Mental Illness and the Family

The January 2017 shooting at the Ft. Lauderdale airport is still being investigated, but what surfaced immediately in seeking a motive for Esteban Santiago’s deadly action was his family’s observations that he appeared to be fighting a mental health challenge. When he returned from military service in Iraq, he reported hearing voices and his family reported that “his mind was not right.”

Totally apart from the issues Mr. Santiago is dealing with, both psychologically and legally, my heart goes out to his family. The family members of a person struggling with mental health issues carry a heavy load, often in isolation and silence, because of the stigma of shame often associated with mental illness.

I am more sensitive to this after recently reading a different kind of book. Sparks of Redemptive Grace – Seeking and Seeing God Amid a Loved One’s Mental Illness is a short but powerful book written by the mother of a young man in a battle with bipolar disorder.
Catherine P. Downing offers grace-drenched perspective that can and should change the way we think about this struggle. I learned a lot from her. For example, she writes,

*It is a heartbreaking truth that I had to learn to say, “Douglas has bipolar disorder,” instead of, “Douglas is bipolar.” A minor wording difference. A monumental identity distinction. To have a disease, rather than to be one, is a defining stance of dignity.*

But it’s not just the family members dealing with mental illness who need to be educated on how to think and respond and love well. We the church family also need to be better equipped to love “the least of these” with the compassion of Jesus. That is going to mean loving the family members staggering under the weight of their loved ones’ illness as well. We are often quick to arrange meals for new mommies or families where someone has had surgery, but what about the families trudging through the exhausting day-in-day-out invisible battle when it’s the brain or the mind that is diseased?

One of the ways we can love families dealing with mental illness is by adjusting our unrealistic expectations. Mental illness isn’t something people “get over” quickly . . . and sometimes not even on this side of eternity.

And then there is the ongoing grieving for the should-have-beens of lost dreams and hopes, and even the loss of the “normal” kind of life most of us assume we will live. The first sentence of the introduction reads, “My husband, Nelson, once said that if we ever write a book the title should be, *It Wasn’t Supposed to Be Like This.*” Those living with this kind
of unrelenting grief need friends who will support them, never give up praying for them, being “Jesus with skin on” for them. (Check out this really excellent list of how to pray for families impacted by mental illness: sparksofredemptivegrace.com/31days31ways2pray4families/)

I was blessed to read this short list of suggestions for how the church can support the families of those dealing with mental illness in the Bible.org article “Mental Health and the Church”:

1. Make your church a safe place for those who suffer. To do that, a church body needs to be transparent about brokenness and acknowledge that all of us struggle with weak areas in our lives.

2. Equip your church with the tools it needs to serve those with mental illnesses and their families. Develop or identify your congregation’s theology of suffering. Train clergy and staff. Offer support groups. Create alliances with local mental health professionals.

3. Treat hurting people like people. Be a friend. Include them in gatherings. Invite them when groups are going to lunch. As needed, refer them on to professional help, but don’t pass them on. At the same time, set healthy boundaries in your relationships. Don’t expect them to be able to do that.

4. Address the stigma of mental illness by talking about it
openly. Include general prayers for the mentally ill in congregational praying. Highlight and financially support local ministries who serve the homeless, the incarcerated and indigent mentally ill populations.

5. Treat those with mental illnesses and their families as you would any who have chronic pain in their lives or are lifelong caregivers. Pray for and with them. Give them space to talk about what is going on in their lives. Attend to practical needs such as transportation to medical appointments, assist, when appropriate, with extraordinary expenses.

I have committed to make hearing new news about the Ft. Lauderdale shootings a reminder to pray for the family members of the troubled shooter. At the same time, I want to be “Jesus with skin on” for those in my world who need comfort for the same kind of pain in their family.

Also check out the website for this helpful little book, www.sparksofredemptivegrace.com

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/mental_illness_and_the_family on January 10, 2017.
How Should We Handle Overwhelming Feelings?

What is the biblical perspective on how to handle overwhelming feelings?

There are healthy and unhealthy ways to do that.

The healthy way to deal with strong feelings starts with thinking wisely about feelings in general. Our pastor often says that feelings are real (we do feel them, often intensely), but they’re not reliable (they make terrible indicators of what is true). So we should acknowledge them, but not be led by them.

Especially powerful, overwhelming feelings.

Allowing yourself to be controlled by your feelings is unwise and immature. The flip side of that is our example of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. No one ever experienced the strength of horrific feelings like He did, to the point of sweating blood. He allowed Himself to feel His feelings, but then He turned in trust to His Father, submitting to His will. He set the bar for how to handle overwhelming feelings: **feel the feelings, and trust the Lord.**

Often, though, especially in the young, people deal with their strong feelings in unhealthy ways.

**Stuff them.** One of my friends refers to her “vault,” the supposedly safe, impenetrable locker where all the painful feelings of her horrific childhood were supposed to stay stashed. Out of sight, out of mind, out of touch. Until the vault developed cracks, and those strong feelings of pain and shame and horror and fear started slipping out sideways into her relationships and her dreams.
This is not God’s plan for emotional health. David wrote in Psalm 51:6, “You (God) desire truth in my innermost being.” In Romans 1, Paul referred to those who “suppress the truth in unrighteousness” (1:18). Stuffing and denying feelings is not truthful. And it doesn’t make them go away. Someone even wrote a book titled, “Feelings Buried Alive Never Die.”

**Let them explode.** Without self-control, the angry person can vent his or her anger with verbal shrapnel and even physical abuse. Road rage, anyone? (I blogged about this in The Problem with Heart Bombs.)

**Self-injure.** The “solution” of cutting, burning, skin-picking, hair-pulling, and other forms of self-injury has been growing in popularity over the past decade or so. These destructive behaviors can provide momentary relief by distracting attention to soul pain by causing body pain. When it becomes an addiction, the release of endorphins, feel-good brain chemicals, provides an additional reason to keep repeating it.

Those choosing to self-injure need an extra measure of grace and understanding, because their level of soul pain is especially high to go to that extreme. In addition to the emotional pain, I believe they are experiencing a nasty spiritual warfare attack. Jesus said that our enemy, Satan, “comes only to steal, kill and destroy” (John 10:10). The “slow suicide” of self-injury is a pernicious way to do that.

