

# *Counseling at the Empty Tomb - Hopeful Resolve*



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Professor Richard L. Gurgel, seminary advisor  
Pastor H. Curtis Lyon, reviewer

by

David P. Russow

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## PERSONAL FOREWORD

*"I simply taught, preached and wrote God's Word, otherwise I did nothing; the Word did everything." – Martin Luther.*

A good friend of mine actually addresses me with the tag, "(Hey, you)...bag of dirt." He's right. I am a bag of dirt. Dust really. Dust I am and to dust I will return. Dust doesn't have much to offer. So, I really have nothing to offer, not one thing, apart from what God, in grace, has first gifted me. I can only give from what the Lord given me. That's true for all of us.

That makes all of us totally dependent on God. I am totally dependent on the Lord, for everything. God has – apart from any merit or worthiness on my part – filled my natural emptiness to overflowing. All that I am and have is what God's made me to be and have. To quote another good friend of mine, "*But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.*"<sup>1</sup> This same friend advised, "*Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.*"<sup>2</sup> That is my only boast.

So I offer what I have received. What I offer not novel. I took to heart what one seminary professor advised, "Men, there is nothing new under the sun. There are no new ideas...Gentlemen, steal!" I have stolen. What is mine has been others'. I offer to others simply because it's not mine to begin with in order that others might have. SAnother wise man, Solomon, gave this inspired advice: "*As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.*"<sup>3</sup>

God has sharpened me with the iron of others. I will be endlessly grateful to the Lord for the others that have blessed me as a Christian pastoral counselor. A number of pastors were mentors for me, especially in the subject at hand, pastoral counseling, a vital part of the practice of pastoral theology. Through these men the Lord has filled many a void in my soul, heart, head, and spoken applications. These mentors supplied me first and foremost with counsel from God's Holy Word, the Bible. They tutored me in classroom and by example, lessons taught, many more caught. God's counsel was in their counsel, their counsel became mine. I was enabled and enabled to enable and equip.

Some of these mentors have fought the good fight of faith, have finished their courses here on earth, and have joined the ranks of the victorious in heaven as part of the Church Triumphant. Others continue "agonizing the good agony" in the Church Militant. I am not a credentialed clinical counselor, however, through the Good Book and the godly lessons that I learned from these men, I have become adept as a pastoral counselor. People, struggling saints of God, have been helped by this "bag of dirt"

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:7; *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. electronic ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, c1984, S. used throughout this document

<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:31, 2 Corinthians 10:17, both quote Jeremiah 9:24

<sup>3</sup> Proverbs 27:17

pastor. Pastoring and counseling go hand in hand, and can be accomplished successfully by the same person<sup>4</sup>.

I consider myself, as a pastor, to be a combination of three other pastors. If I'd be compared to them in some way, I would be humbled and honored. The three:

- Pastor Howard E. Russow (†), my father, who taught me to take a firm stand (some might say a stubborn one) on the Word and with the Word;
- Wayne D. Mueller, who was my “bishop”<sup>5</sup> during my vicar, or intern, year of seminary training. God used him to set me on fire for the pastoral ministry. Mueller’s approach to ministry was simple, yet profound, “The work of the ministry is to touch the Word to the soul as often as possible, to as many as possible.”<sup>6</sup> and,
- Harold J. Hagedorn (†), a true “Barnabas,” a, “son of encouragement,” who was the chairman of the Colorado Mission District Mission Board of the Nebraska District, WELS, when I came out of the seminary, wet behind the ears, assigned to start an exploratory mission in Casper, WY (and Gillette, WY, too). Many a time, he called me to his side with encouragement. I’ve never known a man with a more evangelical in approach, yet firm in resolve, as he.

I am also extremely grateful to have been able to sit at the feet of the following professors: Professors Irwin Habeck, Armin Schuetze, David Vallesky, John Schuetze, and Alan Siggelkow. Their lessons in the classroom were invaluable in equipping me in the theology and practice of pastoral counseling.

I was also a student of a colleague in the parish ministry, Steven Zellmer, who faithfully served a lifetime as a Lutheran elementary school teacher and principal, and high school religion instructor.

*{My personal thanks to Mary Conover for her early manuscript work, a labor of love for our Lord.}*

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<sup>4</sup> Pastoral counseling does not preclude clinical counseling, nor vice versa. Triangulation – pastor/clinical counselor/counselee – is beneficial and often necessary. Those counseled should sign a release of information form so pastoral and clinical counselors are able to share information that best serves to best advantage help and progress.

<sup>5</sup> Supervising pastor during my vicar, intern, year at Trinity Lutheran, Waukesha, WI, 1978-1979.

<sup>6</sup> *Keys to Evangelical Congregational Development*, Wayne Mueller, [Presented to The Wissilowa Pastoral Conference: Savanna, Illinois, Monday, April 22, 1985]

## INTRODUCTION

*"God's work, done God's way, will never lack God's supply." – Hudson Taylor*

Thank God, He supplies pastoral counselors with good counsel!

I discovered my bread and butter in pastoral counseling in the counseling tool that came from the heart, experiences, and pen of a master pastoral counselor, Pastor H. Curtis Lyon, *Counseling at the Cross – Using the Power of the Gospel in Christian Counseling*. What I present here, for the most part, flows from what he presented. This work wouldn't exist without his. Though I never met him before he reviewed this work, I felt a kindred counseling spirit in Pastor Lyon through his counseling tool.

*Counseling at the Cross* shaped my biblical counseling approach more than any other tool. *Counseling at the Cross* has proven to be a blessed counseling instrument with which the Lord of the Church and His Spirit of grace have better equipped many pastoral counselors. I can only presume that many, many a hurting soul has been helped through the theology and methodology put forth by Pastor Lyon.

Lyon's unique approach to pastoral counseling in *Counseling at the Cross* is one which makes very real for the counseled the comfort and certainty of the Gospel message of Calvary. Lyon's method, (and we're careful with this), makes what happened on that hill outside of Jerusalem, very personal and very "experiential." *Counseling at the Cross* helped me help those who have been robbed of hope, especially with the bedeviling effects of guilt.

Through verbal "walks" to the cross the guilt-ridden have found release from the accuser's<sup>7</sup> chokehold. It is my experience in counseling that these "walks" to the cross have been nothing short of miraculous in immediate and lasting affect and effect. These walks to the cross allowed souls, strangled by guilt and gasping to breathe the fresh air of innocence and freedom again, to breathe the breath of life through the forgiving sacrifice of Christ the Crucified. Then being so liberated, those who are counseled at the cross are enabled to walk away from the sight of that blessed timber and to leave their sins completely behind them, remaining there! For those who took these walks it was as if the barbs of Satan's sharp indictments were pulled, removed, at Calvary. Scars might be left, but the pain was gone, and there was healing – because the guilt was gone. Through these walks sin and guilt were left behind where they belong nailed to Jesus, where the Savior wants them, fastened to their Substitute.

Those who were counseled at the cross left counseling sessions having vividly pictured the sight of Golgotha with the eyes of their minds and souls. It was such a joy to see those counseled at the cross express the relief found in sins absolved and to see them so blessed. Often, for the counseled who made these walks, it was the first time since they'd actually been involved with the infraction(s) against God's will that they'd found

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<sup>7</sup> Revelation 12:10

relief and release, that their sin and guilt was forgiven, that they were indeed nailed to the cross and that they were freed.

Luther once said that the Gospel can be taught clearly in the pronouns (see Isaiah 53!). It was such a joy to hear those who made the walks express, using pronouns, the healing and release they experienced. “My sin and guilt are really off of me...really out of me...” Walking to and from the cross – with sin and guilt left there – these counseled at the cross were soothed, relieved, cleansed. They felt new and fresh and that their future looked bright and promising again, for the first time, “...since...”

Revisiting the cross might be necessary. Revisiting multiple times often became essential. But each time the counseled have gone away from the visualized crucifixion both emptied, emptied because they could actually see – with the eyes of faith – that the Lamb of God took away their sin<sup>8</sup>, then filled with renewed hope. The reality of the cross for them was not just history, not just objective truth, but very real, subjective in application. They saw the Crucified and His cross in a way that they’d, perhaps, not seen before and they even saw God in a different light, One who does not condemn. Calvary’s mournful mountain climb uplifted them with joy in the fullness of the Gospel. The descent from that climb had the counseled emotionally clicking their heels in Spirit given ecstasy for any feeling of guilt from outward stimuli as well as any internally imposed feelings of guilt and condemnation were gone.<sup>9</sup> What joy, too, for the counselor to see the tears of Spirit-given bliss and the ear to ear smiles generated by Spirit-given peace because they fully realized that the guilt and condemnation stayed on Jesus!

The picture of this great exchange at the cross – Jesus’ holiness for their specific sins, Jesus’ peace for their inner anguish and outer turbulence – became the new picture indelibly etched in the spiritual memory of heart and soul of the counseled through *Counseling at the Cross*. For many it was an epiphany of epiphanies. For many there was a new comprehension of and appreciation for the depth of the meaning to the age-old and oft-heard proclamation: “Jesus’ forgiveness is yours, full and free, purchased and won for you by his holy blood, the blood of your God and your brother.”

Those counseled at the cross have walked away with the assurance that the sacrifice made at the cross was for each sinner and for every sin, and that meant that this was unambiguously his or hers, and not just for a faceless humanity. The universal truth of Calvary holds such wonderful individual news to the recovered soul in counsel. The fact that God, who cannot lie,<sup>10</sup> has assured the anguished soul that there is love, still, even when what was perpetrated was perpetrated, what was done was done, there is still hope. This hope doesn’t disappoint<sup>11</sup>, even when the counselees’ pasts were messed up and dirty and destroyed. What a sight! What a walk!

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<sup>8</sup> John 1:29

<sup>9</sup> John 8:11

<sup>10</sup> Titus 1:2

<sup>11</sup> Romans 5:5

It would be saying too much to consider that what I present in this work is a companion to *Counseling at the Cross*. I can only claim that this work builds on, or flows from, Lyon's pastoral counseling contribution. In essence, I believe, *Counseling at the Empty Tomb* is but a supplement or compliment to *Counseling at the Cross*.

But with such a disclaimer, I am also excited to share what I discovered when counseling with those whom I have been privileged to help with the Word. The discovery was both practical and scriptural by enhancing the walk to the cross by continuing the walk from Calvary to Joseph's garden burial plot, left empty by the Risen Savior. The counseled left the cross, in certainty and unburdened of their sins and guilt, but often times they also left uncertain and apprehensive of what lay ahead. They left the cross in certainty and assured of their personal forgiveness, liberated from the guilt of their sin. But human hearts are naturally intimidated by the unknown, by the future.). Counseled hearts, thinking back on experiences that first led them to walk to the cross, wondered about what the walk ahead had in store for them. Peace for the what was past couldn't stifle concern, even worry, about the future. Those questions took verbal form:

- How will I be able to bear my crosses?
- How will I be able to deal with loneliness, temptations, challenges, and even the consequences of my sins, and bring forth fruits of repentance?
- How will I be able to interact with those who hurt me, whom I have hurt... with those with whom I have grieved or grieved me...?
- How will I be able to deal with the scars? While the scars represent, healing, recovery, and restoration, aren't they also reminders of hurt and actually represent cruel disfigurement?
- How can I forgive and forget, or do I just keep on forgiving when I can't forget?
- How can I carry on with the roles I failed to fulfill before? Will I fail again?
- How do I regain truthfulness and trust?
- Will the past remain in the past, resolved?
- Will the present resolution hold?
- And, what about tomorrow – will the hope and resolve of yesterday and today translate into a lasting hope and resolve?

Again, for emphasis, I have to say that those who walked to the cross and were counseled there, left in the comfort and certainty that all of the issues of sin and guilt were irrefutably settled at the cross. They left convinced that they had been declared "Not guilty!" – justified – through the death of the Suffering Servant and Conquering King, Jesus. But all those questions persisted.

I found that those who were counseled at the cross left strengthened in *faith*, that is, strengthened in trust that the promises of God are sure in Christ Jesus, and sure for them. But those questions represented a yearning for more. The forgiven also needed *hope*, that is, the confidence *that their today and their future* are and will be as secured in God's promises in Christ Jesus as was their yesterday and their past. Pining and restless hearts that needed Jesus for yesterday, need Jesus for today, and need Jesus

for tomorrow, too. They needed the hope that Jesus alone can give to be able to move on in life, in living, and, finally, in dying. So it occurred to me that perhaps we – counselor and counselee – should keep walking.

From experience and necessity it became my blessed conclusion of mine that, after counseling at the cross, the *walk to the cross* needed to continue the journey three days further...

- † from the mockery, injustice, whip, thorns, hammer, nails, spear, blood, death, and darkness,
- from the sight and sounds involved with the Sin-bearer in agony, rejection, and death,
- from the guilt left nailed to the cross,
- from that Friday we call “Good,” –

### *FROM THE CROSS –*

- † to the first day of the week, Sunday, the day we call “Easter,”
- to soldiers dropping dazed at the coming of an angel, dispatched from heaven, who rolled the stone away from the tomb they guarded, and who then sat on it;
- to a broken seal, bearing an insignia of the mighty Roman Empire that demanded: “Do not disturb under penalty of law,”
- to a grave itself too powerless, too impotent to keep within the One it had swallowed because that One swallowed up death in victory,
- to a fresh, calm, new morning of sunshine – shining as if to pierce the night of gloom – with the dawn of unforgettable sights, like pile of neatly folded – not hastily tossed – burial clothes, and the sounds of angels and the joyous message, “He’s not here; He’s risen. Go, tell...”
- to the eye-popping, jaw-dropping, tear-stopping, heart-warming,  
*motivating,*  
*empowering,*  
*enabling* sight of the risen, resurrected Savior Jesus

## **AT THE EMPTY TOMB!**

Counseling at the empty tomb affords the ongoing and sustaining comfort and certainty of temporal and eternal *hopeful resolve*!

### **Thesis –**

Just as counseling at the cross brings the sure resolve of forgiveness to the guilt-ridden soul, through Jesus' substitutionary, debt-settling death, so also counseling at the empty tomb brings hopeful resolve to the unsure, confidence-seeking soul through Jesus' Gospel-motivating, Gospel-empowering, and Gospel-enabling resurrection.

If the following helps anyone on the giving or receiving end of counseling, God be praised. To God be the glory!

