a cover article entitled "Franchising Hope," reviewed what it termed the Christian psychiatric industry: "In March 1907 Sigmund Freud took on

God, presenting a paper in which he concluded that religion was a 'universal obsessional neurosis.' Ever after, psychiatrists have seen religion as a symptom of problems, not a source of healing. No field has been more resolutely irreligious. Today's scene though would make Freud twitch."

The author obviously feels Freud would be horrified to see Christian psychiatrists invading what *Christianity Today* calls "psychiatry's realm of final authority." In our opinion, Freud would twitch with joy as he watches what the article calls "a cadre of young, confident psychotherapists talking about reforming the church, and nobody laughs."

The real horror is that hardly anybody cries, and those few who do are termed divisive, lacking in understanding, judgmental, and behind the times. *Christianity Today* had enough insight to see that the church is being reformed, or more accurately *deformed*, beyond recognition.

Freud knew that psychology and Christianity stand in total opposition. Paul wrote, "Now brothers, I want to

remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:1, 2).

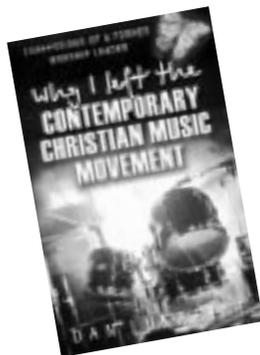
Everyone is making a choice whether they realize it or not. You will choose the truth that sets you free or that awful bondage described so well by Bunyan: "It came burning hot into my mind that however he flattered when he got me to his house, he would sell me for a slave."

Out of those 12 years in that dark prison cell, Bunyan wrote much that would shake the modern church to its foundation:

There can be no divine faith without a divine revelation of the will of God. Therefore, whatever is thrust into the worship of God that is not agreeable to divine revelation cannot be done but by a human faith which faith will not profit to eternal life. ■

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Why I Left the Contemporary Christian Music Movement



by Dan Lucarini

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Seven Tools for Interpersonal Reconciliation

by Roy B. Zuck

Two unmarried sisters refused to talk to each other. They drew a chalk line on the floor between their beds, and each resolved not to invade the other's domain. Cupboards, the refrigerator, the stove burners, the kitchen table—each sister had her own “territory.” They lived that way in silence for years, refusing to be reconciled.

How do you get two people like that to talk, to overlook their differences, to resolve their conflicts? Many husbands and wives are locked in a war of silence, spurning each other because of hurtful words or inappropriate actions. Some people hate going to work because of a mean-spirited boss or a cantankerous coworker. Even some Christians spurn each other at church because of a difference of opinion on music or ministry.

How do you bring together two people who are at odds? How do you help an offended person and the offender resolve their conflict? How can you help them put down their weapons and agree to work together?

The Epistle to Philemon, a short, little-known New Testament book, tells us how the Apostle Paul brought about reconciliation between a slave owner and the owner's runaway slave, Onesimus. Called “the most compelling letter of reconciliation in ancient history,” this epistle is a masterpiece of Christian tact.

Running away from Philemon in Colosse, Onesimus traveled to Rome, about a thousand miles away. Somehow he met Paul, who led him to the Lord. Then Paul sent him back to Philemon with a letter urging the slave owner to

take back his slave.

Imagine Philemon's emotions when he saw Onesimus at his door. Philemon was a believer; he even opened his home to a congregation for Sunday worship. But having been offended by the slave's crime, Philemon may have been smoldering with anger ever since the slave left. Philemon could have been thinking, “If I ever get my hands on him, I'll wring his neck.” Or, “If he ever shows up, I'll make him pay back everything he stole, and then some.” Or Philemon could have said, “He's a criminal. I'll turn him over to the authorities to execute him.” Or on a milder note, “What a surprise, Onesimus. I've been hoping you would return. We have been shorthanded ever since you left.”

Think of Onesimus. Here Paul was sending him back to face the very person he had offended. Filled with apprehension, he may have reflected, “Philemon will probably punish me severely or maybe even have me put to death. How can I possibly face him after I ran away? And yet Paul insisted that I go back.”

To be sure that the slave returned, Paul sent with him a fellow worker, Tychicus. As they arrived, Tychicus handed Philemon Paul's letter. Did Paul order Philemon to take back his slave? Did Paul use his authority as an apostle to demand that the two be reconciled? No. Instead, Paul was diplomatic, using a number of tactics that eased the tense situation and helped restore rapport.

1. *First, Paul commended Philemon; he didn't clobber him.* The apostle wrote of his friend's “faith in the Lord Jesus,” his “love for all the saints” (Philemon 5), and

***How do you
bring together
two people who
are at odds?***

his having “refreshed the hearts of the saints” (v. 7). And he added, “I appeal to you on the basis of love” (v. 9). With such a verbal pat on the back, how could Philemon refuse Paul’s request?

2. *Second, Paul built up Onesimus; he didn’t blast him.* Onesimus was now a believer in Jesus Christ and thus a spiritual “son” of Paul (v. 10) and a “dear brother” (v. 16). That meant that he and Philemon—slave and slave owner—were now equal spiritually. Onesimus was now a “brother” of Paul, and he was also a “brother in the Lord” (v. 16) to Philemon. Surely then the two could be rejoined now that they were both in the family of God. Also Paul wrote that Onesimus, a changed man, would now be “useful” to Philemon (v. 11). The slave, whose name means “useful,” would now be living up to his name. What a clever play on words.

