

# SOUL CARE IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM



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## **SOUL CARE IN THE NEW MILLENIUM**

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As would be expected, we have begun the new millennium ministering to the psychological and living needs of those in the church on the note sounded by Christian professionals in the behavioral sciences. Thus, the field of psychology has tended to usurp the initiative from our theological institutions in this vital area. The result is that it is commonly accepted that Christian counseling or psychology is a specialty; and, for that reason, those practicing it are seldom held accountable for their theological presuppositions as long as they espouse mainline evangelical doctrine. That being the case, educational institutions may well be using a counseling approach and an amalgamation of materials that are counter to their theological positions without being aware of it.

Such is the milieu which the counseling approach that God called me to develop and pioneer was destined to encounter. Back in 1970, Christian psychology was in its infancy but had been formally launched with Fuller Seminary granting a degree that was an integration of psychology and theology. However, this degree and

most of those which followed in other Christian educational institutions did not talk of transformation which would have necessitated their counseling being attended with miraculous life changes. At the same time, Dr. Jay Adams was pioneering an approach which he termed nouthetic counseling which was a counterpoint in that he ruled out psychology in favor of Biblical counseling.

Since the Christian establishment was enamored with this fledgling approach to people's problems, exchanged life counseling or discipleship counseling, which I termed *Spirituotherapy*<sup>®</sup>, and in which I received my doctorate from the University of Northern Colorado, came on the scene at God's behest (Isaiah 58:10,11) with little fanfare and has been largely ignored by the Christian press. It is notable that it has not been mentioned, except in passing, in articles in the major Christian magazines.

A couple of centuries ago, spiritual direction was in vogue; and it found its way into some discipleship teaching in the latter part of last century, but it has not had a broad acceptance since it runs counter to the flesh. Christ-centered counseling or discipleship would be more in this vein and is sometimes taught as a spiritual formation; however, most who would teach this have not applied it to the problems which are currently referred to Christian psychologist and psychiatrists. That being the case, most seminaries opt for a hybrid approach to psychology and theology in counseling

for which their graduates may meet the requirements for state licensure in the field of psychotherapy. Thus, we have not only ceded this strategic area to the behavioral sciences, we have joined them and pander to world system developments in an attempt to garner professional acceptance (and third party payments for services!). Now, the church is not accorded the privilege to determine the extent to which it will dare venture into the domain which has always been its rightful territory. While the church can offer cure, psychology's best effort is care!

The discipline of psychology is restricted to dealing with the works of the flesh and doing therapy in an attempt to counteract them, while the Holy Spirit majors in the fruit of the Spirit as a result of lives transformed by the renewing of the mind. While there are believers who would go beyond the pale of psychology, the Holy Spirit's being the Therapist is not the method; and the experienced Cross (Galatians 2:20, Romans 6:6) is not the goal embodied in Ph.D. programs in psychology with which I am familiar.

The Holy Spirit sovereignly dealt with my life in 1965 by illuminating Galatians 2:20 while yet in the aerospace industry and set me free from what would have been diagnosed as anxiety neurosis, from which I was suffering and was on prescribed medication. My life was transformed in a crisis experience which is not always the case; many are set free in a process as the Holy Spirit deals with their lives. However, this was to be the

basis for my calling to the ministry in 1967; and the experienced Cross, as in Galatians 2:20 and Romans 6:6, became the central focus of the counseling approach which God called me to develop and pioneer. My masters at the University of Colorado both had this central theme. My first book, *Handbook to Happiness*, 1971, (Tyndale House) was accepted as my project in lieu of dissertation for the doctorate.

From the outset, the Holy Spirit transformed lives with my beginning full time ministry under Grace Fellowship International (GFI) on February 1, 1970. The first staff member was added in 1972, and training began that year. In 1975, the first remote office was established, with others in this and other countries following. Lay people have been trained to be very effective since the Holy Spirit is the One who changes lives without the benefit of a therapist. With our book on the history of GFI being readied, there will be ten books in print which are being used in the training of others. *Handbook to Happiness* is now in Spanish, Korean, Romanian, and Russian, with Chapter 2 in tract form now over 40 languages.