## Counseling Another Way

*"It is the nature of God that He creates out of nothing; therefore God cannot make anything out of him who has not yet become nothing... Therefore God receives none but those who are forsaken, restores health to none but those who are sick, gives sight to none but the blind, and life to none but the dead. He does not give saintliness to any but sinners, nor wisdom to any but fools. In short: He has mercy on none but the wretched and gives grace to none but those who are in disgrace." – Martin Luther<sup>12</sup>*

This is our confidence: since the risen Savior was able to raise himself up from lifelessness to the fullness of life and life eternal and from the curse of death to the blessing of life, then he is also able to raise up people from a dead end life to a life of endless hope! In Jesus, people whose experience leave them and their lives in the ash heaps of burned out hurt, pain, loss, and dysfunction find, for time and for eternity, the opposite, resurrection, rejuvenation, restoration, and life which is flourishing and whole.

Pastoral counselors should not short-change themselves in the importance of their role as the Lord uses them to heal. Perhaps a look at what is considered an effective alternative will bolster the confidence of a pastoral counselor. It is good to consider the alternative answers. Counseling at the empty tomb is powerful because it brings to the table the power of Jesus' resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus gives life to those who don't feel alive and hope to those who can't see any reason to have hope. But first, a look at a counseling technique from another counseling perspective.

An example:

When a new counseling, intervention, and support center opened its doors in Ft. Collins, CO, invitations were sent to professionals in the community (pastors included) to attend monthly brown bag lunch presentations. If my schedule allowed, I attended these events in order to see what was being offered in the area of individual and group counseling. Of course, I attended with eyes wide open and with a good measure of Biblical discernment.

I will never forget one particular session that zeroed in on a demonstration of a counseling technique called *Rapid Eye Movement Desensitization (REMD)*.

The facilitator introduced a video presentation of a counseling session which employed REMD. The counselee was a lady who'd been in a serious car accident at a busy intersection in our city. She was suffering from an overwhelming, and seemingly insurmountable, fear that was keeping her from getting back behind the wheel of a car again. Her fear (phobia) of driving was crippling. Not only was she not able to see how she could drive a vehicle again, she was having trouble even riding in a car. Her fear of driving obviously brought dysfunction into her life, seriously hampering her lifestyle and

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<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Day by Day We Magnify Thee, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Fortress Press, 1985, p. 321 (citing Luther's work on the seven penitential psalms, 1517, WA, I, 183f)

her family's activities. She'd been diagnosed with a form of post-traumatic stress disorder (PSTD).

The facilitator of this presentation explained how REMD worked and what we would observe in the video. He explained how in the REMD process the counselor would propose certain scenarios and ask the counselee to visualize herself in them. He explained how the counselor would then ask a series of questions that would evoke from the counselee her thoughts, emotions, and verbal expressions as they related to and in response to those scenarios that she was asked to visualize. The facilitator further explained that during this whole process of engagement of visualization and vocalization the counselor would also physically engage<sup>13</sup> the counselee with an artificial form of stimulation of Rapid Eye Movement (REM),<sup>14</sup> something which happens naturally during the stages and patterns of sleep.

Before showing the video, as a final preparation for the presentation of the actual demonstration of the REMD technique with that fear-driven accident victim, the facilitator commented to the group (as I best remember): "As a person often is disaffected from pressing issues during sleep, during which REM occurs, so the facilitator enables the client to detach from pressing issues while still awake."

We then watched the video-recorded demonstration of the entire counseling session which demonstrated the *Rapid Eye Movement Desensitization (REMD)* technique with that accident victim. (It might be important to note that the accident was not the woman's fault; she had been an unwilling party to, and a victim of that accident. She had been injured physically and emotionally).

The counselor, in the video, began by asking the woman, "When you get behind the wheel of a car now, how do feel inside?" "Afraid!" was her answer. His immediate follow-up was, "Focus on that fear," as he moved his fingers rapidly, back and forth, side to side, right to left and left to right, in front of her eyes. As he did so he kept bidding her, "Focus on that fear, focus on that." Her eyes followed the movement of his fingers.

The counselor's questions continued, "If your fear had a voice, what would that voice be crying out?" "Help me!" was her answer. "Focus on that," was repeated again and again as he moved his fingers rapidly in the motion described. Her eyes followed his fingers.

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<sup>13</sup> The counselor extends two fingers about six to eight inches in front of the counselee's eyes. The counselor moves his fingers back and forth, to the right and to the left, in a line directly in front of the subject's eyes while bidding the counselee to focus his/her eyes on his fingers' movements. As the eyes move side to side, REM is simulated.

<sup>14</sup> REMs occur during the first of four stages of sleep. During the period of rapid eye movements in Stage 1 sleep, it is very difficult to arouse the sleeping subject. Most dreams occur during Stage 1. **Dreams "depend on remembered perceptions."** This dreaming state is sometimes known as "paradoxical sleep," because the subject is near awareness by one criterion (EEG – electroencephalogram), but hard to arouse by another, (REMs). When REM occurs, a regular sequence of 26 eye movements, alternating to the right and the left, happens. (Hilgard, Ernest R., Atkinson, Richard C., Atkinson, Introduction to Psychology, Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., New York/San Francisco/Atlanta, 1971; pp. 167-171).

Then the counselor asked, "If you were yelling for help, what kind of help would you yell for?" "Get me out of this car!" she screamed. "Focus on that," he repeated as he duplicated another REM simulation.

The counselor's REMD questions progressed until he'd led her to the most terrifying place or situation in which she could have imagined for herself. To her, the most stressful, terrifying situation to be found, was the claustrophobic anxiety of being trapped and wedged in a deep, narrow, dark, dank well<sup>15</sup> with the inability to free herself. As she described, in visualized, graphic terms, the scenario of being stuck in a well, the counselor kept reciting, "Focus on that," as he repeated the REM simulation and stimulation.

Once the counselor had her hopelessly jammed in that well, encased alive in that claustrophobic's nightmare, he asked her who it would be from her life that she trusted the most. "My Grandpa," she answered. Repeat the REMD action and encouragement. Then the counselor had her imagine and describe her grandpa's hands and if she could visualize those hands reaching out to help her if she were stuck in such a well. She described grandpa's hands as, "strong, tender, and comforting." Repeat the REMD action and encouragement.

This is how the process concluded:

Counselor: "Did you ever see your grandpa driving a vehicle? What kind?"  
Accident victim: "Yes. A tractor." REMD.

Counselor: "Did you ever ride with your grandpa on his tractor?"  
Accident victim: "Yes. He let me sit on his lap as he drove the tractor." REMD.

Counselor: "Did grandpa hold on to you firmly and tenderly as he drove the tractor?"  
Accident victim: "Oh, yes, his hands were big, and strong, and soft!" REMD.

Counselor: "Did you feel safe and secure sitting on your grandpa's lap on the tractor?"  
Accident victim: "Absolutely! I always felt safe when I was with grandpa." REMD.

Counselor: "Could you imagine yourself sitting safe on grandpa's lap again?"  
Accident victim: "Yes." REMD.

Counselor: "Now think of yourself behind the wheel in your car." The counselee's eyes widened, the source of her fear was being confronted. He was asking her to go, in her mind's eye, to the place she feared the most.

Counselor: "I want you to imagine that whenever you get behind the wheel of your car, and you are driving, that you are doing so while sitting on grandpa's lap on his tractor. Can you imagine that?"

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<sup>15</sup> Like Jessica McClure Morales, who, on October 14, 1987, in Midland, Texas, was trapped for 58 hours, 22 ft. below ground, in an 18 inch wide well casing. Baby Jessica's story, became the object of national attention.

Accident victim: "Yes, yes, I can!! I really can!!" she answered. REMD.

Counselor: "Would you still feel safe driving your car through the intersection of South Taft Hill and West Drake Roads, if you could see yourself sitting on grandpa's lap on his tractor?

Accident victim: "I think so...(followed by a pause)...I can see it." REMD.

She could see herself again behind the wheel of a car because she could see herself, with her mind's eye and comforted psyche (soul) sitting on grandpa's lap on the tractor seat.<sup>16</sup> She found hope and resolve through REMD. Calm was restored to her. Tension left her. The change that came over her was notably visible. The change that came over her was immediate and as instantaneous as was the sea at Jesus' command, "Quiet! Be still!"<sup>17</sup>

Focus on that.

I went away from that presentation with mixed responses, mostly internalized.

As a confessional<sup>18</sup> pastoral counselor, one initial reaction I had was to blow off this demonstration and procedure as an example of humanistic chaff.

I felt that the whole procedure that I'd witnessed was, though well intentioned, a mere exploitation of a vulnerable person, weak in spirit, susceptible to manipulation, impressionable, and gullible. The word mesmerized<sup>19</sup> came to mind.

I speculated that if there was any progress, it was superficial at best in my estimation, and offered no lasting resolution for the awful effects of that accident victim's trauma had been achieved.

I left convinced that any confessional pastoral counselors who might have witnessed what I witnessed would be thinking what I was thinking at that point. Confessional pastoral counselors believe, teach and confess that the Holy Spirit comforts through the

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<sup>16</sup> The demonstration was presented with reference to the work of Shapiro, Francine, "Rapid Eye Movement Desensitization: A New Treatment for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder," Mental Research Institute, Inc., Palo Alto, California: 1990.

<sup>17</sup> Mark 4:39

<sup>18</sup> "confessional" i.e. one that is evangelical (holding to and sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ), apostolic (holding to and sharing the truths as taught by the apostles), and scriptural (holding to the Bible , the true, inspired, inerrant Word of God, on which is the basis of all matters of doctrine and life).

<sup>19</sup> Franz Anton Mesmer, 1734-1815, believed that "the harnessed powers of the cosmic energies" were accessible to enlightened souls such as he considered himself. Sickness and disease were supposedly caused by imbalances in the tidal effects of the universal fluid. Over time, Mesmer developed trance-inducing techniques of touching, stroking, hypnotic stares, the waving of magnetic wands, or having his subjects sit around a metal tub of water, holding metal rods in the water while he moved about in flowing robes to a background of classical music to remedy cosmic fluid imbalance in the troubled bodies of his patients. Mesmer was convinced that his techniques could potentially banish pain and suffering; gleaned from Wikipedia.

Means of Grace, [that is, the Gospel in Word and Sacraments, along with the proper use of the Law and Gospel messages of Holy Scripture]. Confessional pastoral counselors believe that the Means of Grace are the best and most effective tools (and they are!) for lasting resolution. The REMD technique did not employ the Means of Grace.

Confessional pastoral counselors probably would see themselves doing what I did – I politely elbowed my way past all those other professionals, with all their impressive degrees in counseling, and I did so with a certain degree of righteous indignation swirling around in head and heart, but not saying it out loud, “We’re right, they’re wrong.” (Such indignation, by the way, is a tool of the father of lies, the devil, who can easily turn those who think themselves superior into Christ-less Pharisees, “separated ones,” with noses aloof, huffing around with a damnable, “better-than-thou” attitude).

Furthermore, confessional pastoral counselors, such as I, might have huffed out the door while murmuring under one’s breath:

- The bumper sticker sentiment, “No Jesus, no peace; Know Jesus, know peace!”
- Or, a spiritual critique, “What drivell! Any vision of a kind, strong grandpa on his tractor seat holding on to his grandchild however tenderly and tightly cannot begin to match seeing, through the eyes of faith, the kindness and love of God the Father in the real nail-imprinted hands of His Son, Crucified and Risen! He, not a tender-handed grandpa, has got our names written in the palm of His hand!<sup>20</sup> He, not a strong-handed grandpa, is the only One who can claim that, ‘*All power in heaven and earth has been given to me...*’ and who promises that, ‘...surely, I am with you always...!’<sup>21</sup>
- Or, with the sarcastic questions, like, “Why didn’t the counselor have that poor lady also shout out with Janov’s primal scream<sup>22</sup> every time she gets into the car? Wouldn’t that have been just as beneficial and a whole lot faster?”

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<sup>20</sup> Isaiah 29:16

<sup>21</sup> Matthew 28:18, 20

<sup>22</sup> Primal therapy is a trauma-based psychotherapy created by Arthur Janov, who argues that neurosis is caused by the repressed pain of childhood trauma. Janov argues that repressed pain can be sequentially brought to conscious awareness and resolved through re-experiencing the incident and fully expressing the resulting pain during therapy. Primal therapy was developed as a means of eliciting the repressed pain; the term *Pain* is capitalized in discussions of primal therapy when referring to any repressed emotional distress and its purported long-lasting psychological effects. Janov criticizes the talking therapies as they deal primarily with the cerebral cortex and higher-reasoning areas and do not access the source of Pain within the more basic parts of the central nervous system. Primal therapy is used to re-experience childhood pain—i.e., felt rather than conceptual memories—in an attempt to resolve the pain through complete processing and integration, becoming “real”. An intended objective of the therapy is to lessen or eliminate the hold early trauma exerts on adult life. Primal therapy became very influential during a brief period in the early 1970s, after the publication of Janov’s first book, *The Primal Scream*. [Gleaned from Wikipedia] Janov’s primal scream was all the rage, even among the biggest names of celebrity, back in the day when I was studying psychology in college. - One question actually fielded from those gathered for the REMD demonstration did ask the presenter, “Is there a parallel to the results of employing Janov’s primal scream?”

I walked out of that room believing that the only satisfying aspect of that brown bag demonstration of REMD was what was in the brown bag itself – the lunch! Not so fast, counselor. I needed to rethink my impressions and conclusions and lose the airs of denunciation.<sup>23</sup>

How easily we theologically trained pastoral counselors eschew secular approaches. How convinced we are that we know and have better answers. We are justified in this conviction because in a very real, spiritual way, we do know and we have better! We have the knowledge and wisdom and the power of the Spirit! In fact, we do have the best to offer! “Our skills are not the tools, God’s Word is.”<sup>24</sup> The Word of God is living and active and has the power to work on the heart.<sup>25</sup> It is spirit and life and is the way the Spirit gives life.<sup>26</sup>

Yet, that slice of secular therapy that I witnessed, while among a room full of secular psychologists, psychiatrists, and counselors, is a recognized, accepted, and applied counseling technique. The therapy demonstrated is a form of Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing, EMDR. EMDR is a form of treatment especially applied to trauma victims. EMDR is based on the neurophysiological hypothesis of “Accelerated Information Processing,”<sup>27</sup> which, from our biblical perspective, is a marvelous display of the unfathomable wisdom of God the Creator demonstrated in the complexity of His creation of the human brain with its intricate capacity to think, to reason, and to respond.