3. *Third, Paul called on Philemon to decide; he didn’t coerce him.* Gently the apostle wrote that he “did not want to do anything without [Philemon’s] consent.” He wanted his friend’s response to be “spontaneous and not forced” (v. 14). Reconciliation between two people can’t be forced. But it can be encouraged and prompted.

4. *Fourth, Paul expressed confidence in Philemon; he didn’t doubt the slave owner’s positive response.* By being optimistic Paul knew that the slave owner would act favorably and would “do even more” than Paul asked (v. 21). Confidence goes a long way toward encouraging others to take the right steps.

5. *Fifth, Paul appealed to his own relationship with Philemon; he didn’t look down on him.* Philemon, he said, was his “dear friend and fellow worker” (v. 1), his “partner” (v. 17), and his spiritual “brother” (v. 20). How could Philemon not fulfill Paul’s proposal?

6. *Sixth, Paul used shrewd reasoning, not gruff arguments.* He reminded Philemon that the apostle was “an old man”

(v. 9) and a prisoner in chains (vv. 1, 9, 10, 13). And anticipating his release, Paul asked Philemon to prepare a guest room for him (v. 22). How then could Philemon possibly reject Onesimus? When Paul arrived in Philemon’s home in Colosse, he would readily know whether Philemon had complied with his appeal. And by receiving the slave who was now a Christian, Philemon would be refreshing Paul’s heart (v. 20). Since the slave owner had already refreshed the hearts of other believers (v. 7), how could he not refresh Paul’s heart? Bringing together two people who are at odds calls for careful persuasion, not harsh disputes.

7. *Seventh, Paul appealed to the power of the Spirit-filled life, not to sinful practices.* The Colossian church met in Philemon’s home (v. 2), so that

Philemon would have been struck by reading these words in the Epistle to the Colossians: “Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (Col. 3:13).

Imagine this wonderful reunion of a slave owner embracing his slave, a Christian leader accepting a lower-social-class worker who was now his equal in Christ.

Paul’s tactful strategy shows how believers today can help people in emotional tugs-of-war to unleash their strangleholds on each other. As Paul wrote, Philemon’s welcome should be the same as if he were reuniting with the apostle himself.

Want to help bring about reconciliation between a squabbling husband and wife, a disputing boss and worker, or two locked-in-conflict Christian workers? Then follow Paul’s superb example of spiritual diplomacy. Don’t clobber, coerce, doubt, or belittle. Instead, commend, encourage, express confidence, and challenge with Christlike standards. ■

—Reprinted with permission from the author.

***Slave and
slave owner
were now equal
spiritually.***

Confession of a Psychological Heretic

by Richard Ganz

“Get it out, Immanuel!” The group looked on in astonished shock as Immanuel writhed in agony. What had begun as anxious deep breathing had progressed to violent spasms and hyperventilation. “Get it out!” I cried.

Finally he screamed, “I am God!”

I whipped out a small New Testament I had been carrying in my pocket. Just that morning I had read from the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew’s Gospel. I quoted it to him: “Then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ,’ or ‘There He is,’ do not believe him. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. . . . For just as the lightning comes from the east, and flashes even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be” (Matt. 24:23, 24, 27).

Abruptly, Immanuel’s writhing, spasms, and hyperventilation ceased. He calmly asked, “Where did you read that from?” I told him, tossing the Bible across the room and telling him to check it out for himself. There was not another sound or another word from Immanuel for one solid month.

Four weeks later, I was sitting in my office during lunch hour reading from the Bible and praying. Despite my earnest prayer to be used by God to bring others to Christ, so far in my eight months as a Christian, this hadn’t happened. Then came the encounter that changed my life. There was a knock at my door. It was Immanuel. I invited him in and asked, “What brings you to my office?”

This man had spoken only a few words in several years. He looked at me now and clearly and calmly said, “I want to

become a Christian.”

It is said that people about to die experience their lives passing before them in a flash. I had that kind of experience as I looked at Immanuel. I wanted to lead people to Christ, but had never dreamed it would happen this way, in this place. I had imagined Bible study conversions or leading my Jewish family and old friends to Christ.

But that’s not what happened. Instead, here was Immanuel, a patient at the state hospital where I was employed. I knew that talking about religious matters in this setting would have consequences for me. I had worked and studied for years with one goal in mind—that I would become a clinical psychologist. I had achieved that goal. Everything I had hoped or dreamed of was being realized. It was hard to imagine a better job with better conditions, opportunities, benefits, and possibilities. I had it all. Then Immanuel stood there in my doorway and made his statement.

Did I really believe in Jesus Christ? Did I really believe that salvation in Christ was the most important reality that any individual could ever possess? Did I really believe that this one man’s salvation was more important than my career? I knew the answer was yes to all those questions; the proof of the sincerity of my beliefs lay in responding to his request and leading him to Christ! This was a turning point for me. It was the most important decision (apart from my commitments to Christ and my wife) that I have ever made. I said yes to this man’s request, and no to my own fears.

Trembling, I asked Immanuel, “When do you want to become a Christian?”

“Right now,” he responded. I sat down with Immanuel and showed him the plan of salvation, to which he heartily assented. Together we got down on our knees, and Immanuel prayed, repenting of his sin and asking Christ into his life. The years the locusts had stripped away were restored in an instant. As tears streamed down Immanuel’s cheeks, the Holy Spirit gave him a new birth, and he believed God and received Christ.

The next morning the director called me into his office as soon as I arrived at work. As I sat down, he said to me, “Rich, I’ve just heard the craziest story in the thirty-one years I’ve been here.”