I do think that cutting is a demonic suggestion, based on the story in 1 Kings 18 where the prophets of the false god Baal cut themselves trying to get the attention of their idol. Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 10 that sacrifices made to the false gods of idols are actually sacrifices to demons, so there is a biblical connection between cutting and demonic influence. (I’m not saying anything about demon possession, which is not even a good biblical interpretation of the New Testament word *demonize*; rather, I think those who cut hear the whisper from the enemy, whose native tongue is lying [John 8:44]: “Cutting will help. Cutting will make me feel better. Cutting is the
God’s word offers us some healthy ways to express strong, overwhelming feelings.

**Talk about them.** The highly sensitive and emotional King David invited the Lord into his strong feelings, and he used words to express the agony of his heart. Many of the psalms are powerful expressions of the psalmists’ emotions. Consider Psalm 55:1-5 for example:

“Listen to my prayer, O God. Do not ignore my cry for help! Please listen and answer me, for I am overwhelmed by my troubles. My enemies shout at me, making loud and wicked threats. They bring trouble on me and angrily hunt me down. My heart pounds in my chest. The terror of death assaults me. Fear and trembling overwhelm me, and I can’t stop shaking.”

When overwhelmed by strong emotions, telling someone else who can be trusted to listen respectfully and with understanding is a healthy, constructive way to express feelings.

Writing one’s thoughts and feelings in a journal is a powerful process to move the feelings from the inside to the outside. (I recently wrote about that here: Pen > Puter)

**Let yourself cry.** Then there is God’s good gift of tears. God created us with tear ducts as a way for strong feelings to leave the body, moving from our hearts on the inside to our cheeks on the outside, and that is much better, much healthier, than cutting so that the “red tears” flow.

Psalm 56:8 shows us that David was not afraid to let his tears fall:

“You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book.”

God considers our tears precious enough to collect!
Sometimes, though, people have trouble accessing their unshed tears. They are locked up inside. Often this is because of having made a self-protective inner vow, usually many years ago: “I will not cry.” It was considered unsafe because crying resulted in shaming or being punished. When children make a personal inner vow like that, it functions like the cruise control on a car, controlling the speed. The little person who made the vow many years before created a hard and fast life-rule, and until it is addressed and renounced, it stays in place. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13:11, “When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.” One of those childish things can be making an inner vow—which ends up, from the perspective of adulthood, being what the Bible calls a “foolish vow” (Lev. 5:4-6). And the wise thing to do with a foolish vow is break it, or renounce it or cast it off in Jesus’ name. Romans 13:12 instructs us to cast off deeds of darkness, which this kind of vow would be because it is the opposite of trusting in God.

What should we do with hard, overwhelming feelings?

• Don’t try to hide from them or stuff them.

• Acknowledge them and let yourself feel them. Invite Jesus into your feelings.

• Talk about how you feel, and what you’re thinking, with a safe person.

• Let yourself cry them out of your body one tear at a time.

And follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, fully God and fully man: Feel the feelings, and trust the Lord.

This blog post was originally published at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/how_should_we_handle_overwhelming_feelings on June 16, 2015.
On Suicide

Apr. 9, 2013

Over the weekend, Rick Warren (pastor of Saddleback Church in California, author of The Purpose Driven Life) and his wife Kay revealed that their son Matthew had taken his life after a lifelong struggle with mental illness. In an email to his church, Pastor Warren wrote, “[O]nly those closest knew that he struggled from birth with mental illness, dark holes of depression, and even suicidal thoughts. In spite of America’s best doctors, meds, counselors, and prayers for healing, the torture of mental illness never subsided.”

Many years ago, I was privileged to take a three-year lay counseling class from a wise and experienced man who taught us that those who commit suicide don’t really want to die; they just want the pain to end. Deep depression feels like being locked in a dark dungeon with no way out. The pain can become intolerably intense; one friend likened it to being forced to hold a large cauldron of boiling liquid with no hot pads. Those of us who have been spared from deep depression cannot really imagine how dark and how painful it is.

Psalm 139:16 says, “All the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be.” That means that before God even creates us, He knows the day of our death. That also means that those who commit suicide are dying on their ordained last day. Most of the time, though, God intervenes in people’s plans to end their lives, each story different and drenched in grace.

When one teenage girl learned she was pregnant, she planned to drive one of her family’s cars into an embankment at the end
of the week—but her parents sold that car before she could carry out her plan, and she decided she couldn’t wreck the one remaining vehicle. Today, she is so glad she gave birth to her baby girl, who brought immeasurable joy to her adoptive parents, and enjoys her life of service to God which includes her own family.

Another friend lay in bed one night planning to end her life by walking out in front of an 18-wheeler on the nearby interstate. As she thought about making her way in her nightgown across the empty field that lay between her house and the highway, she suddenly thought, “I can’t walk across that field in my bare feet!” . . . and turned over and went back to sleep.

When our son was suicidally depressed in high school, his friend came to us and told us of his plan to hurt himself a few days later. He was not pleased that his friend had “betrayed” him, but we were so grateful—and it enabled us to get him some badly-needed help.

There are so many stories of God’s intervention that when we do hear of someone taking their own life, I do believe it means God allowed it because it was their ordained day. This doesn’t diminish the pain for the survivors, though.

My dear friend Caren Austen, responding to the news of Matthew Warren’s suicide, wrote an essay revealing her own struggles with mental illness and suicidal depression so that people would know what it’s like. With her permission, I gratefully share these excerpts:

“I am not weak, lacking in faith, demon-possessed or oppressed or anything else but suffering from faulty brain chemistry.

“The disorder affects my daily life: my ability to work, interact with other people, activities of daily living to the point of sometimes being unable to get out of bed or leave my house. I hate it. I hate that God has chosen this path for my
growth and sanctification. Depression is my nearly constant companion. I rarely get a break. I wake up with it. I work with it. I go to sleep with it, knowing that tomorrow I’ll wake up and live it all over again.

“There are so many of us who suffer silently, because it is not acceptable to discuss mental illness. Cancer is OK. People have sympathy and understanding for that. Cystic Fibrosis, diabetes, MS and the multitude of other terrible diseases and disorders are acceptable. Mental illness is considered taboo. The stigma attached to it prevents people from getting the help they need, from picking up the phone, from asking for prayer.