The present unstable conditions in our country make it highly likely that the church will be a suffering church and will be called upon to do what it should never have quit doing; however, the majority of lay people are woefully unprepared to assume the responsibilities care and cure. This means that massive training will have to be done to prepare and equip those within the church to be of help to those who will be turning

to the church in times of crisis which are likely to be ahead, as witness the jihad which has been declared and the corruption which is being graphically exposed in our major corporations with the corresponding domino effect on the economic scene. When only miracles will suffice, psychology—even that practiced by Christians—will prove impotent to provide them; it will necessitate an approach which the Holy Spirit honors because the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the experienced Cross, are central (1 Corinthians 1:18).

Thirty-five years of history attest to the adequacy of spiritual answers to what are, at heart, spiritual problems. Though the psychological symptoms may have started at birth, or before, the transforming of the life by the renewing of the mind is more than sufficient in a great percentage of those who normally turn to the behavioral sciences for symptomatic relief. The flesh is the real issue, rather than the works of the flesh which emanate from it in functional, as opposed to organic, problems. A significant percentage of those receiving spiritual counsel find basic victory in the first interview or before they return for the second, if they are at the end of their (and others') resources. Subsequent interviews may be used to address the major symptoms that have been typical of the intrapersonal and interpersonal difficulties. Until the flesh is addressed, it is futile to do therapy on its outworkings; in fact, the problem (the flesh) is worsened because it is strengthened when symptoms such

as depression are alleviated if the Cross has not become a reality in the believer's life.

Since the Holy Spirit is the Therapist, lay people can be, and have been, readily trained to be used of Him in sharing Truth with others inside or outside the church. When one finds victory, revival has just taken place; when that one learns to share what he has experienced with another, revival can spread across the church and across the country (and into other countries as we have already seen).

Will we continue to search for an innovative 21st century approach or will we be willing to regress and opt for a first century method prescribed by the New Testament? It was sufficient then, and we have found that it is more than sufficient now for those who are willing to lose their lives in order to save them (Matthew 16:24,25). However, this has not been understood and appropriated by anything near the majority of the Christian population, nor has it been espoused by Christian psychologists and psychiatrists as the method of choice in dealing with problems in coping with life.

The research has been done and the results are in such that methods and materials are readily available; now, it remains for the church to avail itself of them. The modern church growth devotees will find that the church must come to the end of itself, as well as the individuals which comprise it; and this is not in the game plan for the modern church growth movement. The church as an organization must decrease if the church as an organism is to increase;

this phenomenon is covered in my book, *Handbook to Happiness & You—A Spiritual Clinic*.

The flesh being what it is, it will probably be necessary for the church to be at the end of itself before it will be receptive to the aforementioned Truth and process. It is my prayer and hope that we will be able to share with many churches before the necessity is thrust upon them; obedience is still better than sacrifice! However, leaving the pack and the trend set by Christian educational institutions is not a popular tack to take. It is more acceptable and comfortable to 'go with the flow', even when the flow is going in the wrong direction—usually downhill, except under pressure!

When God called me to develop and launch a spiritual approach to counseling, almost everyone thought I was out to lunch! Now, it is only the vast majority! But deviating from His calling or borrowing from psychology has never been a temptation or remote consideration. When the prospect of a suffering church is thrust upon us, it will make a lot more sense in retrospect than it ever did to my detractors in prospect!

I praise God for His faithfulness to His calling in the transformation of lives around the world directly through GFI and related materials, as well as through those who have been trained, directly and indirectly, over the years. The exchanged life counseling movement, as it is commonly called today, has gained broad acceptance at the grass roots level. With Luther Rice Seminary in Atlanta now offering

degrees in exchanged life counseling, it will soon be necessary for the Christian establishment to come to grips with that which it has ignored for the last third of a century.

It is our prayer that we will be able to minister to the Body of Christ that which was necessarily developed as a parachurch ministry such that it will soon typify the ministry of the average local church. Every major awakening the world has known has been based in this truth. In the past, it was propounded from the pulpit in revival meetings; it is my conviction that this is now a thing of the past, with rare exceptions, and that it now must be done by one believer witnessing to another as well as in more formal discipleship and counseling.

We will covet your prayer and support as we purpose to make such training widely available through materials, media, and internet. It would be one small step for God, but a major step for the professing church. All that is required is for the church to get in step with God rather than continuing to run ahead in its own inventions. The walk in the Spirit is merely a repeated step of being filled with the Spirit, once we are emptied of our resources, and we are content to walk in His!

When the program-driven church becomes the church at rest (Hebrews 4:10,11), it will become the church triumphant and of God be blessed.

## Soul Care in the New Millenium



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