“Let me hear it; those crazy stories are what it’s all about!” I had no idea what was to follow.

“Rich,” he said, “Immanuel’s ‘saved,’ and he’s telling everyone on the ward about it. He wants to get everyone, patients and staff, to become Christians.” I sat listening as my worst fears unfolded before me. “What do you say, Rich?” he asked me. “Is it true that you are speaking these things on the ward, as Immanuel says?”

All I could sputter was, “It’s true.”

The director looked at me and explained that he didn’t want to get rid of me, after having selected me over many other able psychologists just a short while earlier. He urged me to give up this “nonsense.” He encouraged me to be a great Christian after work but to promise to leave my Christianity out of my psychotherapy. At the time, the rich ironies of the situation weren’t readily apparent to me. The goals of my therapy with Immanuel had been to help him to speak four coherent words. Nonetheless, my director’s professional curiosity was uncommonly restrained in this case; he failed to ask, “How did you do it? How did you get him to speak—and so eloquently?”

The director informed me that if I agreed to leave Christianity out of my work, he would forget about this incident.

He would be happy to transfer Immanuel to a “chronic” hospital. After a few rounds of shock treatments, all this would be forgotten!

I was profoundly confused. I thought, *The Bible teaches that I am to submit to those in authority over me. Does this mean I must accept what he asks?* I told him I would need to pray about it.

I spent the night praying and reading the Book of Acts. The answer seemed unmistakable. I “must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29), and I “cannot stop speaking of what I have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20).

The next morning I explained to my director that I must speak at all times of Christ and His salvation and restoration, because those who most needed Christ were individuals just like Immanuel. I had not chosen to resign. I had chosen to bring Christ to the hospital. I knew that if ever there was a place that needed Jesus, this was it. The director saw it differently. As far as he was concerned, I was through—immediately. He gave me thirty days’ notice.

Believe me when I say that this was not the kind of life adventure I had had in mind the day I had hitchhiked into L’Abri Fellowship in the Netherlands eight months earlier. L’Abri is a Christian community in Switzerland, with branches in the Netherlands, Great Britain, and the United States. It was founded by the late Dr. Francis V. Schaeffer IV, one of the leading Christian philosopher/apologists of the twentieth century. At L’Abri I was confronted not only with the Biblical truth regarding man’s salvation through faith in Christ, but also with Biblical counseling.

As an “expert,” people at L’Abri wondered what I thought about a new book that had just come out. The book was *Competent to Counsel* by Jay Adams. I had never heard of Dr. Adams or nou-thetic counseling, a counseling model that Dr. Adams developed based entirely on the teachings of the Bible. In fact, prior to

coming to L'Abri, I hadn't even heard of Jesus Christ except in a disparaging way. As far as I was concerned, *Competent to Counsel* would probably turn out to be simply another psychology book. Little did I realize the profound impact it would have on my life.

I had already been in psychoanalytic psychotherapy. It was continuing (does it ever end?). My psychotherapy practice was psychoanalytic. I had spent years training to uncover the unconscious, break down repressive barriers and defenses, and analyze resistances and transferences. Life, I had come to believe, was simply "long-term analysis." I had rejected the concept of absolutes and any notions of transcendent values. I was not prepared for what I faced at L'Abri.

Competent to Counsel declared that nouthetic counseling sought as its goal, "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control," with a reference to "Gal. 5:22, 23." "What was that?" I wondered! (And to which "gal" was he referring?) I was amazed that anyone even imagined such goals, let alone sought to implement or live by them. In all the years of my counseling training we had never discussed or studied such lofty ideals, nor had we ever dreamed that our patients could live by such principles. My own psychotherapy practice was devoid of such concepts.

It was a good thing that I had no idea what "Gal. 5:22, 23" was. If I had known these goals were from the Bible, I would not have been interested. After all, I had believed the Bible was only for Sunday school children. As it was, in my pagan ignorance steeped in secular therapies, I found the goals and methodology of nouthetic counseling awe-inspiring.

Soon after this initial exposure to nouthetic counseling, I was confronted with the gospel of Isaiah and converted; it took me a month to realize that believing in Jesus Christ meant surrender and submission to Him, with no option to turn back.

This was the truth that my wife, Nancy, and I learned in our stay at L'Abri. Our backgrounds were as different as could be. Nancy was a genteel Gentile from a small town in Ontario. I was a wild Jew from NYC. I fell in love with Nancy at first sight. She was walking alongside a canal in Venice. I was lost (in more ways than one); she pulled out her map to show me where I was going, and we realized that we were both staying at the same youth hostel. That was twenty-three years ago, and this summer we're taking our four children with us to show them where it all happened.

Nancy was studying philosophy and religion at the University of Toronto. As she got deeper into her studies, she became more and more convinced as an atheist. When our relationship grew serious, her family (and mine) began to worry. "He's a Jew. You're a Christian. How will you raise the children?"

She used to answer, "That's no problem. We're both atheists." It seemed to be the one similarity between us.

Then L'Abri happened. While God changed my life through the prophet Isaiah, he had a servant ready for Nancy as well. She began listening to tapes by Dr. and Mrs. Schaeffer. She would urge me to listen to them, but I couldn't. Finally she listened to a tape called "A Bird's Eye View of the Bible" by Edith Schaeffer, which became the book *Christianity Is Jewish*. This tape described the Biblical theme of the Lamb of God from Genesis through Revelation. Nancy had grown up in an Anglican home. She had heard "Behold the Lamb of God" many times. But it had never made sense. Now she understood the Old Testament roots and meaning of what John the Baptist was crying out. She saw her own need of coming to this Lamb, and she did, surrendering her life to Christ in the apple orchard at L'Abri on September 6, 1972, while everyone else watched a memorial service for the eleven slain Jewish athletes at the Olympic games. There was death in

Munich, but life at L'Abri.