“Many, many people, especially Christians, negatively judge people with mental illness and especially those who have made the awful decision to take their own lives. A common statement is: ‘It’s the ultimate selfish act.’ I’d ask you to consider what agony any individual must be enduring to fight every natural instinct for survival to choose instead to die. To be feeling psychic pain so incredible that the very thought of even one more moment is unendurable. I have, in the past, been completely and thoroughly convinced that if I loved my family, especially my children, as I said I did, I would remove the evil (me) from their lives, so I would no longer influence them for evil.

“These are the kinds of thoughts that people who choose suicide experience. They are not to be judged harshly. They are to be seen with compassion. Yes, it is an unspeakable tragedy that leaves those left behind with the worst kind of pain. A pain that I can’t even imagine as they believe that the one who died didn’t love them enough to fight. I know those are the thoughts, the feelings of those left behind, but they are not the actual reasons suicide was chosen. In fact, just the opposite is likely true. The one who chooses suicide often does it out of love for those they care most about, as strange as that may seem.”
Please, please pray for the Warren family and for all those teetering on the edge of suicide. God knows who they are. It may even be someone you know and love.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/tapestry/sue_bohlin/on_suicide

The Keys to Emotional Healing – Part 2

In part 1, I talked about grieving as a necessary part of emotional healing. The other part is forgiving, separating ourselves emotionally and spiritually from the offense so that we can continue to be healthy toward the offender. As I said last time, forgiving is like pulling out the soul-splinter that is causing pain and the emotional “pus” that accumulates from unresolved pain and anger. (Grieving discharges this emotional pus.) Forgiving releases the person who hurt us into the Lord’s care, for Him to deal with.

We see this modeled by the Lord Jesus during the crucifixion process, when He repeated over and over, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). With each fresh offense, He released the offender into His Father’s hands, refusing to succumb to the sin of unforgiveness.

Let’s say you do something to hurt me. It’s like tossing a potato at me. I catch the potato and discover it’s a hot potato. I could continue to clutch the potato to my chest, screaming in pain and yelling at how much it hurts and how awful you are to do this to me, going on and on, “IT HURTS! IT HURTS! OHHH THIS IS HORRIBLE, TERRIBLE, AWFUL PAIN! HOW DARE
YOU DO THIS TO MEEE!

Or I could let go and let it drop to the floor.

There is relief in release, to be sure, but the problem with merely letting go is that we can pick it back up again. Biblical forgiveness means “sending away,” with the Old Testament image of a scapegoat to help us understand. Once a year, the priest would place his hands on the head of a goat, symbolically transferring the sins of the entire nation to the goat, send it away into the wilderness, then release it. (Lev. 16:7-10)

We do need to let go of the offense and the offender, but the real power in forgiveness is sending it away to Jesus for Him to deal with.

If someone tosses a metaphorical hot potato at us, instead of simply letting it drop to the floor where we could pick it up again, we need to imagine Jesus standing there with His hands outstretched, inviting us to give our “hot potato” to Him. He has asbestos hands!

Forgiveness means we acknowledge the offense against us, and then transfer the offender over to God in our hearts. But for forgiveness to be real and true, we need to face the impact of the other person’s sin or hurt against us and grieve it before we can truly let go of it and send it away to Jesus. Otherwise, it’s like going to the emergency room with a broken bone and telling the doctor, “I want you to fix my bone from the other side of the room without touching me.”

In the real world, if I continued to clutch a hot potato to myself, it would cool down and no longer cause pain. But in the emotional realm, if we continue to clutch an offense to our hearts, it hardens into something like cement, and a wall is built between the offender and us. And between us and God. And between us and everyone else. Unforgiveness is spiritually and emotionally dangerous. One of my family members hung on to
every offense of her entire life, real or perceived, and never let go. With every year she became more and more bitter, cold and hard—quite unlovely and unlovable, apart from the power of God. She died with a heart so diminished and shriveled that her death was nothing but a relief for the rest of us.

When we forgive the ones who hurt us, we send their offense to Jesus, who already paid the penalty for their sins and woundings against us. The best exercise I’ve ever encountered to help people forgive is called “the Jesus Jail,” which you can find here courtesy of my friend Chuck Lynch, author of the book I Should Forgive, But . . .

Grieving and forgiving: the two powerful components of emotional healing. May you experience the grace of God in tearing down emotional strongholds (2 Cor. 10:4) to walk in the freedom of healing.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/tapestry/sue_bohlin/the_keys_to_emotional_healing_-_part_2 on April 24, 2012.

The Keys to Emotional Healing – Part 1

After seeing God bring about major transformation of emotional healing in a number of broken people, I asked Him what was happening when He healed people’s hearts. I wanted to understand the process. His answer was simple and profound, but never easy: “grieving and forgiving.”
Both of these emotional disciplines are necessary to move from the place of sustaining a wound to the soul, to the place where that wound no longer controls and diminishes us—because it has been transformed into a healed scar.

Grieving means moving pain and anger from the inside to the outside. Tears are God’s lubricant for that process, and what a gift of grace tears are. They are a physical manifestation of emotional pain, and when we weep—whether silent tears rolling down our cheeks or huge wracking sobs that exhaust us—the pain leaves our soul as it leaves the body.

One of my friends was so deeply wounded as a child by various kinds of abuse that in order to survive, her personality splintered into several “alters.” (Multiple personality disorder is now called DID, Dissociative Identity Disorder.) One day in therapy, as she cried while talking about the pain inside, she reached for the box of tissues to blot the tears. Abruptly, she “switched” to another alter who said to the therapist, “Don’t let her use the Kleenex. We need to feel the tears rolling down her cheeks. That’s what healing feels like.” When she told me this, it resonated deeply with me as true, and I started paying attention to how the feeling of tears on my face nourishes my soul, regardless of the reason for them. (Specks of dust under my contacts notwithstanding!)