EMDR works on the premise that we have an innate physiological processing system in our brain that normally processes disturbing input in an *adaptive*<sup>28</sup> manner. A trauma interrupts this adaptive information process and the traumatic memories are stored in an isolated *neuro-network*<sup>29</sup> that cannot connect with the other more adaptive neuro-

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<sup>23</sup> A good question that might be asked is, “Is there something in this that I can use to help God’s people cope and find hope?” Paul encouraged, “The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. (But the Apostle adds), We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ,” 2 Corinthians 10:4-5. With discernment we can “Spoil the Egyptians.” Origen, in a letter to Gregory, wrote, “The children of Israel were commanded to ask from their neighbors and those who dwelt with them, vessels of silver and gold...in order that, by despoiling the Egyptians, they might have material for the preparation of things which pertained to the service of God,” based on Exodus 12:36, “The LORD had made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and they gave them what they asked for; so they plundered the Egyptians,” Exodus 12:36.

<sup>24</sup> Lyon, H. Curtis, Counseling at the Cross – Using the Power of the Gospel in Christian Counseling, Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 1993, p. 42.

<sup>25</sup> Hebrews 4:12

<sup>26</sup> John 6:63

<sup>27</sup> Neurological activity stimulated by rapid eye movement resulting in reality-based information being processed by the brain to effectively dispute self-defeating thoughts and memories.

<sup>28</sup> Beneficial to the individual and/or relationship.

<sup>29</sup> The brain cell structure in which specific experiences and memories are stored. In a trauma situation it appears that such a brain cell structure is blocked or isolated from the messages of other cell structures that would allow the person to process the information in an adaptive manner.

networks. The use of directed eye movements together with *cognitive processing*<sup>30</sup> seeks to unblock the traumatic information so that it can connect with adaptive thought processes, resulting in emotional relief and healing from the traumatic memories.

But come on, already, EMDR?! Simulating or stimulating REM?! Beneficial?! Healing?! If what happens during sleep is what is needed, why not just quote the counselee the passage that, “*(The LORD) grants sleep to those he loves,*”<sup>31</sup> and leave it at that? Would that problems and issues could be slept away.

The pastoral counselor can neither afford to be arrogant nor cavalier in his approach. The issues of the parishioner who comes into our offices are serious and heartfelt. They are suffering,

- exhausted within from burdens without,
- torn up inside and robbed of peace by guilt,
- and dried up in their emotional reservoirs, drained of any hope.

Each of them would want to be able go home, to rest their heads on their pillows, and fall asleep confident that, “*I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the LORD sustains me,*”<sup>32</sup> or, - “*I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.*”<sup>33</sup> Like the weeping prophet they would love to wake up with the conviction that, “*Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness!*”<sup>34</sup> Weary souls need such rest.

That’s where we can help, with the Word. The LORD of grace and power can and does give the weary rest because His Word is as powerful as the One who inspired it! Applying the Word of God is our forte in counseling. God’s Word, the Bible, is truth, and does sanctify, and we have the privilege of applying that Word. It is that Word alone which is the only source of absolute Truth and which offers absolute healing.

Counter to the Word are the lies and half-truths of the devil. Through them the devil has wreaked havoc on peoples’ hearts and souls ( $\psi\psi\chi\gamma$ ) leaving them devastated and without much joy or hope. They become victims of the devil, victims of their own sinful nature, and victims of a society that defies the counsel of God. That’s why they come into our offices. The unholy three – consisting of the devil, the unbelieving and worldly society, and the sinful nature of each human being – have made them miserable, and

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<sup>30</sup> The basic concept of cognitive processing is that our feelings and behaviors are the result of the way we think. In the cognitive process the counselor helps the one seeking counsel to identify cognitive distortions, irrational beliefs, or negative self-talk and replace such faulty thought processes with reality-based thinking so there are healthy emotions and relationships. Cognitive therapy is didactic in nature, is directive in approach, and collaborative in process.

<sup>31</sup> Psalm 127:2b

<sup>32</sup> Psalm 3:5

<sup>33</sup> Psalm 4:8

<sup>34</sup> Lamentations 3:22-23

have made the role of the pastoral counselor far more challenging and complex than a superficial prescription of, “Take two Scriptures and call me in the morning.”

When the sheep of the Shepherd come to us as wounded as they are, that’s when we dig out our Latin dictionaries for a quick review of the meaning of the word “pastor.” “Pastor” means “shepherd.” We remember that we are but the Good Shepherd’s under-shepherds. The Pastor must shepherd and pastor the sheep through us, through his powerful Word. The roaring lion has done his best to devour<sup>35</sup> them, so, as a shepherd, we pour the oil of healing on their wounds and feed them with the food that will strengthen – the Shepherd’s Word. The sheep have wandered down spiritually dangerous paths and they have been left emotionally, physically, psychologically, and spiritually injured. So the shepherd is careful that he places them in the Shepherd’s care in order that they might not fall into false belief, despair, and other great and shameful sins.<sup>36</sup>

Many of the sheep have been sinned against by other sheep, and many of them have committed grievous sins themselves. The sheep are indeed part of the Shepherd’s flock, clean and purified. But they are also goats, filthy and impure.<sup>37</sup> With the strength and tenderness of the Shepherd, we pastor these sheep. We want what the Shepherd wants for those sheep: that they know victory in time and in eternity and be equipped for life and prepared for life’s end. We want for those sheep that they be graciously shepherded through this world of sorrow and graciously led to the safe sheepfold of the heavenly Shepherd.<sup>38</sup> These are the blessings that shepherds want for the sheep under their care because that’s what the Good Shepherd wants for them. And what he wants, he will always provide.<sup>39</sup>

As we seek to care for Jesus’ sheep, let us be careful that we do not become unwitting tools of the devil’s crafty hands. That may happen if in our counseling and shepherding we are convinced that there is only one way, only one approach in applying the Word. That may also happen if in our counseling and shepherding we naively consider that a one-time application of the Word will be sufficient, failing to follow-up with the sheep.

The LORD is the counselor’s and counselee’s Shepherd and neither will lack his provision. The LORD will cause both the counseling under-shepherd and the counseled sheep to eat to the full and be rested in the green pastures of his Word, while also drinking in, in safety, the water of life (the Word again) slaking the thirst for answers. The LORD will restore their souls and lead them in righteous ways to righteous

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<sup>35</sup> 1 Peter 5:8

<sup>36</sup> Luther’s Small Catechism, 6<sup>th</sup> Petition, Lead us not into temptation. *What does this mean?* God surely tempts no one to sin, but we pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us, so that the devil, the world, and our flesh may not deceive us or lead us into false belief, despair, and other great and shameful sins; and though we are tempted by them, we pray that we may overcome and win the victory.

<sup>37</sup> *simul iustus et peccator*

<sup>38</sup> Luther’s Small Catechism, 6<sup>th</sup>, *ibid*, & 7<sup>th</sup> Petitions, But deliver us from evil. *What does this mean?* In conclusion, we pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would deliver us from every evil that threatens body and soul, property and reputation, and finally when our last hour comes, grant us a blessed end and graciously take us from this world of sorrow to himself in heaven.

<sup>39</sup> “God’s work, done God’s way, will never lack God’s supply,” Hudson Taylor.

resolutions and solutions. How? Once again, it is through the Shepherd's voice, his Word. The LORD will speak and restore their souls, leading the counselor and counseled on right and righteous paths. With the LORD in the counseling sessions, there by his promise<sup>40</sup> and there through the use of his Scriptures, even something as fearsome as death is reduced to the harmlessness of a shadow, and the enemies of both the under-shepherd and the sheep are held at bay while their tables are set with the truth. At times, the Good Shepherd sometimes serves as the counseling under-shepherd's rod in order to drive the counseled sheep. At other times the Shepherd serves as the counseling under-shepherd's staff in order to pull the counseled sheep back. The use of the Word as rod and staff is to comfort, feed, and lead the sheep. Finally, the LORD's steadfast love, mercy, and goodness are made the sheep's, through the under-shepherd's faithful application of God's Word. Immediate goals are attained. But always the final goal permeates the counsel the under-shepherd gives. The final goal that permeates the under-shepherd's prayers, preparation, advice, and counsel is to help the sheep through life to eternal life and entrance into the safe sheep pen of heaven, the House of the LORD. The singular pronouns of Psalm 23, "my" and "me" become plural pronouns, "our" and "us" in the counseling sessions. Praise God that the LORD Shepherd is shepherd of both!<sup>41</sup>

With the under-shepherd fed and led, the pastoral counselor can well feed and lead the sheep.<sup>42</sup> In fact, the pastoral counselor keeps on feeding and being led so that the sheep continue to be fed and led. The under-shepherd repeats the advice of the Word of the Shepherd in concerted and intentional ways.<sup>43</sup>

In the under-shepherd/sheep relationship, the pastoral counselor needs to, above all else, love the sheep, just as the Shepherd loves them. Wandering sheep, filthy sheep, unlovable sheep, broken sheep, wounded sheep, ALL sheep need to be loved, with the Savior's love. The Shepherd's love is there for both.

Loved we can love. Love we must (*Seelsorge*). One of the, "...great prerequisites of the art of pastoral counseling is...love for the sufferer whom God has afflicted."<sup>44</sup> We love the sheep because the Shepherd loves the sheep. We cannot but feel compassion and empathy for the sheep because Jesus does. Compassion, sympathy, and love will find the best way to counsel the individual member of the flock. Look at how Jesus loved his sheep. Jesus' love is many-faceted: unmistakable, sacrificial, and constant and unconditionally.

The Savior's **knowledgeable** love is instructive for the under-shepherd, it is also the most helpful and healing dynamic. The Shepherd knows the sheep better than we do.

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<sup>40</sup> Matthew 28:20

<sup>41</sup> Psalm 23

<sup>42</sup> John 15:9-12,17

<sup>43</sup> "*Keep reminding them of these things....Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth,*" 2 Timothy 2:14,15.

<sup>44</sup> Pieper, August, "*The Book of Job In Its Significance For Preaching and The Cure of Souls,*" Our Great Heritage, II, Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, WI, 1998; p. 163

Jesus knows his sheep,<sup>45</sup> individually, personally and intimately. Jesus calls each sheep by name. The Shepherd came to seek and save the lost, each one is precious. The Shepherd did not just love the sheep in a general way, but each one individually, uniquely, personally, according to knowledge. When he died for the sheep, he did not die for a faceless flock but with each one on his mind and heart. When he laid down his life for the sheep, he did so seeing each sheep's face as if he were seeing that one sheep alone, as if he were sacrificing himself for that one sheep alone. He did that for all of us lost sheep. Our Chief Shepherd, Jesus, had tunnel vision from the vantage point of the cross, and then again when daylight entered the once dark tomb at his resurrection. Jesus' love was objectively given for all, but at the same time his love subjectively given for each. His knowledgeable love was and is a personalized love.

Bring knowledgeable love in to the counseling session. Love these sheep and lambs as did and as does the Shepherd, according to knowledge.

The “one-size fits all” Gospel has specific power, for specific situations, for specific individuals, with specific, individualized application. God has provided numerous ways of presenting this one-size-fits-all gospel individualized, tailored to the individuals and their individual situations. We under-shepherds have been called to pour the right oil, with the right amount, on the head of each sheep, to restore that one precious member of the flock who seeks our care. That one sheep is our singular focus. What worked for one may not work for the other. The Gospel needs to be applied, knowledgeable, in order to soothe that heart, at that time, in that circumstance, with the Shepherd’s restoration and hope. Varied approaches to counseling and therapeutic techniques must be used to serve specific hearts and lives according to their specific situations and needs (*Privatseelsorge*).

Confessional counselors must not only be able to see the counseling snakes in the wood pile, they must also see that there may be some good counseling approaches and techniques wood in that pile.

When a situation demands that try a novel approach be applied – yet, certainly, with the same Word – the counseling shepherd needs to seek out what may be good and beneficial in approaches and techniques used in counseling. Adapt what you discover. It would not be advisable to adopt any counseling methodology or technique without a careful measure of discernment. Jesus sent out his representatives with this direction, “...(Be) as shrewd as snakes and (yet) as innocent as doves.”<sup>46</sup> Jesus directed his apostle to write, “*To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.*”<sup>47</sup> Paul, again, wrote, “*The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension*

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<sup>45</sup> John 10:14

<sup>46</sup> Matthew 10:16

<sup>47</sup> 1 Corinthians 9:22-23

*that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”*<sup>48</sup>

Knowledgeable love for the individual sheep calls for customizing and adaptability. “Pastoral counseling is that pastoral care of individuals as they face their grief, problems, troubles, burdens, fears, and illnesses, **which involves not simply giving advice, but assisting them to find help from the word of God.**”<sup>49</sup> We strive to better “...assist (individuals) find help from the word of God...” I believe we can “take captive” certain techniques in order to “...make (them) obedient to Christ.” Secular counseling and psychology often has much to offer but even at its best it is handicapped without the power of the gospel to bring about and motivate the spiritual, sanctified growth, healing and hope.

When thinking back to the example of REMD, that technique may not be all that useful in our pastoral counseling. However, in observing how one troubled woman was helped with an effective employment of the technique of visualization, it makes sense to take that aspect captive and make it obedient to Christ and his Word in our counseling. We pastoral counselors can learn from such a therapy to better engage and enable counselees to see Gospel realities (objective) and Gospel potentialities (subjective) with the technique of visualization. What we may use and can use, we ought to use.

More and more I appropriated the technique of visualization into my counseling. My counseling experiences took on a new sparkle.<sup>50</sup> The more I applied the visualization technique in my counseling sessions the more I saw downcast faces light up and reflect this new sparkle, to my joy and the counselee’s benefit. In each case, it was the power of the Gospel, not the technique, in and of itself, that produced such these results.

It’s time to move on to the thesis in application. As we do, once again, a disclaimer. I admit and confess, again, that I am a beggar before God. This is true. This is true for me in all aspects of the ministry of the Word and Sacrament. It is true for me as I wear the hat of a pastor-counselor. I merely desire to share what has proven to bring blessings to me as I counseled, as well as what has proven to bring blessings to those whom I counseled. D.T. Niles said, “Evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.” What is true about evangelism is also true about pastoral counseling.