During the next eight months I taught at the university and trained psychotherapists at the medical center complex. I read the Bible continuously and grew in the knowledge of God. My desire to apply the Word of God to people and see them come to Christ also grew. Then came Immanuel, and I was fired.

But I had thirty days' notice, and during my final thirty days at the medical center, a middle-aged orthodox Jew came to my attention on the ward. He spent most of his time in a fetal position, doing nothing. I went over to him and commanded him to get up "in the name of Jesus Christ." He stood up enraged, informing me that he was a Jew. I explained that everything he longed and hoped for both as an individual and as a Jew could be found in the Messiah, Jesus. He rushed from the room, assuring me that he would prove me wrong. He went and got a Bible, and we began meeting to discuss what the Old Testament had to say about Jesus. I never again saw him in a fetal position. Rather, he was bent over his Bible, intent on proving that I was wrong about Jesus. One day I took him to lunch. To my amazement he said, "I want to become a Christian now!" His studies had brought him to Christ. Over a hamburger and french fries, I led him to the place of mercy and living waters, from which he eagerly drank.

My remaining weeks at the hospital more closely resembled revival services than psychotherapy. While these two men were growing and sharing their newfound faith, others were seeking and questioning, opening up in ways they had never dared when I was simply "staff." I heard accounts of emotionally battered and scarred people who had been locked away for years, their problems never getting discussed or resolved. They began hearing of forgiveness in Christ, and a whole new dimension of my work began to take shape.

Needless to say, the hospital and med-

ical center personnel were relieved when my month was over. The three of us—Immanuel, the Jewish man, and I—left together, and for each of us it was a moment of liberation. I couldn't see it then, but I wasn't just saying good-bye to the hospital; it was good-bye to a whole way of life.

I was used to good-byes. I could remember the night my father died. I was twelve years old. It was the most bitterly cold night of the year and the bitterest night of my life. While it was still uncertain whether my father would live or die, I rushed in panic and hope to the one place I thought to find comfort—the synagogue. When I arrived, the doors were locked. No amount of pounding could persuade them to open. I looked into the sky and cursed God, telling Him I was through with Him. Little did I realize it, but that night I was saying good-bye not only to my father, but to my Father in Heaven. The synagogue had been a major part of my life. Every day from the time I was eight years old, I was in Hebrew school, and every Shabbat I worshiped, both Friday evening and Saturday morning. To all of this, without really understanding at all, I had just said good-bye.

I said good-bye again when I graduated from university. I had received a fellowship for doctoral studies, and my mother, with all her immense skill at arousing guilt, asked me, "Is this what I raised you for—to leave home?"

I responded simply, "Yes."

In some ways, leaving my work situation was the most difficult good-bye of all. My first weeks away from work seemed to be a good-bye to life itself. Leaving the hospital position was traumatic. I had spent my life preparing for this work, and suddenly it was gone. In the amount of time that it took to tell of Jesus, everything I'd worked for and dreamed of had disappeared with nothing left in its place, or so I thought. I hadn't yet learned of the blessings of faithfulness to Christ.

I needed to speak with someone, both

to gain guidance for the future and to help me understand the turmoil I was experiencing. About this time, I was given the name of a Christian psychiatrist in New York City. I was thrilled. He was willing to see me and proved to be a gracious Christian man. I spent several hours describing my situation. I showed him my firing notice. It stated that I was fired for "using poor professional judgment, by letting my religious beliefs enter into my psychotherapeutic practice."

This Christian psychiatrist took me down the hall, showing me a lovely suite overlooking mid-town Manhattan. He asked me what I thought of the office. I pondered for a moment and couldn't help thinking that this was just what my mother had always dreamed of for me. I looked at him and told him that it was beautiful. He replied, "It's yours if you want it. Your firing letter is the best letter of recommendation I've ever received." He assured me that since he had a large private practice, there would be no difficulty starting me with a full practice as soon as I was ready.

I was encouraged beyond anything I can convey, but something nagged at me. That feeling was hard to put my finger on, but it went something like this: I knew I was a Christian; I knew I was a clinical psychologist, but I didn't know what it meant to be a "Christian psychologist." How did those two realities fit together? Could they? I asked him for a year to pray about his offer, and he agreed.

During this year, I finished teaching at the university and earnestly considered what God wanted me to do with my life. I traveled to Los Angeles and was offered a position with the Rosemead Graduate School of Psychology. Again, I was encouraged by the offer, but I knew that my psychoanalytic psychology had no Christian foundation. I wondered how I could teach at a Christian school under those circumstances. Strangely, no one seemed concerned about this conflict

except me.

Providentially during this period, I met Dr. Edward Robson, a pastor in a Reformed Presbyterian Church who had a deep knowledge and love of the Bible. The months following our meeting were a veritable feast for me, as he graciously taught me the Scriptures. My demands were great. At a certain point, Pastor Robson made a suggestion. "Why don't you visit Westminster Seminary?" When I learned that Dr. Jay Adams, whose book *Competent to Counsel* I had read at L'Abri, was a professor at Westminster, I made an appointment to speak with him.

I can still remember that first meeting with Dr. Adams. Someone brought my wife and me to his office and announced, "There's a couple here to see you."