In many cases, grieving also requires getting angry. Anger as a response to a violation of our dignity as people made in God’s image, to shaming or disrespect, to neglect or abuse, is a healthy reaction. It says, “You treated me as worthless when I have great value as God’s beloved child. You dishonored me AND you dishonored God.” We can express anger in constructive and destructive ways, and of course it’s always better to choose a constructive expression! We see the Lord Jesus constructively channeling His anger as He fashioned a whip before cleansing the temple (John 2:15). Some people have punched pillows, or hammered nails into pieces of wood, or torn down something slated for demolition. Others have
screamed out their anger and grief in a safe place. Punching bags are a helpful place to discharge anger. And one of the most powerful ways to release anger is to create a list of all the ways someone has hurt us, and the impact of their choices and actions on us, and then talk to that person in an empty chair. We say—or yell or scream—the things we would want to say if we could duct-tape the person into the chair so they couldn’t leave, if they had to listen to us. And we go down the list, one item at a time, telling them everything they need to know about what they did and how it affected us. Often it’s unwise, if not impossible, to actually dump all that anger on the actual person, but it’s amazingly healing to speak out the pain and anger with our words. Out loud. Emphasis on LOUD, if need be!

Once we have grieved the hurt, the next step is letting go: forgiving. Forgiving is like pulling out the soul-splinter that is causing pain and the emotional “pus” that accumulates from unresolved pain and anger. (Grieving discharges this emotional pus.) Forgiving releases the person who hurt us into the Lord’s care, for Him to deal with.

I’ll explain more about forgiving in my next blog post, The Keys to Emotional Healing – Part 2.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/tapestry/sue.bohlin/the_keys_to_emotional_healing_part_1 on April 16, 2012.
Giving Can Improve Your Health; Science Says So

Want happiness and fulfillment in life? Then practice giving, advises an influential medical professor.

It really is good to be good, claims Stephen Post, Ph.D., professor at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine. Science says it is so.

Post and coauthor Jill Neimark present evidence in their recent book, Why Good Things Happen to Good People.({1}) As head of an institute supported by philanthropist Sir John Templeton{2}, Post has funded over fifty studies [related to giving] at forty-four major universities. He’s convinced that giving is essential for optimum physical and mental health in a fragmented society.

Post says research has produced remarkable findings: Giving protects overall health twice as much as aspirin protects against heart disease. If pharmaceutical companies could charge for giving, we might see ads for Give Back instead of Prozac, he speculates. One program, Rx: Volunteer, has some California HMO physicians giving volunteerism prescriptions to their Medicare patients.

All You Need is Love?

Post and Neimark say around 500 scientific studies demonstrate that unselfish love can enhance health. For instance, Paul Wink, a Wellesley College psychologist, studied University of California Berkeley data that followed about two hundred people every decade since the 1920s. Giving during high school correlated with good mental and physical health across life spans. Givers experienced these benefits regardless of the warmth of their families, he found.
Other research says that giving correlates with lower teen depression and suicide risk and with lower depression among the elderly. Studies at Stanford and elsewhere found links between frequent volunteering and delaying death. Post says giving even trumps receiving when it comes to reducing mortality.

Give more; enjoy life and live longer? Maybe, as Jesus famously said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”{3}

Illustrations abound of givings personal benefits. Millard Fuller, a millionaire, gave away much of his wealth at age thirty. He and his wife, Linda, sold their business and affiliated with Koinonia Farm, a Georgia Christian community. They built houses in Zaire and then founded Habitat for Humanity in 1976 to help needy people build affordable homes. Fuller’s goal was to eliminate poverty housing from the face of the earth. Get rid of shacks!

Today Habitat volunteers have constructed over 225,000 houses, helping over a million people in over 3,000 communities worldwide. Countless volunteers attest to the personal satisfaction their involvement brings.

**From Playmate to Orphan Care**

Post and Neimark relate an intriguing tale of a former *Playboy* model who has devoted her life to helping poor kids in Haiti. Susan Scott Krabacher’s childhood helped her connect with the hurting children she now serves. Sexual abuse, her mother’s psychiatric breakdown, multiple foster homes, and her brother’s suicide took their emotional toll. In her late teens, she became a *Playboy* centerfold and moved into the Playboy mansion.

Ten years of playing mixed with depression. Eventually she reconnected with the faith of her youth. Observing Haiti’s
poverty prompted her to learn more of the biblical take on life. The foundation she and her husband started runs three orphanages for 2,300 children. “I work long hours,” Krabacher notes, “put up with unbelievable sacrifice, bury too many children, and get no compensation but love, which is the greatest freedom you can know and the most important thing in the world.”

Post would agree. Do you desire happiness, love, safety, security, loyal friends, true connection, or a benevolent and hopeful world? He has one answer: Give. You'll be happier, healthier, and live longer. Love cures, wrote the esteemed psychiatrist Karl Menninger. It cures both the ones who give it and the ones who receive it.

Notes

3. Acts 20:35 NASB.

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Giving Can Be Good for You: Science Says So
“All You Need is Love”

Do you want happiness and fulfillment in life? Then practice giving, advises an influential medical professor.

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Give more; enjoy life and live longer? Maybe, as Jesus
famously said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35 NASB). Both Jewish and Christian biblical texts admonish us to “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18; Mt. 22:39 NIV). I don’t know about you, but I find it fascinating to explore these ways that contemporary science and social science often highlight the value of ancient biblical principles.

Post presents research to support the value of ten ways of expressing giving love. Here we will examine four of them: compassion, humor, loyalty, and listening.

“Love cures,” wrote the esteemed psychiatrist Karl Menninger. It cures “both the ones who give it and the ones who receive it.”{6}

**Compassion’s Benefits**

Illustrations abound of giving’s personal benefits.

Millard Fuller, a millionaire, gave away much of his wealth at age thirty. He and his wife, Linda, sold their business and affiliated with Koinonia Farm, a Georgia Christian community. They built houses in Zaire and then founded Habitat for Humanity in 1976 to help needy people build affordable homes. Fuller’s goal was “to eliminate poverty housing from the face of the earth. Get rid of shacks!”{7}

Today, Habitat volunteers have constructed over two hundred twenty-five thousand houses, helping over a million people in over three thousand communities worldwide.{8} Countless volunteers attest to the personal satisfaction their involvement brings. And they’re in over ninety countries. In Amman, Jordan, for example, I had lunch with the Habitat director there who involves compassionate volunteers in the Middle East.

As I reflect on his work, I’m reminded of another Middle
Eastern leader who showed great compassion. One of His followers wrote, “When he [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:36 NIV).