So this beggar is compelled and eager to share with other beggars an idea that became an effective technique in counseling through which the one counseled is connected with a rich supply of the free, yet, priceless Bread of life. Those starving for the comfort food of the Gospel have been filled by means of a verbal walk to the empty tomb of the risen Savior, to find there an abundant supply of hopeful resolve. This is a counseling walk that is taken with Jesus, who said, *“For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world... I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will*

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<sup>48</sup> 2 Corinthians 10:4-5, cited also in footnote 14.

<sup>49</sup> Schuetze, Armin W., Habeck, Irwin J., The Shepherd Under Christ, a Textbook for Pastoral Theology, Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 1974, p. 181; emphasis mine.

<sup>50</sup> Somewhere Luther is to have said, “The Bible is like a diamond. Every way you turn it there is a new sparkle.”

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*never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.”<sup>51</sup> “Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!”<sup>52</sup>*

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<sup>51</sup> John 6:33-35

<sup>52</sup> Psalm 34:8

## **Remember the Sabbath!**

*"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." Matthew 11:28-30*

*Look around and be distressed – look within and be depressed – look to Jesus and be at rest.<sup>53</sup>*

Hurrying from that brown bag lunch, we hasten to the tomb where they lay Jesus' breathless clay. There are stones of solitude and gloom in peoples' lives that need to be rolled away. There's no better place to go roll away stones than to the empty tomb where the stone was rolled away! That empty tomb was intended for a rich man's resting place in death. It, more than likely, became that. But it when it was it was it had the tag "used," but used for a little while, three days by Jewish counting. That empty tomb displayed an unmatched, paramount display of power on earth for the One who rose alive from that tomb SWALLOWED UP DEATH IN VICTORY! At the same time, that empty tomb exposes mankind's best displays of power and strength as puny and ineffective, for the seal of the mightiest powerhouse of a government at that time, the Roman Empire, which flexed its muscles through the arms of the armed, trained, and exercised detachment of soldiers were helpless to keep the dead One in.

To the empty tomb we run. A tomb, that tomb, should witness to us, "The End," but instead speaks, "Here's the Beginning!" A grave, that grave, ought to smack us with the message of hopeless end, but instead offers endless hope. We hasten there with those we counsel so they find in Jesus, alive, strength for today and hope for tomorrow. Let's go to that empty tomb when counseling those who have come to their ends, to hopeless ends. As with *Counseling at the Cross, Counseling at the Empty Tomb* employs the counseling technique of visualization.

Begin by visualizing rest, perfect rest, with perfect peace, with perfect calm, with perfect everything – the opposite of life's realities for the counselees. To visualize such perfection we need to go back to the time when everything was perfect, back to the beginning – the beginning of all things.

I believe that a good place to start in a new counseling series, if not the only place to start, is at **the** beginning, the Genesis 1:1 – 2:2 beginning. It's at the beginning of all things that any of us can begin to understand what true rest is, the kind of rest in its most sublime form, the kind of rest God intended and wants for struggling people. Rest equals resolve, resolution.

Rest is found "...In the beginning..." It was that kind of rest that was restored by Jesus through His fulfilled mission of salvation. That kind of rest is what we seek to impart through counseling. Start with the goal in mind that you, as a pastoral counselor, first

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<sup>53</sup> Shared with me by a faithful Lutheran elementary school teacher and principal, Lutheran high school religion teacher, and an admired friend, Steven W. Zellmer

seek to be used by the Lord to take the counselees back to the rest of the perfect beginning of all things. When someone walks in for counseling, counselor, envision Eden's rest in your mind and heart. Resolve to take those counseled back to Eden's rest.

Perhaps the hardest step for new counselees to take is the first one. The Germans have an idiom, "Aller Anfang ist schwer," meaning, "Every beginning is hard." Nearly every beginning with new counseling situation is hard because the counselee never wanted to be in a situation in which he/she needs help, AND, finally has to admit that there are problems beyond her/her present human capabilities and NEEDS HELP. To seek help is humbling. But with the Lord's promise, both to the counselor and the counselee, that those who humble themselves before the Lord will by the Lord be exalted and lifted up<sup>54</sup> such a hard beginning is worth it. To be in need is a good place to be, because then we are made to, "...wait in hope for the *LORD*; (and then find out that) he is our help..."<sup>55</sup>

Every counseling start, because it is so hard, ought to cause pastoral counselors to drop to their knees (spiritually if not also physically) in praise and thanks to the Lord God in heaven for moving those in need of counseling to come to the realization that they are in predicaments beyond their control, beyond their abilities, so that they do SEEK THE LORD'S COUNSEL AND HELP!

It is He who moves that first step as the weary come to Him who gives rest. Rejoice when they come to us who serve as pastoral counselors, because they are really coming to Jesus. Pastoral counselors are merely Jesus' representatives equipped with a Bible, with Jesus' words of rest. Does their coming for counseling mean more work for the pastoral counselor? Probably. But it's good work! And this is true: after the work comes the rest.

That's the way it worked after that very first week ever. God created all things in six, normal, natural, consecutive days, by the power of His Word, perfectly and orderly, and then He rested on the seventh day.

As you begin the work – the privilege – of counseling those fatigued with life and what it's brought them, the best place to start is with the first seventh day – at the beginning. The best we have to offer is what surrounded and filled God's created ones on that first week's last day: rest, *Sabbath*.

Go to that first day of rest at THE Beginning. Go there in your mind's eye as a counselor and imagine Adam and Eve and God together in *Sabbath*. God and mankind together: relaxing with each other, relishing each other, in perfect communion with each

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<sup>54</sup> James 4:10, 1 Peter 5:6

<sup>55</sup> Psalm 33:20

other, dwelling with each other, in perfect harmony. *Sabbath* then was the stuff of heaven itself.<sup>56</sup>

Go there through Genesis 1 and 2 and read for yourself what God really wanted for Himself with them, wanted for them, and wanted for that man and that women and that couple brought together in marriage. I do not believe that it is no wasted exercise for the pastoral counselor to remember what Eden gave those first people who had no issues at all. After all, those first two chapters of God's revealed Word, hold the primordial history of God's saving grace – grace dispensed by the pastoral counselor, grace received by those counseled. Go back to Paradise and remember what God wanted to last forever. In Moses' first book, the Lord opened His heart to us with that, "...beginning history of God's grace, God's saving activity."<sup>57</sup> History is made in counseling sessions because of that beginning history of God's saving grace. God's grace and saving activity alone can bring hopeful resolve to each person in need of counseling.

Through the Word and the Gospel of Jesus, we counselors desire to help those who feel the searing heat of the flaming sword<sup>58</sup>, as they, in their own ways, are kept eating from the Tree of life and from that rest of paradise. Paradise was lost. The suffering who trudge into the counselor's office seem only to be able to see the flaming swords of their issues,<sup>59</sup> flashing back and forth before their weary eyes. We need to help the counseled see the power of the resurrection and rest restored in the Risen One.

What revelation, those first chapters of Genesis! God introduces *who* He is, the mighty creator, and *how* He is, the God of all grace, of undeserved love. At the conclusion of that first week, and at the conclusion of God's exertion of creative power, He rested with the first man, the first woman, the first married couple, the first individuals. All was and all were in total bliss, in absolute perfection, in complete serenity. Everyone found joy in self, in each other, and in each role each had. How different from the timidity, tension, discomfort, and uncertainty of that very first counseling session! The atmosphere and tenor of that first counseling session usually is the very opposite of Eden and *Sabbath*. Tension, anger, frustration, nervousness, grief, guilt, fear – every negative of human experience imaginable – hang in the counseling room of that first session like thick fog. Words boom like thunder, words spoken and heard. Tears drop like rain, drizzling or down-pouring in sheets. Irritability flashes like lightening. - To the tomb, counselor, where the clouds break and the sun of that new day shines!

Before sin, the man whom God had handcrafted, and the woman He had fashioned from the man's rib, bore perfectly God's image of righteousness and holiness. Before sin, Adam and Eve were whole, within and without, physically and emotionally. Before

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<sup>56</sup> "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God...no)...tear(s)...no...death or mourning or crying or pain..." Revelation 21:3-4.

<sup>57</sup> Lawrenz, Carl, J., Jeske, John, C, A Commentary on Genesis 1-11, Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 2004, p. 33.

<sup>58</sup> Genesis 3:24

<sup>59</sup> See Genesis 3:24.

sin, there was no need for counseling. Before sin, there was perfect communion between God and those two, the crowns of his creation, and they were in perfect communion with each other. Now, as the counselees sit in the first counseling session, they look as if they'd been bashed the side of the head by life, and often as if they are ready to crown each other. They need *Sabbath*!

Genesis makes clear why they need *Sabbath*, because it also records the genesis of evil, the very reason for the need for counseling. They are there because of evil, because of sin. They have sinned or have been sinned against. The one who hated the first people and what God had given on that seventh day, hated them and God enough to shatter the blessings of *Sabbath* in their lives. The infection cultured by the evil one countered everything God wanted for those who engage counseling. The counter to the evil one is the Messiah Who was promised right after Sabbath was lost. The Messiah, Jesus, restored and restores the blessing of hopeful resolve.

***Hopeful resolve could be defined as a return to the blessedness of paradise and the Sabbath enjoyed there.***

I believe that it is necessary for the pastoral counselor to be an idealist. The pastoral counselor seeks and, with the Lord's blessing, expects the best for those who, in their own unique ways, are experiencing and feeling the worst. That alone makes him an idealist.

The ideal takes us back to Eden where everything was ideal. Walks to Calvary's hill and to Joseph's Garden, with their restorative power, do take us back to Eden. That is the powerful effect of the Gospel message of Jesus' cross and empty tomb. Those who seek pastoral counseling are seeking to give their issues a rest. Rest is defined by what was found on the first seventh day in Eden, the Sabbath Day. Through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that perfect Sabbath Day rest can be recovered and restored to those living with the adverse aspects that are this side of the flaming sword.<sup>60</sup>

Start at the beginning – the beginning of all things. Remember how everything began, at the beginning of all things. All was perfect.<sup>61</sup> Recall how nothing was imperfect before the fall into sin, at the beginning, the Genesis 1:1 – 2:2 beginning. Recall what was left behind in Eden because the first humans gave in to the lies of the evil one. At the beginning of all things God gave the gift of rest, true rest, a rest that he intended to last forever, a rest for which the struggling counselees long.

Ruin and unrest come too easily since the fall into sin. Every counseling situation proves that. It isn't easy getting back to Eden and Eden's seventh day rest.

This blessedness of Sabbath rest is described well in the following lesson taught by Professor Carl Lawrenz:

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<sup>60</sup> Genesis 3:24

<sup>61</sup> Genesis 1:31

"Even as God rested after His works of creation, even as God found joy and delight in all that He had made, so man(kind) likewise was to find blessed rest in God's creative works and in their gracious God who had made all for them. In this way (mankind) was to enjoy blessed fellowship with his God and joy and bliss in all of His works from the seventh day on, and on every future day. That seemingly is the reason why the seventh day is not closed in the same way which the other six days (of the creation week) are closed. Its great benefit was not to be restricted to the seventh day like each of the divine acts of the six days was restricted to them and never to be repeated. The seventh day was, however, the blessed creation Sabbath. The seventh day was the dedication day of heaven and earth and of all the joy and bliss which man(kind) was to find in it and in their God who made them..."

...Hebrews 3:8 – 4:12, especially 4:9, 'There remains therefore a rest to the people of God.' The rest of God is described as remaining; it has not been revoked, it still continues in force, and blessed is the one who is permitted to share it. It is not something new, a new blessing. God's rest, which He intends that we should enter, dates from the completion of the universe and will have no end. Adam and Eve were drawn in, into it to enjoy the blessedness of that rest. When they sinned they lost it. Through the gospel God offers it anew. Through faith we enjoy it. THIS IS BLESSED FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD, REACHING ITS CONSUMMATION IN HEAVEN."<sup>62</sup>

Each time I begin a new counseling situation, I cannot help but think back to when counseling wasn't needed and to the way *Sabbath* was studied at the feet of Professor Lawrenz. I can't help but remember the professor's lectures on THE beginning of all things, on that *Sabbath*, on how it was so idyllic for the first man and woman before they chose to sin and forfeited the perfection of Sabbath and Eden. Then I look into the sad, or angry, or questioning eyes – eyes that reveal that they are tired of what they have been going through, tired of the way things are – and I literally sigh<sup>63</sup> inside and from the heart pray, "Lord, use me to bring them your Sabbath through your Word."

So it has become one of my personal goals, when beginning a new counseling situation, to pray that I am given a heart, a head, a set of ears, and a mouth that are all connected. I pray that I listen well, that I can, with discernment, understand the issues, and also that I will speak what needs to be said. Then, I pray that I am used by the Lord, the Creator of things that are good, to bring to those new counselees – who are hurting, crying, and searching – what God wants for them: rest restored. That is the ideal. Pastoral counselors need to trust the Word as they use it: "*There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience. For the word of*

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<sup>62</sup> Lawrenz, Carl, seminary notes on Genesis 1:1-2:3

<sup>63</sup> Commenting on Jesus' miracle of opening the ears of a deaf man, (Mark 7:34), Martin Luther preached in 1534, that, "...the Lord Jesus sees all mankind's flesh and blood, and how in Eden the devil had brought it into deadly peril...He looks not on those two ears alone but on the whole multitude of men that have been born of Adam and are still to be born. So that this Gospel paints Christ as being the one man who cares for you and me, and for us all, as we ought to care for ourselves, as if he were plunged in the same shame and sin as we are, and tells how he sighs over the horrible devil who wrought all the ruin." Day by Day We Magnify Thee, op. cit., p. 70, (citing W.A., 37, 509)

*God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*<sup>64</sup>

*Der Christ ist ein optimist* (“The Christian is an optimist”) said Martin Luther. The counselees probably have waited longer than they should have to seek help and make the beginning, but nothing is too hard for the Lord.<sup>65</sup> They often have come in as a last resort and pretty much with a pessimistic expectation, (at least it can be certain that the evil one has already sown the seeds of pessimism). Perhaps they do not believe the Lord can enable them to reach resolution, but the arms of the Lord are not too short.<sup>66</sup>

And, to be sure, the evil one will be there in the room, in the first session, to curse the project. His whispering in their ears and yours ears will seek to curse the projects even as it begins. His intent is to bring eternal curse. The devil is the eternal pessimist. That is his eternal lot. That is what he seeks to promulgate.