To this he bellowed, "A couple of what?"

"A couple of people," was the feeble response.

To say that Dr. Adams was consistent in his direct approach is an understatement. When I remarked to him that Westminster Seminary seemed to be a cold place, he replied, "Warm it up!"

During the course of our discussion that day, Dr. Adams asked me, "Do you want to be able to say, 'Thus says the Lord?'"

I responded, "Definitely."

He fired back, "Then you'd better know what the Lord says!"

When I asked about counseling at the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation, his response was sharp and to the point. "I don't care how many degrees you have; no one counsels here unless they know the Word of God!" At that moment I knew I was going to Westminster. I finally understood that I needed to be the learner, not the teacher. Instead of coming to a lucrative job, I found myself coming to Westminster Seminary as a first year student. I was starting all over.

Just as it was when I came to Christ, starting all over was the only way to

begin. I had to learn my lessons from the ground up. Even then I assumed I would eventually have an independent counseling practice. I was in for another surprise—I would learn not only how to use the Bible, but where to apply my gifts. I had to resolve a number of problems I had with the church. It took me five years to understand that I should use my skills in the pastoral ministry. The difficulties I had experienced in placing myself as a freshman in seminary were nothing compared to my struggle with the idea of becoming a pastor. But slowly I realized that the pastorate is the heart of truly Christian counseling, which is the ministry of God's Holy Word. I learned that I shouldn't expect or seek the approval of man.

Imagine a New York City Jew becoming a preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Years later one of my relatives who would still speak to me said, "You can still make something of your life." But it was the disdain of fellow Christians that was most disconcerting. They seemed to view pastoral work with contempt.

If someone practiced law without legal training, he'd have no clients. If someone became a physician without medical training, he'd be sued for every cent he was worth, and then some. Only in the area of pastoral work, and Biblical psychology (literally "the study of the soul") in particular, is training in theology (literally "the study of God") considered, if not a detriment, at the very least, a waste of time.

Many Christians warned me against seminary, fearing that I would lose my love for God and His Word as I studied the Scriptures. Yet as I have studied the writings of influential Christian psychologists, I see an obvious problem—they are deficient in theological understanding. They don't know the Word of God or its power. They have devoted years to obtaining psychology degrees from secular institutions, training under people much like

my director at the medical center. Inevitably the fruit of those years subverts even their best efforts as Christian believers. Sadly, this is true even of many who are most esteemed in Christian circles. We will take a look at some of their truncated "Christian" philosophies and see where they deviate from a truly Biblical approach to human problems.

My goal in this book is to help readers understand that the counseling concepts woven into psychoanalysis (and its secular psychotherapeutic offshoots) are inherently opposed to the Word of God. My approach will be to reveal the direct conflict between secular philosophies and Biblical principles and to strip back to its ugly roots the psychotherapy that the church has baptized and embraced. My hope is that the church will stop shuffling her hurting and broken members to the "experts" who lack the power and perspective of the Word of God, that pastors will instead seize the opportunities to teach, rebuke, correct, and train in righteousness a people fit for service to King Jesus.

Even as I write this, I am reminded that the task is difficult. Just yesterday a desperate young woman called. A recent convert, she came to Christ with many problems. Her pastor, an evangelical, sent her to the psychiatric department of a major teaching hospital in the city. Her doctors put her on powerful psychotropic medication, and she began seeing a psychotherapist.

This young Christian asked me, "Shouldn't Christians be able to get Biblical counseling?" I hope my book awakens pastors and helps them to keep their flock from the clutches of the psychiatric establishment.

It has been said before, but we need to hear it again: Men and women of God, you are competent to counsel one another. May God enable you to accomplish this task. ■

—Taken from *Psychobabble*, © Crossway Books, 1993.

What Is Nouthetic Counseling?

by Jay E. Adams

Jesus Christ is at the center of all true Christian counseling. Any counseling which moves Christ from that position of centrality has, to the extent that it has done so, ceased to be Christian. We know of Christ and His will in His Word. Let us turn to Scripture, therefore, to discover what directions Christ, the King and Head of the Church, has given concerning the counseling of people with personal problems. The Scriptures have much to say concerning the matter. Perhaps the best place to begin is with a discussion of what I have called “nouthetic confrontation.”

The words *nouthesis* and *noutheteo* are the noun and verb forms in the New Testament from which the term “nouthetic” comes. A consideration of most of the passages in which these forms occur will lead inductively to an understanding of the meaning of nouthesis.

Nouthetic Confrontation: By the Whole Church

First, whatever nouthetic activity may be, it is clear that the New Testament assumes that all Christians, not simply ministers of the Gospel, should engage in it. In Colossians 3:16 Paul urged:

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and [for the moment we shall simply transliterate the next word] *confronting one another nouthetically*.

According to Paul, all Christians must teach and confront one another in a *nouthetic fashion*. In support of this proposition Paul also wrote (Romans 15:14):

Concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to *confront* one another *nouthetically*.

In both Colossians and Romans, then, Paul pictured Christians meeting in nouthetic confrontation as normal everyday activity. He was sure the Christians in Rome were able to do so because they were filled with knowledge and goodness. These qualities equipped them to confront one another nouthetically. So the first fact is plain: nouthetic activity is a work in which all of God’s people may participate.¹

Peculiarly the Work of the Ministry

But while all Christians ought to engage in such confrontation, nouthetic activity particularly characterizes the work of the ministry. Paul considered nouthetic confrontation a vital part of his own ministry. Incidental remarks in several passages indicate clearly that such activity was central. In Colossians 1:28, for instance, Paul declared:

We proclaim him *confronting* every man *nouthetically*, and teaching every man with all wisdom in order that we may present every man complete in Christ.