Stephen Post says “we’re hardwired to open our hearts and to care—and in fact, compassion is important for the survival of the species.”[9] He cites preliminary psychological research in which “compassion significantly reduced depression and stress.”[10]

In that light, consider the intriguing tale of a former Playboy model who has devoted her life to helping poor kids in Haiti. Susan Scott Krabacher’s childhood helped her connect with the hurting children she now serves. Sexual abuse, her mother’s psychiatric breakdown, multiple foster homes, and her brother’s suicide took their emotional toll. In her late teens, she became a Playboy centerfold and moved into the Playboy mansion.

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Humor – Good Medicine

There are intriguing parallels between some modern social scientific findings and time-tested biblical life-lessons. One of these involves humor. An ancient proverb says, “A joyful heart is good medicine” (Prov. 17:22 NASB).

Humor heals. Think about how you felt the last time you roared
with laughter. Maybe a funny movie, a family situation, or an uproarious joke session had you even crying and gasping for air. Your abdominal muscles and heartbeat went wild. One Stanford psychiatrist “found that a hundred laughs is the aerobic equivalent of ten minutes of rowing.”[12]

Stephen Post sees humor as a way to help others, “a very effective way of connecting, of lightening another’s life as well as our own.” Interviews with Holocaust survivors conducted by a Tel Aviv University researcher found that many cited humor “as a way of surviving trauma.” Post notes that Ronald Reagan was a master of using humor to put other people [and perhaps himself] at ease. When President Reagan was shot and at risk of dying, he quipped to the emergency room doctors, “I hope you’re all Republicans.”[13]

Of course, bitter humor can hurt rather than heal. But positive humor can help people relate and communicate openness. Post cites psychologist Robert Provine who monitored and analyzed over twelve hundred “bouts” of laughter in public places. Provine says shared, contagious laughter can be “an important signal you send to someone that says, ‘This is play. I’m not going to attack or hurt you.’”[14]

Humor is also important for a successful marriage, according to University of Washington psychologist John Gottman. He found that coping with issues “through dialogue, laughter, and affection” was a good predictor of whether marriages would last.[15]

On a Detroit TV talk show, the host and I were discussing my book, Secrets of Successful Humor. He asked about humor and marriage. I told him, “The secret of our marriage is that we take time two evenings each week to go out to a lovely restaurant. A nice dinner, some candlelight, soft music, a slow walk home. She goes Tuesdays; I go Fridays.”

It hit a nerve. The host roared, long and loud. Contagious
laughter spread throughout the studio audience. We all enjoyed some communal fun that helped open us up to each other.

**Loyalty Bonds**

A famous biblical proverb notes, “A friend is always loyal, and a brother is born to help in time of need” (Prov. 17:17 NLT). Post believes that “Loyalty is love that lasts. . . . The commitment inherent in loyalty defuses our deepest existential anxiety.” He continues: “Broken covenants are hard to restore and never quite attain their state of original trust. It’s not easy to find loyalty in our society.”{16}

Marriage and friendship, of course, can be significant expressions of loyalty. University of Chicago demographer Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher co-authored the book *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People Are Happier, Healthier, and Better Off Financially*. Analyzing data from over six thousand families, Waite discovered strong correlations between marriage and longevity. Gallagher says their research demonstrated that, compared to similar singles, married folks “are physically healthier, live longer . . . experience less anxiety, depression, hostility, and loneliness, and are more likely to tell you that they’re happy with life in general. They have more sex than single people of the same age.” Of course there’s a caveat, Post notes. High-conflict marriages bring stress and can lower immune function.{17}

Friendships count, too. University of North Carolina sociologist Rebecca Adams’ frequent childhood moves had her attending thirteen schools by the time she entered college. She feels she learned how to *make* new friends but wasn’t as good at *maintaining* them. These experiences helped motivate her to study friendship. She’s discovered strong links between quality of relationships and mental well-being. Adams notes, “It’s been shown over and over again that friendship is more important to psychological well-being than family relations.
are. . . . Friendships are voluntary. So we’ll choose friendships that support our psychological well-being.”

Men can learn a lot from women about friendship. Male and female friendship styles often differ, Adams says: “Men define their friendships in terms of shared activities, and women define them in terms of conversation. For men, a friend is their fishing, golfing, or bowling buddy. For women, a friend is someone they can confide in.” Of course there are exceptions, but Post notes that emotional intimacy is what nourishes friendships most.

Giving love through compassion, humor, and loyalty all contribute to our well-being. But, is anybody listening?

“I’m Listening”

The television comedy Frasier was one of the most popular TV series in U.S. history. It’s been called “a thinking person’s comedy.” Reruns are ubiquitous, about six episodes daily in our area. Frasier Crane, the protagonist, is a caring, sensitive, cultured—but insecure and sometimes pompous—Seattle radio psychiatrist who always greets his callers with, “I’m listening.” Yet sometimes he becomes so wrapped up in himself that he tunes others out. He’s not alone. In one amusing scene, Frasier’s ex wife, Lilith (also a psychiatrist), tries to converse with Frasier’s brother, Niles (yet another psychiatrist), about an especially weighty matter. Niles, focused on a video game, doesn’t pay her sufficient attention, prompting Lilith to exclaim, “Is there a chair here I could talk to?”

I confess that in our home, my wife Meg sometimes has to use Lilith’s line to get my attention. (Mind you, I don’t confess that it’s as often as she might claim!) But listening is a powerful form of affirmation and an important tool in understanding and communication. Solomon, a wise Jewish king,
wrote, “What a shame, what folly, to give advice before listening to the facts!” (Proverbs 18:13 NLT)

Stephen Post writes, “When we truly absorb another’s story, we are saying, ‘You count. Your life and feelings and thoughts matter to me. And I want to know who you really are.’” He claims that listening can help both the listener and the one listened to. New studies indicate: “Listening activates the part of our brains hardwired for empathy. . . . When we listen to others in pain, their stress response quiets down and their body has a better chance to heal.”[20]

Post says that without a good listener, we can feel terribly alone, “like the psalmist in the Bible who cries out, ‘No man cared for my soul.’” He continues, “This has led some scholars to call the God of the Psalms a God of listening. Our need for a listener is an inherent aspect of all prayer.”[21]

So, giving love is good for you. Science says so. Compassion, humor, loyalty, and listening are important ways you can express giving love. Is it as intriguing to you as it is to me that contemporary science and social science are often in harmony with age-old biblical counsel? Makes me think I should read the Bible more often.