The devil can't be seen. The pastoral counselor can. Thus the pastoral counselor must be seen as the one in the room who is an optimist and an idealist, especially in that first session (and, of course, in each subsequent session). Such optimistic idealism is not a façade, nor does it stem from a naïve or unrealistic self-deception. It is real, and it is fervent.<sup>67</sup> The pastoral counselor is so optimistic and so idealistic (fervently and ardently) because he knows the power of the resurrection.<sup>68</sup> Jesus can raise “from the dead” those who came in to counsel!

Martin Luther gave a commentary concerning the resurrected Lord which brightens every counseling session with the light of optimism and clear glow of idealism:

“...He who is called ‘Resurrexit’ is risen from death and grave, so he that says ‘Credo’ and cleaves to Him must also follow. For He has gone before us that we should follow, and He is begun the work in us, that, through His word and Baptism, we may be daily raised with Him.”

“If you receive the Word in faith, you are given other eyes which can see through death to the resurrection and apprehend the pure thoughts and image of life. If I would judge according to my reason and what I can see and understand, I should be lost. But I possess an understanding loftier than what eyes can see and senses feel, which faith has taught me. For there stands the text which says, ‘Resurrexit,’ ‘He is risen,’ not for Himself but for our sake, that His resurrection may be made ours, that we may also rise

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<sup>64</sup> Hebrews 4:9-12

<sup>65</sup> Genesis 18:14.

<sup>66</sup> Numbers 11:23

<sup>67</sup> To keep my idealism alive, one of the most important goals in ministry has been to attend post graduate seminary courses. I find these courses (for me usually one or two week summer quarters) serve to fan into flame the idealism I had before I left the seminary with a diploma and a first Call in hand. I find rest and a retreat sitting again at the feet of those who bring the Word, to study and to apply, under the banner: κηρύξατε τὸ εὐαγγέλιον

<sup>68</sup> Paul wrote, “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead,” Philippians 3:10-11.

in Him, and not remain in death and the grave, but with Him may celebrate in the body an everlasting Easter.”<sup>69</sup>

That’s the optimism and idealism that Jesus gives the pastoral counselor, his expectations and attitude. That makes it imperative that the pastoral counselor does not in any way allow, contribute to, accommodate, nor acquiesce to a spirit of pessimism. The pastoral counselor is the first one who cannot condemn the project before it starts. No counseling situation is beyond the Gospel’s help, hope, and resolve.

Head pessimism off with the Word by heading back to Eden, to the ideal found at the beginning of all creation.<sup>70</sup> There begin the answers, because there we find out about ourselves, and more importantly about our God. There, in the first three chapters of Moses’ first book, the pastoral counselor can begin to understand what’s going on with the counselee. There the pastoral counselor can review the roots and truths that are the basis of all anthropology and theology:

- that God made all things out of nothing in six, normal, natural, consecutive days, by the power of His Word, perfectly and orderly;
- that mankind, God’s crown of creation, created in God’s image, was blessed with work, marriage, and was drawn into a blessed Sabbath (communion rest) with God and each other;
- that mankind forfeited and ruined all by listening to the devil’s lies and by choosing to fall into sin;
- that the results of sin became immediately evident;
- that Satan was cursed;
- that God gave the first promise of the Savior born of woman who would crush the serpent’s head, restore a Sabbath rest for the people of God, and bring the joy and hope of salvation;
- that the woman’s life and roles would be affected negatively by sin but that the LORD would justify and sanctify her and her roles through the Coming One;
- that the man’s life and roles would be affected negatively by sin but that the LORD would justify and sanctify him and his roles through the Coming One; and,

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<sup>69</sup> Day by Day We Magnify Thee, *op cit*, page 415, (citing W.A. 37. 69f.)

<sup>70</sup> Lawrenz, Seminary Notes, Genesis 1:1-2:3, “The eternal, almighty, all-wise, gracious God created all things in perfection for the benefit of man, who He made in His own image to be the special object of His love and whom He drew into His own Sabbath rest.”

- that it is God's unchanging will to return people to Sabbath rest through the Messiah, the Christ.

Pastoral counselors, as the representatives of the God of power<sup>71</sup> and the LORD of full and faithful grace<sup>72</sup>, counsel those who have messed up themselves and their own lives and the lives of others. Pastoral counselors counsel from the perspective that God never wanted any such messes! They were the result of the peoples' choices. God wants to restore what was there on that first seventh day to these people. God wants people to be brought back into the embrace of truth. His truth is one which confesses, "Thou my Lord Jesus, art my Righteousness; I am Thy sin. Thou hast taken what is mine and hast given me what is Thine. Thou didst become what Thou wert not and madest me to be what I was not."<sup>73</sup> Eden and Sabbath are restored when the Spirit blesses the wounded heart and soul with that prayer and confession.

The malady is sin. That's what brought in those who are seeking help. They either sinned or are victims of sin. Address them about the sin involved in a patient, straightforward way. The answer, or resolve, is found in Jesus, crucified and risen. Connect them to the Savior. As pastoral counselor, help them remember the first Sabbath.<sup>74</sup> Pastoral counselors need to *Sabbath* first themselves.

Pastoral counseling is not for the faint-hearted<sup>75</sup> as they help the faint-hearted. So, what better prayer could be prayed by the one leading new counselees toward the ideal, than the prayer of St. Francis, of Assisi?

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.  
Where there is injury, pardon.  
Where there is doubt, faith.  
Where there is despair, hope.  
Where there is darkness, light.  
Where there is sadness, joy.*

<sup>71</sup> אלְהִים

<sup>72</sup> הָוֹה

<sup>73</sup> Walther, C.F.W., The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, p. 110

<sup>74</sup> Interestingly enough, the only Commandment that tells us to "Remember!" is the Third in which the LORD God gives us His will concerning *Sabbath*. Eugene H. Peterson, in the foreword to the book, 24/6, written by Matthew Sleeth, M.D., Carol Streams, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2012, wrote, "...here is a meditative practice that I find attractive...subtracting one word at a time from Psalm 46:10 to help me come to rest:

*Be still and know that I am God.  
Be still and know that I am.  
Be still and know that I.  
Be still and know that.  
Be still and know.  
Be still and.  
Be still.  
Be." (xi-xii)*

<sup>75</sup> Psalm 73:26, "My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

*O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek  
to be consoled, as to console;  
to be understood, as to understand;  
to be loved, as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive.  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life. Amen.*<sup>76</sup>

“...Where there is despair hope...” The restoration of Sabbath eternal gives hope now. “The hope that we have in Christ...gives strength to deal with the trials we face. No matter how severe, no matter how long they seem to go on, we know that one day our suffering will end. When we cope with a prolonged illness, when we face problems that continue to plague us throughout our lives, we still have the assurance of God’s love and the hope that God will deliver us from evil. He can do this by taking the problem away, or by giving us the strength to bear up under the problem, or, finally, by taking us away from the problem to himself in heaven. Christians do not live their lives without hope. We walk by faith, but we do not walk without hope. Our hope comes from Christ and his promises.”<sup>77</sup>

Remembering the first Sabbath in counseling is, at the same time, the goal, the means, and a great source of encouragement for both the pastoral counselor and the counselee.

The loss of Sabbath was the result of sin. It is sin that necessitates a need for pastoral counseling and for making the connection with Jesus’ cross and empty tomb and those who are counseled.

Examine the fall when hope was lost. Doing so helps the counselor get into the mind of the evil one who sought and ever seeks to rob God’s people of the hope that is there’s in Jesus.

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<sup>76</sup> Christian Worship – A Lutheran Hymnal, Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 1993; page 138

<sup>77</sup> Lange, Lyle W., Sanctification – Alive in Christ, Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 1999; page 189

## **The Devil Lied - Hope Was Lost**

*“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me!”<sup>78</sup>*

*“Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,<sup>79</sup> but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” “You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.”<sup>79</sup>*

The fact that counseling sessions are so often a necessity demonstrates that Paradise with its perfect Sabbath rest was lost. Sin entered the world and death through sin. Sin’s effects were manifold. Pain, suffering, sorrow, separation, death - Pandora’s Box was opened at first taste of the nectar of the fruit forbidden! Sin’s made Eden seem almost mythological, at best, forgotten history. But Eden was real. Perfection was reality. The Bible says so. It certainly isn’t the reality of the new counselee, as the counselor looks into a new set of tear-filled, reddened, and swollen eyes. The opposite of Eden has been her experience. The fruit in her life is the result of knowing the difference of good from evil. Evil holds the sway, it seems to her. That is her experience. Her outlook is dark, dank, pessimistic, last with an unhealthy measure of anger and bitterness. Eyes that no longer are able to see Eden need to be enabled to see Easter.

Yet even the sights of Easter may seem too far in the past, too out of place, too irrelevant to be able to make any difference to the counseled.

Who’s to blame for that? There’s plenty of blame to go around. Initial and concurrent sessions may often be laced with (and can disintegrate into tirades of) blame: “You...You always...You never!”

That shouldn’t surprise us. Blame happened after the first sin at the first confrontation of the first sinners when God held them accountable for their sin. Adam and Eve had chosen to sin and had chosen to forfeit the perfect image of God in which they had been created. Adam abdicated his spiritual leadership role as he stood there the whole time his wife was tempted – saying and doing *nothing*. But still, Adam blamed Eve (whom God gave). Then Eve blamed the serpent (the animal which God had created). And in so doing, both blamed God.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> John 8:44-45

<sup>79</sup> Genesis 3:1-6

<sup>80</sup> Genesis 3:7-14

Of course, the LORD God is not to blame. Those who do evil are. The originator of evil is. The devil deserved the blame them and deserves the initial blame in every counseling situation with which pastoral counselors have to deal. He's poisoned the hearts and the relationships of those who come into the counselor's office.

The pathways throughout Scriptures are pocked with the ruinous activity of the evil one. It was he who challenged God concerning Job.<sup>81</sup> It was he who buffeted Paul with the thorn that caused the apostle such suffering and pain.<sup>82</sup> Pastoral counselors recognize that it was he who, also, has been active in the hearts and lives of those who seek counsel.

It should go without saying that Satan is the enemy not the ones who seek counsel. True, the counselees so often and in so many ways prove themselves to have been in league with the devil by yielding to his temptations. In many cases they have made his plans their willful choices. While that may be true and while no personal responsibility is ever relinquished and definitely will need to be addressed, those who hurt and those who are hurt are also the devil's victims. The devil has gone about in their lives wreaking havoc. His intent is always to devour them and their souls eternally.<sup>83</sup> This perspective will help pastoral counselors remain objective and avoid "taking sides."

That will also help pastoral counselors speak what needs to be said. The American Luther called for the right words, and the proper application of the Law and Gospel, when situations are wrong, by encouraging, "...Announce (*that*) the will of God...hates and abominates...despondency and melancholy as plague(s) of Satan."<sup>84</sup> Walther's advice would never make it on a plaque sold in the "gifts for pastor" section at the local Christian bookstore, (no manufacturer would consider such a plaque marketable). But I believe pastoral counselors could appreciate the apparent truths. God does hate and abominate despondency and melancholy in their many forms. God also hates it that people experience despondency and melancholy, and that counseling has to be a necessity. God hates these "plagues of Satan."

So do pastoral counselors. Pastoral counselors are God's representatives in the counseling session. The hearts of pastoral counselors are reflective of God's heart. Pastoral counselors also hate and abominate what causes God's people to be sitting before them, wilted, worn, on edge, enraged. Pastoral counselors recognize that the counselees have been abused by the evil one and bear in their lives frailties and maladies due to the evil one's tempting (both to sin and to test their faith). Pastoral counselors loathe the originator of sin and what he has done to God's people.

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<sup>81</sup> Job 1 & 2

<sup>82</sup> 2 Corinthians 12:7

<sup>83</sup> 1 Peter 5:8

<sup>84</sup> Walther, *ibid.*, p. 108

Again, pastoral counselors proceed with a keen awareness that what plagues God's people was never meant to be. What Jesus said about divorce is true about every malady, "...that's not the way it was at the beginning..."<sup>85</sup>

Again, every individual, couple, or family that seeks counseling has been victimized by the evil one, the devil. The devil loathed the love, which, at the beginning, God poured out and with which he blessed his people. The people were made perfect, in God's image. The place God gave them also was perfect. The relationships of Adam and Eve were perfect with each other and with God. It is the devil's goal to destroy all this perfection and to bring disorder to all of creation.

Counseling calls for a deep understanding of how the counselees got themselves further and further away from Eden's paradise. Equally important to understanding what's wrong is to find out why it went wrong for them as individuals and in their relationships.

Sin is always involved. Christian counseling deals with sin. Sin is the source of every malady and misalignment that exists between people and their God and between people and their people. Sin is the source of every loss of true happiness, joy, peace, and hope. Satan introduced sin. What's wrong inside the counseled was first inside the devil's mind. Lies are the devil's thoughts. Lies are the devil's words. People are broken and need fixing because the devil lied.

There would be no need to schedule any counseling sessions were it not for the fact that the devil introduced life's hope-draining plagues with his lies. Know the liar. See his lies for what they are. Help those who are victims of his lies see how and why they were tempted, tripped up, even dove headlong into the pits in which they find themselves.

The first temptation, recorded in Genesis 3:1-6, reveals the devil's strategy. He lied in order to bring ruin upon God's crown of creation. He lied in order to disrupt mankind's perfect environment. He lied to wreck peoples' lives and in doing so destroy the people themselves. He is the father of lies and a murderer from the beginning.<sup>86</sup> His lies turned an ordered universe into one that is spinning out of control in disorder,<sup>87</sup> is now a hostile environment, inhabited by hostiles, (who are naturally hostile to God and to each other).

The Evil One used four basic lies to deceive the first human beings, Adam and Eve.

