

PRESENT TRUTH

A Teaching Letter from Lifestream Teaching Ministries

For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. (2 Peter 1:12 NKJV)

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Kingdom Therapy

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Introduction

I have had several inquires lately about various counseling and psychological therapies that present themselves as 'Christian' forms of help. All of these are presented as techniques that can be used to heal emotional hurts, relieve guilt, resolve conflict, and bring forth happiness in our lives. While all of this sounds good, the techniques and understanding of our problems come from worldly, heathen, pagan thinking processes not from a scripturally renewed mind. This immediately makes all of them suspect in terms of spiritual value.

This Present Truth Teaching Letter will look at true and false therapies and the provision that the Lord has made for us in His Kingdom.

The Root of Our Problems

Mankind had no problems until Adam and Eve listened to the Devil, believed a lie, and became disobedient to God. The entrance of sin immediately created problems. Adam and Eve were ashamed of being naked, guilty over their disobedience, and fearful of the presence of God.

Notice that all of these results were centered in the soul, especially the mind—shame, guilt, fear. Is it any wonder then that, as time moved on, there would be a progression of effects on our minds that comes from sin? And that sin grows from the root of disobedience producing all of the fruit of these effects in our minds? Our modern society is filled with mental illness and psychological problems that are a direct result of the root of disobedience and the fruit of sin. While this manifested through our minds, the cause is spiritual; therefore, the solution or cure is spiritual.

The Last Adam

Jesus, as the Last Adam, came to reverse the effects of the first Adam's disobedience.

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned ... But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by

the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many” (Romans 5:12; 15).

There are two aspects of the work of Jesus for us: His death and His Resurrected Life. Paul makes this very clear: “*we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life*” (Romans 5:10). This is a two step process that we must experience: 1) reconciliation through the death of Jesus, and 2) being saved by His life. The death of Jesus deals with our past. The life of Jesus deals with our future. The past and future meet in our present; therefore, in our present we are applying the death of Christ to our past and living by the life of Christ as we move into the future.

The Lord has made all provision for us. He provided for our justification through His blood so that we could be restored to a place of fulfilling God's purpose for man. He sent forth the Holy Spirit so that we might live through Him and have the power to fulfill God's purpose.

Kingdom Therapy

Since the root of our problem is sin and disobedience, the Lord has provided the way for us to deal with the issues that arise from life. Sin comes at us in two ways: 1) the sins that we commit, and 2) the sins committed against us. Our solution for the sins that we commit is *repentance*. Our solution for the sins committed against us is *forgiveness*. These are the Lord's method for us to deal with the ongoing problem of sin and disobedience. They operate in our present walk with the Lord. There is no lasting help for any of our problems until we learn to walk correctly in the areas of repentance and forgiveness.

The Lord, Himself, dealt with our past. According to Isaiah 53, Jesus took our sins and became sin for us when He hung on the cross. When we come to Jesus at the cross we exchange our old life before Christ for a new life in Christ. Look at these Scriptures:

Galatians 2:20 NKJV I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Galatians 6:14 NKJV But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Romans 6:6 NKJV knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

From these it is very clear that who we were before knowing Jesus, our old man, our old nature, was crucified with Jesus. The person that we were is now dead along with all of his sins. After knowing that we were crucified with Jesus and died with Him, our old nature is buried in baptism. [Dead bodies are buried.]

Romans 6:3-4 NKJV Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? (4) Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

So, the cross and water baptism are the end of who we once were. If we understand this properly and apply 'Kingdom therapy' to it, our past mental and psychological problems are solved—they belong to a dead person.

The blood of Jesus deals with our sins—what we have done. The cross deals with the body of sin—who we are—the son of Adam. The only thing that can be done with the old nature is to crucify it—put it to death. You can't clean it up, send it to church, make it good, or do anything else with it except crucify it. That's why we receive a new nature in Christ and we are to live by the new nature.

His Cross and Our Cross

We need to understand three expressions of the cross¹:

1. The *word* of the cross
2. The *work* of the cross
3. The *way* of the cross.

The *word of the cross* is the preaching about the cross. The work of the cross is what Jesus accomplished when He hung on the cross. The way of the cross is the daily application of the cross to our lives. It takes the power of the Spirit to reveal the work of the cross and it takes the power of the Spirit to apply the way of the cross to our walk.

The *work of the cross* is a one-time event—a crises event. From then on we reckon the deed done. Our old man was crucified with Christ—it is done—the 'life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God'.

The *way of the cross* is the application of the work of the cross on a real-time basis—a daily lifestyle that incorporates the work of the cross. In our lives the old nature is reckoned dead. The work of the cross is for the old man—the way of the cross is for the new man.

Jesus said that we should deny ourselves, take up the cross daily, and follow Him. This is a three-step process. It begins with us denying ourselves. Many people think of this as taking up their cross; but, Jesus said deny ourselves first and then take up the cross (Luke 9:23). What is the difference between these two?

Denying ourselves does not kill the flesh. A good moral person can deny the urge to steal because he is a good moral person. It doesn't have anything to do with God. Taking up our cross *always* involves death—the death of the flesh, the old man. This *always* involves God.

There are three characteristics of the Cross:

1. a *principle* in God before the foundation of the world, the Lamb was slain before there was a need for a savior.
2. a *place* where divine loves meets human hate, where the human will crosses the will of God;

¹ For more information about the cross and its application to us, see "The Foundation of Ministry" teaching available on the website: www.lifestreamteaching.com.

3. a *power* for those that believe.

We have all heard the scripture preached about the cross being the power of God; in most cases, we have not rightly divided the word of Truth.