Paul’s proclamation of Christ involved confronting every man nouthetically. Certainly public confrontation in preaching was a part of Paul’s nouthetic activity, but he was engaged also in the nouthetic confrontation of individuals. Colossians 1:28 does not refer primarily to Paul’s public ministry, but principally to his private ministry to individuals. This is apparent

when he speaks of “nouthetically confronting *every man*.” Paul confronted people nouthetically in the day-by-day contacts of pastoral work. The fullest biblical account of Paul’s private nouthetic activity occurs in his farewell address to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20. This is a moving scene; they would see one another no more. In his remarks, Paul reviewed his three-year ministry at Ephesus, recalling the past, looking into the future, and describing the present. He warned about problems likely to arise, described the kind of activity in which he engaged while he was with them, and urged them to continue this same work among their people. Verse 31 is an informative statement that most fully describes nouthetic confrontation. His words give us a deep insight into the ministry of Paul in the place where he ministered (as far as we know) longer than any other. . . . What did Paul do during that time? He says:

Be on the alert [i.e., as I was], remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to confront each one nouthetically with tears.

It is important to notice first that nouthetic confrontation took up a fair share of Paul’s time if he engaged in it *night and day* for three years *without ceasing*. Paul continually confronted people nouthetically. We seldom think about Paul involved in pastoral work. His basic image is that of the missionary, crossing vast territories, sailing across the sea. We think of his remarkable ministry which spread the Christian faith through the *oikoumene*.² Of course he was that, but wherever he stayed for any length of time, Paul engaged in the solid pastoral work that is necessary to build up individuals in their faith. He says that nouthetic activity was a prominent part of that work. . . .

Three Elements in Nouthetic Confrontation

It is important to define nouthetic confrontation precisely. What does the word *nouthesis* mean? The term contains more than one fundamental element. That is one reason why it is difficult to translate. Traditional translations have vacillated between the words *admonish*, *warn*, and *teach*. A. T. Robertson (in his exposition of Colossians 1:28) rendered it “put sense into.” A few of the newer versions sometimes translate it “counsel.” Yet no one English word quite conveys the full meaning of *nouthesis*. . . . It is probably important to continue to transliterate *nouthesis*. Since the word has no exact English equivalent, the concepts inherent in the term probably do not exist widely in the English-speaking world. An attempt to bring the Greek term over into English perhaps ought to be made as the first step in endeavoring to establish *nouthesis* both as a concept and as a practice.

I

Nouthetic confrontation consists of at least three basic elements. The word is used frequently in conjunction with *didasko* (which means “to teach”). But in Colossians 3:16 and elsewhere it is distinguished from that word. Nouthetic confrontation always implies a problem, and presupposes an obstacle that must be overcome; something is wrong in the life of the one who is confronted. Cremer says, “Some degree of opposition has been encountered, and one wishes to subdue or remove it, not by punishment, but by influencing the *nous* [mind].” *Didasko* does not imply any problem. *Didasko* simply suggests the communication of data (teaching); making information known, clear, understandable, and memorable. The word *didasko* implies nothing about the listener, but refers exclusively to the

activity of the instructor. The person taught may or may not be anxious to receive instruction. He may pay great sums of money or travel long distances at great personal sacrifice to be taught, or his may be the typical response of the recalcitrant schoolboy, but the word *didasko* says nothing (one way or the other) about this. On the other hand, the word *nouthesis* focuses on both confronter and the one confronted. *Nouthesis* specifically presupposes the need for a change in the person confronted, who may or may not put up some resistance. In either case there is a problem in his life that needs to be solved. Nouthetic confrontation, then, necessarily suggests first of all that there is something wrong with the person who is to be confronted nouthetically. The idea of something wrong, some sin, some obstruction, some problem, some difficulty, some need that has to be acknowledged and dealt with, is central. In short, nouthetic confrontation arises out of a condition in the counselee that God wants changed. The fundamental purpose of nouthetic confrontation, then, is *to effect personality and behavioral change*.

II

The second element inherent in the concept of nouthetic confrontation is that problems are solved nouthetically by verbal means. Trench says:

It is training by word—by the word of encouragement, when this is sufficient, but also by that of remonstrance, of reproof, of blame, where these may be required; as set over against the training by act and by discipline which is *paideia*. . . . The distinctive feature of *nouthesia* is the training by word of mouth.

Trench quoted as evidence, Plutarch's use of *nouthetikoi logoi* (nouthetic words) and continued: "*Nouthetein* had continually, if not always, the sense of admonishing *with blame*,"

and finally says that the idea of rebuke is affirmed by the derivation "from *nous* and *tithemi*" which indicate that "whatever is needed to cause the motion to be taken home, to be *laid to heart*, is involved in the word." So to the concept of *nouthesis* must be added the additional dimension of person-to-person verbal confrontation. *Nouthesis* presupposes a counseling type confrontation in which the object is to effect a characterological and behavioral change in the counselee. In itself, the word neither implies nor excludes a formal counseling situation but is broad enough to encompass both formal and informal confrontation. Nouthetic confrontation, in its biblical usage, aims at straightening out the individual by changing his patterns of behavior to conform to biblical standards.