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<sup>85</sup> Matthew 19:4-6

<sup>86</sup> John 8:44

<sup>87</sup> Interestingly enough the theory of evolution proposes the very opposite, i.e., the universe is reaching a higher form of energy (order) and a lower form of entropy (disorder)

### THE DEVIL'S FOUR BASIC LIES

1. Sin won't hurt;
2. Sin is fun (beneficial);
3. Throw out the Bible and decide for yourself;
4. Be my missionary (Get others to sin with you).<sup>88</sup>

I contend that these four basic lies are inherent to every temptation with which the evil one plagues humanity. The father of lies is smart. He understands the logic – the damning logic – that, “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” What worked well in Eden works well where we are and where those we serve are. How many trees have fallen to produce the supply of tissues that have been used to catch the tears that have fallen because these four devious lies have worked so well caused so much suffering, pain, and sorrow?

Knowing the devil’s modus operandi may well help us to understand what’s going on with God’s hurting people. The lies destroy, knowing the ones the devil uses helps the counselor reconstruct what led to the crises and the present circumstances. That reconstruction can help in reconstructing – with direct and specific application of the Word – hopeful resolve in the minds, hearts, and lives of the counseled.

On that most “ill-fated” day of the fall into sin, hope and hopefulness were forfeited. Satan’s lies engendered the opposite of hope and hopefulness. God’s truth brings hope and hopeful resolve. While it may seem redundant, it cannot be stressed enough, any discussion of hope restored must begin with these foundational and fundamental truths:

- that God, in mercy and love, wants miserable people to be filled with hope now and forever, and at the same time,
- that Satan, the enemy of God and of all people, (especially God’s people), wants to counter God’s will and plague people with hopelessness now and forever.

No matter how successful Satan may be with his lies and no matter how beaten God’s people may be, the Lord’s saving counter-punch of truth *will* speak the last word. God’s truth *will not* be suppressed and *will* succeed with and for those hurt and damaged by the devil’s lies. “*The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*”<sup>89</sup>

Know the enemy. Know his lies and their effects. Pastoral counselors who do so will have a proper perspective and helpful objectivity, (especially at the outset of a new counseling situation when the accusations are made and assumptions can form). Think of how the look that appears on the counselor’s face is perceived by the ones there for

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<sup>88</sup> Mueller, Wayne, “*Inside the Devil’s Mind*,” a sermon based on Genesis 3:1-6, delivered at Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church, Waukesha, WI, March 4, 1979; the four lies are somewhat adapted by the author.

<sup>89</sup> Psalm 34:18

counsel. Let that look be one of gut-wrenching compassion, like Jesus had,<sup>90</sup> no matter what is said in the room. Imagine what the message received would be if the pastoral counselor's eyes betray the look of shock, or disgust, or that which bespeaks, "This case is beyond the pale...beyond the scope of assistance and help." Lord, give us the eyes that match the God-given heart of compassion! Don't give Satan such an edge.

If there is any face it's a face-off with the real enemy. Look the real enemy, the devil, in the eye first. Defy him before you look into the yearning and searching eyes of the counselee. As you do, get into the enemy's mind. See through the devil's lies that have so affected those whom you counsel.

The lies are out in the open for us to examine; the devil may have outwitted himself. The lies are insidious and destructive, and over all the millennia of human existence, the evil one has not changed his repeated use of those lies. That's to our counseling advantage. Examine the enemy's basic, operational lies individually:

1. *Sin won't hurt.* ("You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman," Genesis 3:4.)

The devil lied and people died. They have been dying ever since. And they have been hurting along the way as they head to the cemetery. When the devil told Eve, "You won't die!" it was simple, but it was genius, "Sin won't hurt." What a skilled liar the devil is! The devil's best is the worst. He told Eve the exact opposite of what God had said and what God had said would happen if Adam and Eve would eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. God had said, Genesis 2, "...for when you eat of it you will surely die."<sup>91</sup>

Adam and Eve did surely die that day, spiritually. God, in undeserved love and mercy, spared them of an immediate physical execution. Had they died physically, without the Gospel of the coming Savior, they would have also died forever in the flames of total abandonment and separation from God in hell. God, rather, gave our first parents a time a grace,<sup>92</sup> a time before the soul leaves the body and is judged<sup>93</sup> eternally to be able to hear and believe the first promise of a coming Savior, the Messiah.

But eventually they did die.

Turn to Genesis 5. The chapter reads like a long newspaper obituary. The bell tolls for each one named in that list. Adam, the obituary reads, lived 930 years, but then the Bible also pronounced him dead, "...and he died."<sup>94</sup> Perhaps it can be assumed that

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<sup>90</sup> "Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion (ἐσπλαγχίσθη – Aorist Passive Indicative of πλαγχίζομαι) on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." Matthew 9:35-36.

<sup>91</sup> Genesis 2:17

<sup>92</sup> "Time of Grace" is a phrase that is not only a definition of life but also serves as a definition of the purpose of life.

<sup>93</sup> Hebrews 9:27, "...Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment..."

<sup>94</sup> Genesis 5:5

Eve had about the same length of days. Though we're not told that in the Bible, it is an indisputable fact that Eve also died. So her body, fashioned by God from Adam's rib, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, returned to dust as did Adam's body. Adam and Eve lived ten times the length of our days; but then they died.

The devil lied. Sin did and does hurt.

Sin also hurts because it robs sinners of hope. *Repetitio est mater studiorum*: "repetition is the mother of learning." In each of our counseling situations, we can see that the teacher of wickedness has effectively and respectively in each case and circumstance repeated the same lie that sin: "Sin won't hurt." In each of our counseling situations, we can also see that these people have effectively been robbed of hope. People hurt and are left bereft of hope.

The serpent spoke with a forked tongue. His was an outright. Lies oft repeated, can become the accepted "truth".<sup>95</sup> Just look at the number of counseling sessions that have to be scheduled because the devil lied convincingly that sin wouldn't hurt. They are dealing with the harsh realities of the lie. Sin does hurt.

The horrific effects of this lie are obvious. Open your doors, your newspapers, your computers, and your other electronic devices. Whole societies, (as well as each of as individuals) bear the deadly residue of the lie that sin won't hurt. In today's culture almost any action can be carried out by any consenting, rational adult, just so long as it doesn't "hurt" anyone. But everyone who touches sin or is touched by sin gets hurt. The hurt will always follow the sin. For one sin or a googol,<sup>96</sup> that same law declares, "*Whoever keeps the whole law and yet offends at just one point is still guilty of breaking all of it.*"<sup>97</sup> While the devil's logic is appealing and seems to remove the stigma or even the danger from the evil deed, the evidence is to the contrary. The hurt is visible wherever the eye looks.

Like a hammer striking an anvil the law of the Word of God pummels the human heart: "*The wages of sin is still death*"<sup>98</sup> Death comes to all because all have sinned.<sup>99</sup> Sin hurts. We cannot deny, ignore, or avoid that. The notes the counselor writes on his pad are like ugly blots telling the same story – different victims – that sin hurts. Church file records of funerals bear witness as a silent testimonies that sin hurts. Guilt-ridden consciences accuse incessantly because sin hurts. Night sweats drench and nightmares haunt because sin hurts. Alcohol abuse kills brain cells, causes DWIs, gets people fired, and ruins finances because sin hurts. Drug abuse fries minds and burns

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<sup>95</sup> Dr. Paul Joseph Goebbels, Adolf Hitler's Propaganda Minister, mastered the art of repeating the lie until it was believed. In Hitler's "Mein Kampf" (My Struggle) he originates the idea of "das Grosse Luge" (The Big Lie): "But the most brilliant propagandist technique will yield no success unless one fundamental principle is borne in mind constantly and with unflagging attention. It must confine itself to a few points and repeat them over and over. Here, as so often in this world, persistence is the first and most important requirement for success."

<sup>96</sup> 1 googol =  $1.0 \times 10^{100}$

<sup>97</sup> James 2:10

<sup>98</sup> Romans 6:23

<sup>99</sup> Romans 3:23

bridges, evidence that sin hurts. Disobedient children wreck their lives and break their parents' hearts because sin hurts. Gossips have the devil on their tongue and the listeners have the devil in their ears, ruining reputations and destroying trust between friends because sin hurts. Adulterers lose their marriages and the sexually immoral gain STD's because sin hurts.

Every time we go to a funeral we know that the devil lied when he told Eve, "You won't die." Every time we pass a cemetery we know the devil lied. Every time we mark another birthday and subtract our age from 70 or 80 years<sup>100</sup> we become acutely aware of our mortality and that the devil lied. Every time a flag flies at half-staff or drapes a coffin we know the devil lied. Sin does hurt. Even pets die,<sup>101</sup> adding to the pain people experience, all because the devil lied.

Graveyards pock this once blemish-free orb and people walk away from those unnatural pits in tears confirming that sin hurts. Sin hurts most poignantly because it wrings hope from peoples' hearts and lives. Hope is lost to sorrow, to bitterness, to anger, to apathy, to depression, to the loss of self-esteem, to the loss of love, peace, patience, kindness, self-control. Hopelessness then taps the natural and deep reservoir of evil in the human heart, releasing hatred, discord, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, envy, narcissism...<sup>102</sup>

The phone rings, the text arrives, the email is opened, the counseling appointment is set because people have been hurt by the lie that, "Sin won't hurt." Sin hurts. Sin always hurts. It always causes some awful wreckage for those who commit it or have it committed against them.

2. *Sin is fun (beneficial).* *"For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."* Genesis 3:5.

With the second lie the snake becomes the charmer. He makes sin look good, so inviting: "Sin is fun," another take, "Sin is beneficial." How effective the second lie! This lie is the antithesis of the essence of sin. Sin is evil. Evil is labeled "good," and good is labeled, "evil," with this lie.

This lie also attacks the essence of God. God is good. This lie implicates God as the bad guy. God is kind, but this lie pictures God as unkind. This lie makes God out to be one who delights in withholding what is good from people. This lie paints the picture of a selfish God who reserves something wonderful and good only for himself, and in so doing deprives something good and wonderful from the human experience. This lie

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<sup>100</sup> Psalm 90: 10, "The length of our days is seventy years— or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away."

<sup>101</sup> Romans 8:19-21, "The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God."

<sup>102</sup> Galatians 5:19-23.

caricatures God as a manipulating puppeteer pulling on the strings attached to us earth-dwellers, letting the puppets get just close enough to having pleasure, but then jerking the strings keeping happiness away, leaving the manipulated with sadness to his own sadistic delight. The devil renders God the villain, hand-wringing and mustache-twirling, who ties people to the rails of his restrictions and limits and barreling down the tracks is the locomotive of unhappy people with unhappy lives. This lie denounces God as a begrudging ogre whose favorite communication is a thunderous, "No!" This lie actually makes God out to be at fault for unhappy people with unhappy lives.

Ever the blame-shifter, the devil is the author of blame shifting with this second lie!

With this lie, the devil wants people to see God as being entirely against us, not entirely for us.<sup>103</sup> The devil wants us to conclude that if God isn't for us then we must be for ourselves. Then sin does appear beneficial, advantageous. The ultimate, logical conclusion is that God *wants* us to be miserable, that he does not want us to be happy, and that he doesn't want us to be free to do what is good for us.

With the introduction of this second lie, the devil was also incubating a new theology. The devil was the first false prophet. His message was the message of the theology of glory.<sup>104</sup>

Every sin-affected soul who has the fortitude to use the contact device, or has the gumption to walk into the office to say, "Pastor, could I talk with you?" has been burned by the lies that sin won't hurt and sin is fun/beneficial. The counselee will think that it's too late to do anything about the hurt and curse that they've brought into their lives and relationships. But it is never too late with the Lord Jesus, not with him who died and rose again! Never! His sweet Gospel counters the bitterness they've experienced.

Genesis 3 is a treasure-packed chapter. Not only does it continue by presenting case studies of how these lies burned the first man and woman, it also explains how God responded. The chapter further describes how the consequences of listening to the lies of the evil one and of choosing to sin define the sort of hurt that women experience, as women, and that men experience as men.

### Hurt Women

Sin hurts. It is not fun. It is not beneficial. It hurt Eve and all her daughters after her. The adverse effects were especially felt by Eve in two extremely important and sensitive areas of her life and of her heart: 1) in her childbearing and rearing, and, 2) in her marriage.<sup>105</sup> In her most cherished roles, in her very heart of hearts, Eve would feel the smart of the lie. Her relationships would bring her the hurt.

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<sup>103</sup> Contrast with Romans 8:31, "*If God is for us, who can be against us?*"

<sup>104</sup> Luther, Martin, Heidelberg Disputation, Thesis 21: "A theologian of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theologian of the cross calls the thing what it actually is." (LW 31, p. 40)

<sup>105</sup> "*To the woman he said, 'I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you,'*" Genesis 3:16.

With pain (עֲזֹבֶן pain that comes from work) she would birth and rear her children. Once a mother always a mother, and, while motherhood is a wonderful blessing, motherhood would, at the same time, bring on her the heaviest burdens of heart and body. And in the other major relationship, her marriage, Eve's desire (תְּشִׁקָה longing) for her husband would be all-consuming, but Adam would no longer be perfect in that relationship. Adam's rule over her, (לְשָׁמֵד have dominion, reign), once a complete blessing, would no longer be full of blessing, but often the opposite. "Rule" would have a negative connotation attached to it for Eve.

Women are hurt most harshly within their relationships. Women live and breathe relationally. What matters most to women is the status of their relationships. Sin would now make the relationships of Eve, not only her primary source of fulfillment and identity but also her main cause of pain.

Generally, a woman derives their greatest sense of self-worth and identity from their relationships. A woman thinks **relationally**. The rudimentary make-up of a woman's nature, her thoughts, her perceptions, her perspectives and her filters is centered on her relationships. She is relationship oriented. She is wired relationally. Dr. David Clark observed, "In a relationship, women want closeness. That's their number one priority. For a woman, if she has not closeness in a relationship she has nothing. She literally can't be happy and satisfied."<sup>106</sup> Can you see why women are so heartbroken when their **relationships** are broken, painful, or disappointing?

Sin was alien to Eve. So also was pain and hurt. Eve was created in and with perfection. The yearnings of her heart were perfect before sin shattered that perfection. Her yearnings, her drives, and her feelings remained just strong within her, post-fall, also. But now those yearnings, drives, and feelings would be what would wound her the most.

All the rage a number of years ago was John Gray's, *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*. Examine the following inventory describing what is the very heartbeat of a "Venusian."