Notes

2. Ibid., 1.
3. Ibid., 7.
4. Ibid, 7-8, 48-51.
5. Ibid., 8-10, 68-69.
6. Ibid., 2.
7. Ibid., 25, 275.
8. www.habitat.org
10. Ibid., 184.
Starting Over: Facing the Future after Significant Loss

Written by Rusty Wright

February 13th fell on a Tuesday that year, but it seemed like my unlucky day.

My wife of twenty years was divorcing me; it would be final in two days. February 1, my employer had shown me the door—on the twenty-fifth anniversary of my employment. Now, on February 13, I was in my physician’s office getting test results. Unaware of my difficulties, he asked, “Have you been under stress recently?” Perhaps he was assessing my emotional state to help him gently ease into the difficult subject he was about to address.
He said I might have cancer.

That evening, a longtime friend called to encourage me. As we spoke, I felt the weight of my world crashing in. Would the haunting pain of spousal rejection ever end? Where would I work? What of my life’s mission? Would life itself last much longer? I wept into the phone as I struggled to make sense of the swirling vortex of uncertainty.

Relationships, work and health absorb our time, energy, memories and hopes. Ever had a fulfilling relationship turn to ashes? Maybe you’ve excelled at work; then a new or insensitive boss decides your services are no longer wanted or affordable. Or perhaps your health falters. Your parent or best friend dies suddenly of a heart attack or perishes in an auto wreck.

What do you feel? Shock? Grief? Anger? Desires for revenge or justice? Discouragement and depression? How do you cope with the loss, and how can you start over again?

Over dinner, a new friend told me he had lost both his parents in recent years. “How did you cope?” I inquired. He related painful details of their alcohol-related deaths. I listened intently and tried to express sympathy. “But how did you deal with their deaths?” I asked, curious to know how he had handled his feelings. “I guess I haven’t,” he replied. Painful emotions from deep loss can be difficult to process. Some seek solace by suppressing them.

My wife lost her father, then her mother, during a five-year span in her late twenties and early thirties. Focusing on her mother’s needs after her father’s passing occupied much of her thought. After her mother’s death, she felt quite somber. “People who always were there, whom you could always call on for advice, were no longer around,” she recalls. “That was very sobering.” Over time, the pain of grief diminished.

How can you adjust to significant loss and start over again? I
certainly don’t have all the answers. But may I suggest ideas that have worked for me and for others along life’s sometimes challenging journey?

Grieve the loss. Don’t ignore your pain. Take time to reflect on your loss, to cry, to ask questions of yourself, others or God. I remember deep, heaving sobs after my wife left me. I would not wish that pain on anyone, but I recommend experiencing grief rather than ignoring and stuffing it. This tends to diminish ulcers and delayed rage.

A little help from your friends. During divorce proceedings and my rocky employment ending, good friends hung close. We ate meals together, watched football games, attended a concert and more. A trusted counselor helped me cope. A divorce recovery group at a nearby church showed me I was not the only one experiencing weird feelings. Don’t try to handle enormous loss alone.

Watch your vulnerabilities. In our coed divorce recovery group, I appreciated learning how women as well as men processed their pain. It also was tempting to enter new relationships at a very risky time. Some members, not yet divorced, were dating. Some dated each other. Attractive, needy divorcés/divorcées can appear inviting. After each group session, I made a beeline to my car. “Guard your heart,” advises an ancient proverb, “for it affects everything you do.”[1]

Look for a bright spot. Not every cloud has a silver lining, but maybe yours does. After my divorce and termination, I returned to graduate school and saw my career enhanced. My cancer scare turned out to be kidney stones, no fun but not as serious. I met and—four years after the divorce—married a wonderful woman, Meg Korpi. We are very happy.

CNN star Larry King once was fired from the Miami Herald. “It was very difficult for me when they dropped me,” he recalls.
King says one can view firing as “a terrible tragedy” or a chance to seek new opportunities.{2}

Cherish your memories. Displaying treasured photos of a deceased loved one can help you adjust gradually to their loss. Recall fun times you had together, fulfilling experiences with coworkers or noteworthy projects accomplished. Be grateful. But don’t become enmeshed in past memories, because the time will come to. . .

Turn the page. After appropriate grieving, there comes a time to move on. One widow lived alone for years in their large, empty house with the curtains drawn. Her children finally convinced her to move but in many ways she seemed emotionally stuck for the next three decades until her death.

Significant steps for me were taking down and storing photos of my ex-wife. Embracing my subsequent job with enthusiasm made it fulfilling and productive. Consider how you’ll emotionally process and respond to the common question, “Where do you work?” Perhaps you’ll want to take a course, exercise and diet for health, or develop a hobby. Meet new people at volunteer projects, civic clubs, church, or vacations. Consider what you can learn from your loss. Often, suffering develops character, patience, confidence and opportunities to help others.

Sink your spiritual roots deep. I’m glad my coping resources included personal faith. Once quite skeptical, I discovered spiritual life during college. Students whose love and joy I admired explained that God loved me enough to send His Son, Jesus, to die to pay the penalty due for all my wrongdoing. Then He rose from the dead to give new life. I invited Him to enter my life, forgive me, and become my friend. I found inner peace, assurance of forgiveness, and strength to adapt to difficulties. Amidst life’s curve balls, I’ve had a close Friend who promised never to leave.
One early believer said those who place their faith in Christ “become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun!” Jesus can help you start all over with life itself. He can help you forgive those who have wronged you.

As you grieve your loss, seek support in good friends, watch your vulnerabilities, and seek to turn the page. . . . may I encourage you to meet the One who can help you make all things new? He’ll never let you down.

This article first appeared in Answer magazine 14:1 January/February 2007. Copyright © 2007 by Rusty Wright. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Notes

1. Proverbs 4:23 NLT.
3. 2 Corinthians 5:17 NLT.

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**Divorce and You**

**It’s Over**

Divorce. What thoughts and feelings does that word kindle in you?