Specific biblical instances of such nouthetic activity may be seen in Nathan's confronting David after his sin with Uriah and Bathsheba, or Christ's restoring Peter after His resurrection. The failure to confront nouthetically may be seen in the blameworthy behavior of Eli recorded in 1 Samuel 3:13:

You tell him that I will execute justice over his family forever, because he knew that his sons were bringing a curse upon themselves, and he failed to *discipline* them (Berkeley Translation).

In the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Old Testament) the word *discipline* is the verbal form *enouthetei*. Eli's sin was failure to confront his sons nouthetically. He failed to speak soon enough, strictly enough, and seriously enough, to effect genuine changes in them. In 1 Samuel 2:22ff. there is, to be sure, the record of one feeble, futile, final attempt made much too late. . . .

Why do you behave this way? I hear all the people talk about your misconduct. This will not do, my sons; for what I hear is not a good report.

Eli's stress upon "why" may indicate one of his failures as a father. It was not his business to speculate about the causes of his sons' wicked deeds beyond the fact that he already knew—that they were sinners. It was his task to stop them. . . .

Usual counseling methods recommend frequent long excursions back into the intricacies of the whys and wherefores of behavior. Instead, nouthetic counseling is largely committed to a discussion of the what. All the why that a counselee needs to know can be clearly demonstrated in the what. *What* was done? *What* must be done to rectify it? *What* should future responses be? In nouthetic counseling the stress falls upon the "what" rather than the "why" because the "why" is already known before counseling begins. The reason why people get into trouble in their relationships to God and others is because of their sinful natures. Men are born sinners.

Much time is wasted by asking why. The question "Why" may lead to speculation and blame-shifting; "What" leads to solutions to problems. "What have you been doing?" is a very significant question to ask. Having answered that question, counselors may then ask: "What can be done about this situation? What does God say must be done?" Because nouthetic counseling seeks to correct sinful behavior patterns by personal confrontation and repentance, the stress is upon "What"—what is wrong? and what needs to be done about it? People never understand the why more clearly than when the focus is upon the what. The second element in nouthetic contact, therefore, is personal conference and discussion (counseling) directed toward bringing about change in the direction of greater conformity to biblical principles and practices. Any biblically legitimate verbal means may be employed.

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III

The third element in the word *nouthesis* has in view the purpose or motive behind nouthetic activity. The thought is always that the verbal correction is intended to benefit the counselee. This beneficent motive seems never to be lost, and often is quite prominent. For example, in 1 Corinthians 4:14, Paul uses the verbal form of the word in this fashion:

I did not write these things to shame you but to confront you nouthetically as my beloved children.

The antithesis in that sentence brings out the tender concern inherent in the term. Because of this element, the term appropriately describes the concern of the parent for his child, and is used frequently in familial contexts. The Septuagint translators evidenced their preference for the word in the relationship of Eli as a father to his sons. The parent-child relationship also appears in Ephesians 6:4. There Paul spoke about bringing up children "in the nurture and the nouthetic confrontation of the Lord." In the parallel passage in Colossians 3:21, Paul warned parents not to "exasperate" their children. In Ephesians he urged, "Do not provoke them to wrath." Even in the most serious circumstances, an unruly Christian is to be "confronted nouthetically *as a brother*" (2 Thess. 3:15). . . .

So then, the third element in nouthetic confrontation implies changing that in his life which hurts the counselee. The goal must be to meet obstacles head on and overcome them verbally, not in order to punish but to help him. . . . As Paul wrote in Colossians 1:28, every man must be confronted nouthetically in order that every man may be presented to Christ mature and complete. These, then, are the three basic concepts in the word *nouthesis*.

SWORD AND TRUMPET

Nouthesis and the Purpose of Scripture

Nouthesis accords quite fully with what Paul says elsewhere about the purpose and use of Scripture. In 2 Timothy 3:16, he wrote:

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is useful for teaching, for reproving, for correcting, for training in righteousness.

Here, the same nouthetic goals that Paul had previously stated in Colossians 1:28 seem to be in view. There he spoke about confronting every man nouthetically in order that every man might be presented perfect in Christ. One might say that the Scriptures themselves are nouthetically oriented. In 2 Timothy Paul indicated that the Scriptures are useful to perfect the man of God, by what might be called nouthetic means (teaching, reproving, correcting, and training).

The Scriptures then, are useful for the nouthetic purposes of reproving, teaching, correcting, and training men in righteousness. Because this is the classic passage concerning inspiration, its primary purpose often has been overlooked. Paul was concerned to discuss not only inspiration but primarily the purpose of the Scriptures. He argued that because they were God-breathed, the Scriptures are useful for nouthetic purposes.

In the fourth chapter Paul continued this discussion. Based on his conclusions in Chapter 3, Paul urged Timothy to use the Scriptures concretely in accordance with their nouthetic purposes. He wrote:

Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with great patience and instruction (2 Timothy 4:2).

Timothy could fulfill that mandate only by using the Scriptures nouthetically. So nouthetic confrontation must be scriptural confrontation. Nouthetic

confrontation is, in short, confrontation with the principles and practices of the Scriptures. Paul's words in Colossians and 2 Timothy pertain to the same matter. In both passages Paul thought of bringing God's Word to bear upon people's lives in order to expose sinful patterns, to correct what is wrong, and to establish new ways of life of which God approves. Since it embraces all of these ideas, the term *nouthetic* seems to be an appropriate modifier for "counseling."