- "A woman's sense of self is defined through her feelings and the quality of her relationships." (p. 18)
- "Women are motivated and empowered when they feel cherished..." (p. 43)
- Women need to receive...
  - Caring
  - Understanding
  - Respect
  - Devotion
  - Validation
  - Reassurance (p. 133)

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<sup>106</sup> Clark, David, Men Are Clams Women Are Crowbars, Uhrichsville, OH: Promise Press and Imprint of Barbour

Sin would erode what was most important to a woman, her relationships. The result would be that – post fall into sin – that a woman would so often experience the opposite of what her heart's desire. She,

- doesn't always feel cared for,
- isn't readily understood,
- experiences a lack of devotion,
- isn't always validated in who she is and what she does, and,
- finds too little reassurance.

A woman wants loving relationships. In those, however, she will too often find her most severe tests and painful trials.

### Hurt Men

C.S. Lewis pointed out that in our relationship to God we are all female.<sup>107</sup> The Bible, in fact, uses female roles and visuals to describe what the relationship of believers, both men and women, is like with the Savior. The Bible often describes this blessed relationship that believers have with the Savior Jesus by making use of marriage terms: Jesus is the Groom and believers – men included – are his beautiful bride (the Church). The joy of salvation is also described as a great wedding feast, Jesus the groom prepares the reception for his bride.

Adam took some of the forbidden fruit, ate it, and like his wife who was chronologically first sinner<sup>108</sup>, he became an imperfect sinner. Adam was responsible for sin entering the world<sup>109</sup>. He failed in his spiritual leadership. He stood there and said and did nothing while his wife was being tempted. Adam chose to break the bond with his Creator. Adam, and all men after him, bear the due consequences of sin and sinfulness.<sup>110</sup> Sin hurt Adam and sin hurt Adam's sons. Men hurt, too. No toughness nor masculinity can hide the fact that men hurt, too.

Sweat would become an unpleasant ingredient baked into the bread that men would eat. Unwelcomed, unintended, un-nurtured, un-cultured, un-fertilized thorns and thistles

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<sup>107</sup> Lewis, C.S., That Hideous Strength, New York: Macmillon, 1965; p. 316.

<sup>108</sup> 1 Timothy 2:14, "1 Timothy 2:14, "And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner."

<sup>109</sup> Romans 5:12, "...sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned..."

<sup>110</sup> Genesis 3:17-19, "To Adam he said, 'Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, "You must not eat of it," 'Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.'"

would invade and obstruct the fields of labor of fallen men. Murphy's Law<sup>111</sup> came into existence when by one man sin entered the world and that law would be proven true, daily, in a multitude of ways – thanks to the lies that sin won't hurt and sin is fun. Men and their **accomplishments** would be messed up by sin!

Generally, men derive their identities and their greatest sense of self-worth from their accomplishments. So, generally, men think **practically**. So what's messed up, by sin, in men's lives will be their accomplishments. The filter, the perspective, the thinking, the drive of a man is naturally that which is practical. A man is wired with the practical. But now that blessing would prove his bane. Manly, tough, independent guys have been cut down in size and strength and joy by sin and life and life's situations would be unmanageable because of sin. Men would hurt too.

Clark concludes: "For a man, if he has not control<sup>112</sup> in a relationship he has nothing."<sup>113</sup>

Gray gives this litany:

- Men are motivated and empowered when they feel needed. (p. 43)
- Not to be needed is a slow death for a man. (p. 46)
- A man's deepest fear is that he is not good enough or that he is incompetent. (P. 56)
- Men need to receive...
  1. Trust
  2. Acceptance
  3. Appreciation
  4. Admiration
  5. Approval
  6. Encouragement (p. 133)<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> The following article was an excerpt from *The Desert Wings*, March 3, 1978: Murphy's Law ("If anything can go wrong, it will") was born at Edwards Air Force Base in 1949 at North Base. It was named after Capt. Edward A. Murphy, an engineer working on Air Force Project MX981, (a project) designed to see how much sudden deceleration a person can stand in a crash. One day, after finding that a transducer was wired wrong, he cursed the technician responsible and said, "If there is any way to do it wrong, he'll find it." The contractor's project manager kept a list of "laws" and added this one, which he called Murphy's Law. Actually, what he did was take an old law that had been around for years in a more basic form and give it a name. Shortly afterwards, the Air Force doctor (Dr. John Paul Stapp) who rode a sled on the deceleration track to a stop, pulling 40 Gs, gave a press conference. He said that their good safety record on the project was due to a firm belief in Murphy's Law and in the necessity to try and circumvent it. Aerospace manufacturers picked it up and used it widely in their ads during the next few months, and soon it was being quoted in many news and magazine articles. Murphy's Law was born. The Northrop project manager, George E. Nichols, had a few laws of his own. Nichols' Fourth Law says, "Avoid any action with an unacceptable outcome." The doctor, well-known Col. John P. Stapp, had a paradox: Stapp's Ironical Paradox, which says, "The universal aptitude for ineptitude makes any human accomplishment an incredible miracle." Nichols is still around. At NASA's Jet Propulsion Lab in Pasadena, he's the quality control manager for the Viking project to send an unmanned spacecraft to Mars. [www.murphys-laws.com/murphy/murphy-true.html](http://www.murphys-laws.com/murphy/murphy-true.html)

<sup>112</sup> That is, be able to take control and do something about it, master the issue; not the pejorative, be "controlling."

<sup>113</sup> Clark, *op. cit.*

<sup>114</sup> Gray, *op. cit.*

Like their female counterparts, men experience the opposite of what they want and for which they work. They don't feel needed and consequently die agonizing deaths inside. They rarely feel good enough or competent enough, and if they carry on as such that will often be with false bravado, or a boastful pride, or narcissism, or some sort of mask to hide their own apparent inadequacies. What men often receive is:

- distrust,
- rejection,
- a lack of appreciation,
- negative criticism, and what they perceive as nagging. Encouragement is a stranger to them, within and without.<sup>i</sup>

Sin! What fun! How beneficial! Certainly not!

Sin hurts women relationally and sin hurts men practically.<sup>115</sup> Sin hurt. Sin hurts.

*3. Throw out the Bible and decide for yourself. "When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it," Genesis 3:6a.*

This third lie is the devil's clincher, his silver bullet, his ace in the hole, his trump card: "Throw out the Bible and decide for yourself." This lie works like a date rape drug<sup>116</sup> that renders the devil's victims helpless, incapable of resistance. When administered, this poison allows the devil complete access and he can have his way. With this lie the devil then can get a victim to do anything he wants him to /her to do but God doesn't. With this lie he can get his victims to not do anything that he doesn't want them to do but God does! If the devil can get us to throw out the Bible and decide for ourselves then he can have his way with us also.

The devil had not gotten too far with Eve with his lies of "Sin won't hurt," and, "Sin is fun (or beneficial)" until he got her to stop using the Bible, the Word of God, of her day. Eve had been making very good use of God's Word in her answer to the devil's temptations.

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<sup>115</sup> The pastoral counselor needs to understand and facilitate with those who are counseled the impact that sin has on the relationships of men and women with each other. To understand that women, generally speaking, are relationally oriented and that men, generally speaking, are practically oriented will go a long way in each understanding the other, in sympathy of each for the other, and in empathy of each with the other. Good communication of each with the other is enhanced when there is an understanding of the other's filters and perspectives. Issues of each with the other are exacerbated when men don't get it that women are relational in nature and women don't see that men are practical in nature.

<sup>116</sup> These are drugs that are sometimes used to assist a sexual assault. These drugs are powerful and dangerous. The drugs often have no color, smell, or taste, so you can't tell if you are being drugged. The drugs can make a person weak and confused -- or even pass out -- rendered unable to refuse sex or defend one's self. Date rape drugs are used on both females and males. The three most common date rape drugs are:

Rohypnol and GHB short for gamma hydroxybutyric. These drugs also are known as "club drugs" because they tend to be used at dance clubs, concerts, and "raves." The label "date rape" is applied to these drugs but most experts prefer the term "drug-facilitated sexual assault."

[http://www.medicinenet.com/date\\_rape\\_drugs/article.htm](http://www.medicinenet.com/date_rape_drugs/article.htm)

Eve answered the devil by saying, “*God did say...*” (Genesis 3:3) and that settled it. “*God did say...*” and that was that.

The Word of God was the one thing that stood between Eve and sin, between Eve and death, between Eve and separation from God<sup>117</sup>. The devil was stone-walled by Eve’s use of God’s Word. And the devil knew it. The devil also knew how powerful the Word of God is. By his Word, God called everything into existence. The man and the woman, hand-crafted by God in God’s image, also understood the power of God’s Word.

The Word of God is like a surgeon’s scalpel, so writes the holy writer to the Hebrews.<sup>118</sup> Paul describes the power of God’s word. In Romans 1:16, he writes that the Gospel is the, “*power of God unto salvation.*”<sup>119</sup> The word “power” is a translation of the Greek word from which we get the word dynamite. Dynamite is recognized as the standard for explosive force on the face of the earth. The power in nuclear warheads is measured in mega-tonnage of dynamite.

Jesus used the power of the Word of God after fasting 40 days and nights. Though he was emaciated physically, Jesus was strong spiritually, empowered by and with the Word of God. With the Word, he resisted changing stones into bread, bowing down and worshiping Satan in exchange for all of the wealth and glitz of the world, and even misapplying Scripture by throwing himself off the temple heights to test God’s reliability. The Word of God is what Martin Luther wrote about in the hymn, “A Mighty Fortress,” as we sing, “...one little word can fell him (the devil)...”

The Word of God is to that fallen archangel what kryptonite is to Superman. It was God’s Word that the devil had first defied when he rebelled in heaven. It was God’s Word that decreed him separated from God and cast him to hell, binding him forever to damnation. It is God’s Word that was able to save<sup>120</sup> the first sinners. It is God’s Word that is able to save us. So the devil had to get Adam and Eve to throw out God’s word and use some other standard to decide whether or not, to eat of that forbidden fruit.

If the devil can get people to throw out their Bibles, God’s Word, he’s got ‘em! If we throw out the Bible, God’s Word, he’s got us! That’s exactly how he got Eve. He got her to stop saying, “*God did say...*” and to start relying on a human source of decision-making. Human intellect and reasoning and human basis of moral decision is limited and confined. True, Adam and Eve bore the image of God before the fall, even as they were tempted. But that which is human is human, the creation was still not the Creator. Perfect, yes, but able to choose to sin. If the devil could remove the perfect thoughts of the Creator (God’s Word) and supplant them with Eve’s human basis of determination, he’d have his in. If the Word were tossed, Eve would still have had to had a basis of decision. Eve’s intellect, emotions, and senses became the replacements for God’s

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<sup>117</sup> Isaiah 59:2, “...Your iniquities have separated you from your God.”

<sup>118</sup> Hebrews 4:12

<sup>119</sup> Romans 1:16

<sup>120</sup> James 1:21

Word. Post-fall three fallible standards are the devil's replacements: human emotions, human senses, and human rationalization/thinking/decision-making.

Fallible is the operative word. Once the devil gets us to throw out the Bible and decide for ourselves all hell breaks loose in actions, in lives, and inside hearts, minds, and souls.

That's why we need God's Word so.

When it hurts, when the benefits seem non-existent, we need the Word of God. "*Faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the Word of Christ.*"<sup>121</sup> Christ is God. (Later it will be discussed how Easter proves the divinity of the Messiah, the anointed hope of mankind.)

4. *Be my missionary (Get others to sin with you). "She took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it," Genesis 3:6b.*

Adam was there with Eve the whole time that she was being tempted. He was there, but he said and did NOTHING! She ate, then immediately she became the devil's missionary, getting Adam to sin with her. And he ate. The blame-shifting that followed demonstrated a aspect, too, of the fourth lie, "Get others to sin with you."

Sin doesn't seem so bad when others are doing it too, does it? There are a couple of reasons for this. **One.** When others are sinning with us there's a collective responsibility involved – the burden of blame and shame is diffused because it is spread out on the multiple, on the many. In effect, the devil was getting his prey to be coiled with the rationale, "Don't worry, God's not going to be so tough on you if he's got to deal with others at the same time with the same sin. No worries!"

**Another.** When others are sinning with us there's a numbing, desensitizing effect. The sharpness of sin and sin's impact are dulled. The rationale expresses itself somewhat this way, "Come on, sin's not as bad as it appears. Look, that sin is everywhere. It's common, every day, hardly noticeable, it belongs. It's socially acceptable. We've evolved."

**A third.** When others are sinning as a group the deep-seated yearning to belong is fulfilled. That's what drives participation in gangs. They belong.

The sin done in a group not only makes the members feel accepted, the sin itself becomes acceptable, even a badge of honor. (Sometimes the sin is even considered to be cute, laughable. For example, if an adult uses profanity it almost always is considered to be uncouth and offensive. But when a child of two uses the same language, it might be considered to be amusing. The child notices and smiles at the accomplishment. Tacit approval is met with appreciation for being welcomed into the club. "I belong!")

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<sup>121</sup> Romans 10:17

**The worst!** When we listen and agree to serve as the devil's missionaries, and we manage to get others to sin with us, we are actually robbing Jesus of His role as Savior. How so?

When we bring others down with us it really is an attempt to elevate ourselves. It's a form of self-justification. Any attempt, (again, *any attempt*), to lift ourselves up out of the muck and mire of guilt and the seriousness of and responsibility for the sin with its guilt robs Jesus of the sole possession of the title *Redemptor!*

By getting others to sin with us, by spreading and equalizing the shame, the motivation is a round-about way to achieve, partially and in a twisted and convoluted way, a declaration of affirmation, "You're okay in who you are and what you do." That robs Jesus' life of perfection, Jesus' death by crucifixion, and Jesus' conquering resurrection of the distinction of being the sole means of salvation-earning power. It believes that the sinner can save himself or herself. It buys into a "justification by comparison" spiritual adjudication. Jesus cannot be robbed of being the only way, the only truth, and the only life,<sup>122</sup> not even by means of self-exoneration.

The ploy of the devil to have Eve lead Adam to sin with her was a sly way of down-playing the seriousness and the mortal damage of her sin. Downplay sin; downplay the need for a Savior. "Making our sins small, we make Christ small."<sup>123</sup>

In fact, multiplying sinners emboldens sinners. History proves this. An example of how this once played out took place, only weeks before I was confirmed in the confession that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, as revealed in Scripture alone, through Christ Jesus alone at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Hadar, NE. On March 16, 1968, on the other side of the world, Charlie Company, of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 20<sup>th</sup> Infantry, of the 11<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade moved into the hamlets known collectively as My Lai. They proceeded to massacre (between 347 and 504) unarmed old men, women, and children. Not one of them had fired on our troops. About fifty of our troops participated, six of whom were charged with war crimes, and one of whom was convicted.