Are you happily married and feel that divorce is not an option? Maybe the concept scares you. The fear of loss seems
Are you in a struggling marriage and the end is near? Perhaps you are confused, angry, depressed, or grieving. Or maybe you are happy and envision this as the necessary end of an unpleasant relationship.

Perhaps your parents are divorced. Maybe you recall their angry disputes during your childhood, fear over your family’s future, anguish over deciding with whom you would live.

Got any friends whose marriage is on the rocks? You might care for both of them, but how should you relate to them now? Take sides? Remain neutral? Intervene? Keep out of it?

In 1975 I married a wonderful woman. She was kind, sensitive, beautiful, loving, intelligent, fun, talented . . . my best friend. We traveled the globe together speaking in universities, on television and radio, writing books and articles about love, sex and marriage. She taught me much about love, kindness, sensitivity, communication. Much of the modest success I’ve seen in speaking and writing I owe in part to her excellent coaching.

Twenty years later, in 1995, she told me she wanted out. I felt devastated. The love of my life didn’t love me any more. The pain of rejection ran deep. I had not committed adultery or desertion. I felt helpless. Legally, I was helpless. California’s “no-fault” divorce laws mean that in our state it takes two to get married but only one to get divorced. One partner can simply claim “irreconcilable differences” — no proof is needed — and a judge will dissolve the union after a six-month waiting period. The unwilling partner is legally powerless to stop it.

Imagine the worst spat you’ve ever had with your spouse, partner, or friend. Multiply the pain of that by a jillion and you have a glimpse of the hurt. It felt as if I were being reamed out by an emotional Roto Rooter. I cried buckets. It
was really, really awful. Are you getting the idea that I did not like this experience?

What does the Bible say about divorce? How can you cope with divorce if it comes your way? How can you help a friend who is going through it? And what about divorce in the ministry? This article offers you some practical thoughts on this controversial topic.

Biblical Issues

Is divorce a solution or a cop-out?

I appreciate it when speakers or writers make clear their way of looking at the world. My worldview is a biblical one. You may agree or disagree, and I certainly respect that, but may I encourage you to consider what the biblical documents say on this issue?

Moses, the famous Jewish liberator, explained that God made the first man and woman for a close bond. “For this reason,” Moses wrote, “a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.”{1}

Hundreds of years later, some religious leaders asked Jesus of Nazareth about divorce. He quoted Moses’ statement, then added, “Since they are no longer two but one, let no one separate them, for God has joined them together.”{2} Jesus held marriage in high esteem: “God has joined them together,” He declared, “. . . let no one separate them.”

But if divorce is wrong, these male religious leaders responded, why did Moses discuss how to handle certain complicated divorce situations? Jesus explained: “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you,” Jesus continued, “that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.”{3}

Years before my own marriage began to crumble, I carefully studied a biblical perspective on divorce and remarriage. Here is what made the most sense to me. Partners should enter marriage for life, “until death do us part.” If splits arise, reconciliation should always be the first aim. If reconciliation fails, I see two biblical bases for divorce and remarriage: adultery of one spouse, and desertion. Adultery or desertion do not mandate divorce, but they make it allowable.

As difficult as this subject may seem, remember that God loves you and wants the very best for you. If you are hurting right now, He understands. He wants to wrap His arms around you, be your friend, and help you handle your deepest disappointment.

**Coping With Divorce**

What are some ways to cope with a shipwrecked marriage?

Divorce can teach you a lot. I’m a sinful person who made plenty of mistakes in marriage. I could have been more thoughtful, sensitive, and kind. Though I tried hard to be a good husband, I realized I could not be responsible for another’s decision.

About a year after the divorce, at some friends’ encouragement, I began to speak publicly about what I had learned. I was determined not to speak ill of my ex wife, but I wanted to encourage others. My story got several reactions, which I began reflecting to audiences to help them process it. Maybe you can relate.
“Some of you feel uncomfortable with this topic,” I would tell listeners. “You wish I would change the subject. I’ve felt that way. Others of you think, I wish the person I love would be as open with his heart as you’re being.’ Some of you are skeptical,” I’d continue. “You’d like to hear her side of the story! I can appreciate that. Maybe you’re angry. Perhaps I remind you of your ex-spouse. You think, He talks so sweet. But I bet he’s a tyrant in private!’ I realized that I cannot assume responsibility for all the people who have hurt you. But I can offer hope. Maybe people will reason, He’s hurt; I’ve hurt. He says Jesus helped him with his hurt. Maybe Jesus can help me with my hurt.’

Jesus can help you with your hurt. He said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle, and you will find rest for your souls.”

Often divorcees experience the classic stages of loss: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. You may not believe you’re experiencing this. You may be mad at your mate or God. You may promise God you’ll follow Him if He restores your marriage. You may become depressed when the end seems certain. Eventually you may accept reality.

What helped my journey through grief? I had to believe that God really did cause “all things to work together for good to those who love” Him. I sought to walk closely with Him. I asked forgiveness of my ex-wife for my many shortcomings. I forgave her and forgave myself.

I saw a skilled counselor. A wonderful divorce recovery group helped me understand what I was experiencing and feeling. I did not date for about two years after the divorce was final, to allow time to sort things out. And some fine friends helped me to land on my feet.
Responding to a Friend’s Divorce

How might you be a friend to someone in the midst of divorce?

The couple next door is splitting up. One partner is bailing on the marriage. You and your family have known them for years. You’ve babysat each other’s kids, carpooled to work, vacationed together, laughed and cried together. You are members of the same church.

How should you relate to them now? Take sides? Remain neutral? Intervene? Keep out of it?

If you are a follower of Jesus, you likely will want to seek divine wisdom. Every situation is different, and marital strife can be explosive. Jesus’ mother Mary once had some wise advice that relates well to these situations. She said, “Whatever He [Jesus] says to you, do it.”{11}

I was quite fortunate to have a circle of good friends who reached out in loving care. Perhaps their examples can give you some ideas of what you might do.

My friends did not abandon me in my darkest hour. They stuck with me, let me know that they cared, asked how they could help, arranged opportunities for us to spend time together. One couple had me over to dinner every Friday night during the fall. Then we would watch their son play high school football. It helped take my mind off of my problems, relax, and enjoy being around other people.