Nouthetic Involvement

Turning again to the 20th chapter of Acts, notice Paul's comment about nouthetic pastoring "with tears." Today counselors seldom cry in counseling sessions, though from time to time nouthetic counselors find that it is impossible not to shed tears. But probably there is no need to cry as Paul did. Modern American culture is different. Paul lived in a society that encouraged people to express their emotions freely. Until very recently, our culture has considered free emotional expression taboo. A Hebrew was likely to tear his shirt in half and throw ashes on his head when he became upset. To modern Americans this is "losing one's cool." Most Americans simply do not "weep and wail and gnash their teeth" even when deeply grieved. Whether this stifling of emotion is good or bad is another issue. But Paul's tears plainly reveal one fact—that he became deeply involved in the problems of his people. Involvement may differ not only in intensity, but also in kind. Tears show that Paul's involvement was a total involvement both of intensity and of kind. To the Corinthians Paul wrote:

Who is weak without my being weak; who is led into sin without my intense concern? (2 Corinthians 11:29).

In his third letter, John too showed evidence of nouthetic involvement:

I have no greater joy than this, to hear that my own children walk in the truth (vs. 4).

Nouthetic counseling, then, necessarily embodies involvement of the deepest sort.

There is a prevalent view of counseling which says, "Don't become involved too deeply with your counselee." The image of the ideal counselor according to this view is that of a professional who is stochically clinical, and who maintains a sterile white-coated manner. . . . While the counselee is to be wholly open, the counselor must never be known in his total personality. There is a double standard. . . .

Love Is the Goal

What are the goals of nouthetic counseling? In 1 Timothy 1:5 Paul put it this way:

But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and a sincere faith.

The word *authoritative* might be added to that translation: "The goal of our authoritative instruction is love." The original word (*parangelia*) is more than simply instruction; it is instruction imposed authoritatively. The authority of God is presupposed. The purpose of preaching and counseling is to foster the love toward God and love toward one's neighbor which God commands. Jesus summed up the keeping of the whole law as love. Any notion of authority as antithetical to love is inconsistent with Scripture.

Love is precisely man's problem, however. How can sinful man love? Since the fall, in which Adam's sin led to a guilty conscience, hypocrisy, and doubt, it has been impossible for natural men to keep their hearts pure, their consciences good, or their faith unhyprocritical. All are born with a warped sinful nature that vitiates any such possibility. And yet love depends upon these very qualities. That is why Paul conditioned love upon the solution

to these problems (note: "love from," i.e., "which issues from"). God's authoritative instruction through the ministry of His Word, spoken publicly (from the pulpit) or privately (in counseling), is the Holy Spirit's means of producing love in the believer.

The overarching purpose of preaching and counseling is God's glory. But the underneath side of that splendid rainbow is love. A simple biblical definition of love is: The fulfillment of God's commandments. Love is a responsible relationship to God and to man. Love is a relationship conditioned upon responsibility, that is, responsible observance of the commandments of God. The work of preaching and counseling, when blessed by the Holy Spirit, enables men through the gospel and God's sanctifying Word to become pure in heart, to have peaceful consciences, and to trust God sincerely. Thus the goal of nouthetic counseling is set forth plainly in the Scriptures: to bring men into loving conformity to the law of God.

Authoritative Counseling

But notice that Christian counseling involves the use of authoritative instruction. "Authoritative instruction" requires the use of directive, nouthetic techniques. Technique, and all methodology, must grow out of and be appropriate to purpose and content. The end does not justify the means; rather, it regulates the means. Love will blossom as counselors focus their attention upon purification of the heart, the clearing of the conscience, and the building of genuine trust. Counseling will seek to reverse those sinful patterns which began in the Garden of Eden. When he disobeyed God, his conscience was awakened, and out of fear, sinful man fled, covered himself, and tried to hide from God. When confronted by God, finding that he could not successfully avoid Him, he resorted to blameshifting and excuses. In

antithesis to running and hiding, nouthetic counseling stresses turning to God in repentance. Instead of excuse-making or blameshifting, nouthetic counseling advocates the assumption of responsibility and blame, the admission of guilt, the confession of sin, and the seeking of forgiveness in Christ. In his dealings with Adam and Eve, God literally did not allow them to get away with what they had done. Adam tried to make a getaway into the woods. But God confronted him nouthetically, in order to change him by words. The relationship between God and Adam had been established on the basis of

God's Word, broken by Satan's challenge to that Word, and had to be reestablished by God's Word. God elicited a confession from him. He probed until he got satisfactory answers. God gave hope and promised salvation in Christ. ■

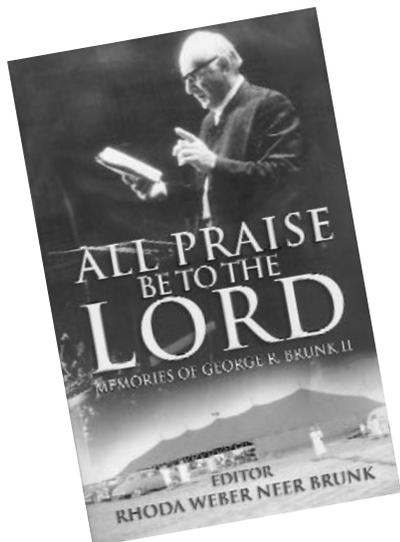
ENDNOTES

1. The priesthood of all believers, a biblical doctrine revived in the Reformation, led to calling the minister *pastor* *pastorum* (shepherd of shepherds). All believers have a ministry to all others, which Paul says involves counseling, or nouthetic confrontation.
2. The civilized Greek-Roman Mediterranean world.

—Taken from the book, *Competent to Counsel*

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