1 Corinthians 1:18 NASB (18) For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

This is not a scripture for the lost. The preaching of the word of the cross is not for the lost—they consider it foolishness. The preaching of the word of the cross is for us *who are being saved!* Read this scripture carefully—that’s what it says—the word of the cross is the power of God to us who are being saved! To those that are perishing (the lost), it is foolishness—they laugh at it.

Now back to what Jesus said:

Luke 9:23-24 NASB And He was saying to *them* all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. (24) "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.

If we have a desire to follow Jesus, there are two pre-requisites: 1) deny ourselves, that is, the old man, the old life, the old nature; and 2) take up our cross daily, that is, apply the principle of the cross to our new life every day. After doing these we can follow Jesus.

Taking up our cross deals with our consecration to the Lord and the purposes of God. Without our cross we cannot be His disciple.

Luke 14:27 NASB "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

That is the biggest aspect of our problem today. Too many are believers and too few are disciples. The believer must deny himself and take up his cross in order to become His disciple. However, we teach in our institutional churches that all we need to do is believe and all of the benefits are ours. It is true that justification is free; it was paid for by Jesus. Being a disciple of the Kingdom, however, will cost us everything, just as Jesus said in the scripture above, “For whoever wishes to save his life [the old life] will lose it, but whoever loses his life [the old life] for My sake, he is the one who will save it [the new life].”

Kingdom Therapy Applied

Our mental and psychological problems are left-overs from our old life. They continue to plague us if we have never been taught how to deal with them from the Kingdom perspective. We have been rescued out of the kingdom of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of the Son². If we continue to live as if we are still in the kingdom of darkness, then the effects of sin—shame, guilt, fear—will continue to control our lives.

In our walk with the Lord we must apply the work of the Lord to our lives and move out of the kingdom of darkness in practical terms and begin to live in the Kingdom of the Son. There are

2 Colossians 1:13

several practical steps that we must take.

1. We must *repent* of our disobedience and our works of darkness.
2. We must *forgive* all who have wronged us, whether real or imagined by us.
3. We must *be baptized* in water to bury the old man that died on the cross. This is an act of obedience that is required and it becomes a marker, a testimony, a barrier that cuts off the past from directing and controlling our present.
4. We must *deny ourselves*, the desires of our flesh and mind.
5. We must daily *take up our cross* and apply the principle of the cross to our lives.
6. We must *follow Jesus* into the fullness of our new life and in service to God.
7. We must *learn about our identity* in Him and walk in new character and conduct.

As we do these things we present our bodies as living sacrifices; we are transformed by the renewing of our mind; we know the Truth and are set free; and our understanding is enlightened by the Holy Spirit. In other words, we become a well-rounded, well-balanced, functional citizen of the Kingdom of God.

False Therapies

It is easy to bash things that are false, but, I wanted to give you a foundation of the true first before dealing with the false. If you understand what the Lord has done and is doing it will help you recognize the false therapies even as they come forth under different names.

I have lived long enough now that I fully agree with Solomon as it relates to natural things, “there is nothing new under the sun”.

Ecclesiastes 1:9 NKJV That which has been *is* what will be, That which *is* done is what will be done, And *there is* nothing new under the sun.

The latest self-help therapy will have a new name but will deal with the same issues and problems in basically the same manner. This is true because the natural man deals with natural problems with the natural mind and the reasoning process. I remember a time when all of the self-help programs proudly proclaimed that they were based on the latest advances in psychology and did not pretend to be in any way particularly Christian. Now, these same programs have been “Christianized” and given believer-oriented names such as Theo-therapy, Theophostics, etc. The name and the buzz-words change but the core process remains the same. They masquerade or pretend to be “Christian therapies” but are actually psycho-heresies.

Do mental, emotional, psychological problems exist? Of course they do. We all grow up in the kingdom of darkness, subject to the prince of the power of the air. Life happens to us. We are hurt, victimized, wounded, abused, tormented, oppressed, deceived, lied to, tricked, put down, put off, shamed, ridiculed, merchandised, and every other form of mental, emotional, physical abuse imaginable is done to us. This happens to everyone in varying degrees, to some it is much worse than to others. It affects us in every area of our development. And when you are born again, you get a new spirit but you do not get a new soul so the effects of all of this is still with

you after you become a Christian.

All of the false therapies begin with the idea that your current problems come from the past because the inner you, the inner child, the ego, the whatever, was terribly hurt or wounded and you haven't been able to get over it. In order to fix your current problems you have to go back to the past (in your mind, of course) and confront/heal the root or source. When this is done fully, then the current problems are either reduced or go away completely.

The false therapy method of fixing the past involves counseling and some form of visualization. With the types that don't pretend to be Christian, the counselor will use hypnosis, guided imagery, or spiritual guides to take you into the past or regress your mind to the situation or events that created the problems for confrontation and/or healing. With the types that pretend to be Christian, the counselor will pray with you and guide you through a series of questions and answers (frequently using out-of-context scriptures to lend credibility to the process) or prayers to the situation or events that created the problem. You are asked to fully visualize, picture the scene in minute detail, and then ask Jesus (your spiritual guide in this case) to come into the situation and confront/heal it.

While these therapies are presented as solutions that will bring resolution to your problems, the reality is that, once started, this is an everlasting process. Any attempt to heal the wounds of the old man or nature that occurred before we knew Christ is an attempt to resuscitate that which the Lord has declared dead. Once you put the old man on life support you have to maintain the life support forever. The old man does not want to die. However, we have to 'pull the plug' and bury the old man or we will never walk in the fullness of the Kingdom of God.

If you apply the true Kingdom therapies provided to us by the Lord for the sanctification of our soul there will be no need for any of the false therapies. He whom the Son sets free is free indeed.

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