Some recommended books,{12} met me for lunch, and invited me to a concert. One couple listened as I poured my heart out and helped me plan my future. Some organized a prayer meeting among close friends, helped me move, sat with me in court. They would call to ask how I was doing, especially when I felt particularly lonely or burdened.

Two friends tried to contact my estranged wife to encourage
her to drop the divorce action.

After the divorce, many gracious folks welcomed me into their circles and encouraged me to serve others. Some pastors and theologians who knew me well told me they thought it was appropriate biblically for me to remarry. I was reluctant. I wondered if I could ever open my heart to another woman.

Then, at a conference, I met Meg Korpi, a beautiful, sensitive, kind, wise, caring, brilliant, fun woman. She was as dedicated to God as she was wise and gorgeous. (I get points for saying all this in writing, you understand!) I knew what I liked and I liked what I saw! We began to date almost three years after the divorce ended and were married about a year-and-a-half later. We are very happy together. We thank God often.

**Divorcees and the Ministry**

What about divorce and the ministry? If a ministry leader divorces, should he or she remain in ministry?

If a leader initiates an unbiblical divorce — or commits adultery or otherwise acts inappropriately — one should confront him or her as described in Matthew 18. In my view (not all will agree), with a change of mind and heart — and after appropriate time — it may be possible to restore a fallen leader to effective service. Paul wrote, “If someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.”{13}

What about the victim of an unbiblical divorce? There are both wise and unwise ways to deal with such tragedies. Ministry boards and executives should take special care to act biblically. They may be tempted to value public image and donations above biblical principles.

Perhaps my case will be instructive. My first wife and I were international speakers with a prominent evangelical movement
with thousands of wonderful staff. We traveled the world together, wrote books, appeared on television. In my twenty-fifth year with this organization, my wife filed for divorce without — in my opinion — biblical grounds. This caused quite a stir.

Though initially expressing concern and care, corporate leaders claimed they had a policy requiring me to leave if my spouse divorced me. I was told I was a PR risk and would need to go. At one point they wanted me to agree never to speak or write about marriage, divorce, or remarriage (mine in particular or these themes in general). Things got “curiouser and curiouser.”

Again, this movement has done much good around the globe. It helped me come to faith when I was a student. Please understand that I am seeking here the proper blend of grace and truth, not an easy task in these matters.

My employer owned a seminary, a separate corporation that had no automatic divorce restriction. The seminary president hired me. He took some heat for acting biblically, but those like him who refused to convict me of a sin — divorce — that I did not commit were God’s instruments of grace in my life. After a time of healing, I returned to the lecture circuit. Today, I am privileged to enjoy an even larger global influence via speaking and writing.

Divorce does not have to end ministry. Has any sin been dealt with in a biblical fashion? If so, then the divorced servant of Christ can, with God’s direction and power — and with appropriate accountability — continue to touch lives for Him. Jesus welcomed the denying Peter into fellowship and service.

The wounded servant may become even more effective, able to connect with people on a deep level and to point them to the One who can heal their broken hearts.

Notes
1. Genesis 2:24 NASB.

2. Matthew 19:6 NLT.

3. Matthew 19:8-9 NIV.


6. 1 Corinthians 7:12-15, taken with Matthew 18:15-17. An outline of this argument regarding desertion is as follows: 1 Corinthians 7:12-15 can be understood to mean that when a spouse who does not believe in Christ deserts a spouse who does have faith in Christ, the deserted believer is not bound from remarriage. Regarding a marriage between two believers, a deserted spouse should first seek reconciliation. If the deserter will not reconcile, the deserted spouse should follow the biblical “progressive correction” prescription in Matthew 18:15-17. That is, s/he should confront the deserter with his/her sin individually, then (if the deserter continues to resist) with one or two others, then involving the church. If the deserting spouse still resists, then the Lord’s admonition to the church (which includes the deserted spouse) is “let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.” In other words, relate to that person just as you would to someone outside the church, as to an unbeliever. How does the church relate to unbelievers? One of the many biblical teachings regarding relationships between believers and unbelievers is that an unbelieving spouse who deserts a believer does not bind that believer from remarriage (1 Corinthians 7:12-15). See Adams, op. cit., for a more complete discussion of desertion as allowable grounds for remarriage.

7. Romans 8:35-39; Psalm 23.

8. Matthew 11:28-29 NLT.
“Are Chemical Imbalances Real or a Worldly Idea?”

Some people in my family have been diagnosed with chemical imbalance in their brains. In the past I have been a reader of Jay Adams. How does this idea of chemical imbalances (CI) measure up to the Scriptures and spiritual problems? Is this CI something the world has come up with denying the spiritual or is it really legitimate? Where can I find scriptural or spiritual input on this subject? At this point, I believe it is primarily a spiritual problem. Please help!!

When it comes to depression, I have seen people dealing with it because of spiritual issues, emotional issues and physical issues (chemical imbalance). In fact, my husband had anemia-induced depression that was treated by taking anti-depressants for three months. If it were a spiritual or emotional issue, simply taking the meds for such a short period of time wouldn’t have solved the problem.
Our brains are an organ, like our gall bladder, lungs and liver. They can develop physical problems and chemical imbalances; why would the brain be any different? We are not our brains. We are souls—personalities—that have a brain and who live in a fallen world where physical brain problems arise.

I am aware of Christians who try to make everything a spiritual problem, but I think that’s simplifying things too much. After all, scripture says we are made of three parts, spirit, soul and body (1 Thess. 5:23). To try and make depression (which is experienced in the emotions) solely a spiritual issue, doesn’t make sense. Unfortunately, there is a lot of shame heaped on people for treating depression chemically, which I think is unnecessary shame. For instance, I know someone with manic-depression who NEEDS her medications to allow her to function, just as I need physical assistance to make up for orthopedic weakness from polio. There should be no shame in either my cane or my friend’s medications; they are both a matter of accepting help for a real, physical problem.

Along a different line, another friend is a longtime school teacher and principal. She used to pooh-pooh the use of Ritalin for ADD and ADHD, until she researched the issue in depth and reversed her opinion. While there are certainly many kids who are taking it needlessly (quite possibly the majority of them), there are others who have a true chemical imbalance and benefit greatly from taking medication.

I hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin

Probe Ministries