The reference to this part of Viet Nam history is not meant to reignite a passions and resentment, or to cause the kind of feelings that welcomed the military back from Nam with the accusation, "Baby killers!"

But this account does demonstrate the power and effectiveness of this fourth lie. When officials and counselors followed up with those soldiers, it was shocking to learn that the majority did not remember doing anything wrong. The chief reason was this: because it was a group action, the involvement became the acceptable norm for the individual, too.<sup>124</sup> What happened in Eden happened in the Quang Ngai province of South Viet Nam. What happened oceans and miles away is what happens where we are today. Damnable peer pressure! Misery loves company, not just because, "If I have to suffer,

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<sup>122</sup> John 14:6

<sup>123</sup> Walther, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

<sup>124</sup> For a beneficial discussion of this My Lai incident see, Peck, M. Scott, People of the Lie, The Hope for Healing Human Evil, New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1983; "My Lai: An Examination of Group Evil," pages 212-253.

others have to suffer,” but also because, “What I did isn’t so bad because others did it too.”

### People of the Truth

The devil loves misery. The devil loves miserable people. The devil loves miserable people to be in the company of and with other miserable people. And ultimately the devil would love our company and for us to be miserable with him forever. So, with his “messengers of Satan”<sup>125</sup> he will buffet the human race, especially those of us who are believers, the Bride of Christ. He will stop at nothing to make us and our lives ugly, to batter us in body, mind, and spirit with the intent that finally we would curse God and die.<sup>126</sup>

Since he will make use of any means to do so, so also must we! So also will we! We can and will make use of every means that may be at our disposal to counter his damning activity in the hearts, minds, souls, and lives of God’s people. “*For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.*”<sup>127</sup>

A counterforce to all of Satan’s lies is the Lord’s Word of Truth. Connecting God’s Word of Truth with people of the lie is the task of pastoral counselors. When even God’s people give in to the perverse logic and appeal of the devil’s lies and are in, “... *the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will,*”<sup>128</sup> our task is to set them free with the Truth.<sup>129</sup> This is not so easy a task, since people of the lie are, by nature, evil, with a natural bent to do evil. The task is, in fact, beyond us, and our own capabilities and potentials.

There are some counselors who don’t necessarily think that such a noble task is out of our natural reach. In his work *People of the Lie*, M. Scott Peck concluded that, “The evil are ‘the people of the lie’ who deceive others as they also build layer upon layer of self-deception.”<sup>130</sup> His conclusion is people can handle what’s wrong with themselves and their lives, but they are doing it in the wrong ways. He sees ‘people of the lie’ as those who go round and around justifying themselves, hiding themselves, convincing themselves that as long as they feel guilty they might as well do what makes them feel guilty.

Peck also suggested, in an earlier work, *The Road Less Travelled*, that the most basic sin to be exposed in counseling is laziness. He offers discipline<sup>131</sup> as the answer for

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<sup>125</sup> 2 Corinthians 12:7

<sup>126</sup> Job 2:9, the advice of Mrs. Job

<sup>127</sup> 1 Timothy 4:4-5

<sup>128</sup> 2 Timothy 2:26

<sup>129</sup> John 17:17; John 8:31-32

<sup>130</sup> Peck, People of the Lie, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

<sup>131</sup> Peck, M. Scott, in his work The Road Less Traveled – A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values and Spiritual Growth; Simon and Schuster, New York, 1978; offers four techniques of (self)-discipline: 1) delaying self-

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resolution and healing. To have discipline basically means that with effort produces resolve. Whose effort is the question? Peck's advice is this:

- "Problems don't go away. They must be worked through or else they remain..."<sup>132</sup>
- "We cannot solve life's problems except by solving them...only when I say, 'This is my problem and it's up to me to solve it.'"<sup>133</sup>
- "Truth or reality is avoided when it is painful. We can revise our maps only when we have the discipline to overcome that pain."<sup>134</sup>

With that advice in mind, if we went back to the lady who had the PTSD fear of driving, all that she would have had to do is work on her map, choose the road less travelled (in her case go back to the intersection of S. Taft Hill Rd. and W. Drake Rd., Ft. Collins, CO), do a quick self-REMD in the mirror, buck up, buckle up and drive. She'd have been good to go, right?

Real hopeful resolve is alien to us. Hope is absolutely alien to us or *through* (by means of) us. "**The objective of all counseling** is to bring about change."<sup>135</sup> None of us has the ability to change ourselves, really. I cannot bring about a change in the person I counsel. He cannot change himself.

"**The purpose of our counseling**, then, is to build faith through application of the Word of God and to arrive at the resolution of various guilt problems and their related distress."<sup>136</sup> None of us can build faith. I cannot believe on my own, nor believe for the person I counsel. She cannot build her faith herself either. "*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*"<sup>137</sup> Grace is a gift of God. Faith is not of our selves. Even the good works we do are via God's creative power.

Curt Lyon's "walk" to and away from the cross of Christ crucified, was for me a breakthrough in counseling. I had not previously experienced such effective results, often with immediate healing, as I did when I applied God's Word with the method the "walks" demonstrated in *Counseling at the Cross*. I found the book's claim to be true in my counseling, namely that, "Taking the trip to Calvary will shorten the time we spend counseling...because people will be working through the process to see how resolution

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gratification, 2) assumption of responsibility, 3) dedication to the truth or reality, and, 4) balancing needs, goals, duties, responsibilities, directions by giving up; Section I, pp. 15-78.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51

<sup>135</sup> Schuetze, Armin W. and Matzke, Frederick A., The Counseling Shepherd, Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 1988, p. 14. Emphasis mine.

<sup>136</sup> Lyon, *op. cit.*, p. X. Emphasis mine.

<sup>137</sup> Ephesians 2:8-10

became a reality. Their sin will be left at the cross and they will know it. That is resolution.”<sup>138</sup>

In such a vivid and active way, the walk to the cross connects the person who is smarting with the erosive, controlling grip of guilt to the resolution found in the Crucified Lord, and in the freedom found in His forgiveness. It was then such a joyful discovery and blessing to my counseling efforts when, after counseling at the cross, I would continue the walk to Joseph’s lovely garden. At the empty tomb the counseled soul finds, the all-in-all of resolution, seeing the, “*Alpha and the Omega...who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty...the First and the Last... and (the One who described Himself as) the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive forever and ever!*”<sup>139</sup> What further joy to witness the Spirit’s working as,

- † the flow of tears that cloud any vision of hope and a future<sup>140</sup> subside at the sight of the Risen Lord who brings both hope and an endless future, and,
- † the timid, “I can’t,” becomes a lion’s roar to, “*See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed,*”<sup>141</sup> and,
- † the defiant obstinacy of “I won’t,” fades into yielding faith and the will to do the unthinkable and impossible before him who did do the impossible by vacating the tomb. As Jesus burst forth from the tomb alive, so also a confession of living faith bursts forth, “*I have been crucified with Christ*<sup>142</sup> and I no longer live, but **Christ lives in me;**”<sup>143</sup> “*We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.* If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that **we will also live with him,**”<sup>144</sup> “*For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah*

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<sup>138</sup> Lyon, *op. cit.*, p. 92

<sup>139</sup> Revelation 1:8, 17,18

<sup>140</sup> Jeremiah 29:14

<sup>141</sup> Revelation 5:5

<sup>142</sup> “Luther in *The Bondage of the Will* ventures to say: ‘When God brings to life, he does so by killing; when he justifies, he does so by accusing us; when he brings us into heaven, he does so by leading us to hell’(WA 18, 633). He makes alive by killing! - that is the adequate way to speak of the unreasonable way God acts.” Arnold J. Koelpin, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross*, 1981, p. 8; WLS Essay Files

<sup>143</sup> Galatians 2:20

<sup>144</sup> Romans 6:2-8

*while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.*<sup>145</sup> and,

- † the doubting bewilderment, “What if?” would find answers in questions that were asked on that day of resurrection, “*Why do you look for the living among the dead?*” “*Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?*”<sup>146</sup> Those answers make bold the faith that believes and confesses, “*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: ‘For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord,*”<sup>147</sup> and,
- † defeatism (self-imposed or by the oppression of an irregular person<sup>148</sup> in one’s life) hast lost in the victory of the One who defeated death, and,
- † the darkening shroud of depression is brightened by the shining brilliance of the Bright (Easter) Morning Star<sup>149</sup>, and,

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<sup>145</sup> 1 Peter 3:18-4:1

<sup>146</sup> Luke 24:5, 26

<sup>147</sup> Romans 8:28-9:1

<sup>148</sup> Let me recommend that anyone who has had or who counsels a person suffering under an oppressive person who inserts him/herself into a person’s life manipulating that person by causing almost constant distress with merciless, unceasing criticism—an “irregular” person—to obtain a copy of the out of print book by author, Joyce Landorf, Irregular People, Word Books Publisher, Waco, Texas, 1982. Gospel resolution both at the cross and the empty tomb will hold the keys to dealing with such an irregular person. The book does a good job in identifying the issues with the person. The author’s suggestions for dealing with an irregular person need to be taken captive and made obedient to Christ and the Scriptures, 2 Corinthians 10:5.

<sup>149</sup> Isaiah 14:12, 2 Peter 1:19, Revelation 2:28, 22:16

† the whine of self-pity is hushed at the sight of the Christ of God who took life back again and causes us to sing, “I am content! My Jesus lives again...”<sup>150</sup>

Counselors and those who are counseled are unable to peel away the layers, to get out of their lazy ruts, to take responsibility, nor take control. They cannot break the spell of the father of lies. People cannot fix problems because people cannot fix themselves. People cannot fix problems for other people either. Counselors and those counseled need a Savior who gives us hopeful resolve. We need the Christ. There is hopeful resolve in Jesus, the risen Savior!

The devil showed us his hand. Pastoral counselors, with the Word, not only can show the hand of God, but can also apply the hand of God. Pastoral counselors apply the Word of Truth.

While we may not be able to know fully the mind of the Lord (until we are fully known) or to be his counselor,<sup>151</sup> we can help people see at Jesus’ cross and empty tomb what they could not see before. The Holy Spirit causes them to visualize how real Jesus is and how sure His healing is through the eyes of faith. Paul wrote, “*Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him.*<sup>152</sup> “*No, we speak of God’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written: ‘No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him—but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.’*<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Johann J. Moeller, August Crull.

<sup>151</sup> Romans 11:33-36

<sup>152</sup> Isaiah 64:4

<sup>153</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:7-10

## **Jesus Spoke the Truth: He Rose – Restoring Hope**

*"When the dust has soaked up a person's blood, once he is dead, there is no resurrection."*  
- Apollo, founding of Areopagus<sup>154</sup>

*"At this time there is a wise man who was called Jesus. And his conduct was good, and was known to be virtuous. And many people from among the Jews and the other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. And those who became his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that he was live; accordingly, he was perhaps the Messiah concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders." – Josephus<sup>155</sup>*

*"But not all the relief that could come from man, not all the bounties that the prince could bestow, nor all the atonements which could be presented to the gods, availed to relieve Nero from the infamy of being believed to have ordered the conflagration, the fire of Rome. Hence to suppress the rumor, he falsely charged with the guilt, and punished with the most exquisite tortures, the persons commonly called Christians, who were hated for their enormities. Christus, the founder of the name, was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius; but the pernicious superstition, repressed for a time broke out again, not only through Judea, where the mischief originated, but through the city of Rome also." – Tacitus<sup>156</sup>*

*"I have been used for many years to study the histories of other times, and to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them, and I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort, to the understanding of a fair inquirer, than the great sign which God hath given us that Christ died and rose again from the dead." – Thomas Arnold (Author of the three-volume History of Rome, holder of the chair of modern history at Oxford)<sup>157</sup>*

In the well-known classic work of John Bunyan entitled, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the character named Christian finds that his progress on a certain path is difficult. So he climbed over into a meadow which looked to him to be much more passable. Eventually the ground grew soggy and became covered with poisonous vines. The sky grew dark and rain began to pour. Christian spent the night huddled at the base of an oak tree. The next morning Giant Despair found, grabbed, beat, and threw him into the dungeon of Doubting Castle. The walls were thick and black. He was tortured in body and spirit. He weakened and his spirit sank as his mood and hope faded. He tried singing, but that didn't help him. He looked for something, for anything, for some hope, for some way out, but he could only find a rope, a knife, and a bottle in his cell, (potential tools for suicide). One night he prayed and as he did he had an epiphany. He was reminded that he had a key, a key of hope, that was already within him. That key that could give him hope, could also give him the hope of freedom. That key could

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<sup>154</sup> Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 647-48

<sup>155</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities*. XVIII: 3, quoted by Allen Quist, *The Marks of the Nails*, Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1985; p. 21

<sup>156</sup> Tacitus, *Annals*, XV, 44; quoted by Allen Quist, *The Marks of the Nails*, Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1985; p. 24. The author adds, "There can be little doubt that the "superstition" and "mischief" referred to...was the claim that Jesus had risen from the dead."

<sup>157</sup> Arnold, Thomas. *Sermons on the Christian Life - Its Hopes, Its Fears, Its Close*, sixth edition, London: T. Fellowes, 1859. p. 324

free him. The key was PROMISE. With the key of PROMISE Christian escaped the clutches of Giant Despair and the Doubting Castle.

Like Christian, the Christians who seek counsel are on pilgrimage. Like Christian, life's choices have often turned out to be the opposite of their desired result. Like Christian, despair and doubt shackle and confine them. The keys that give release, relief, and hope are found, not within them, but in counsel in and with and through the promises fulfilled and secured by Jesus' cross and empty tomb.

How the lies in Eden's Garden have caused sin's curse to go viral! The devil's lies have filled grave after grave and emptied heart after heart of hope ever since. Ever since, as well, there has been need for counseling. People often describe their lives as being "living hells." Hell-like, yes; but not hell itself. This side of eternity, people and lives, though fractured by sin, neither are entirely nor eternally separated<sup>158</sup> from God. The gates of hell may indeed post the warning, "Abandon all hope, all you who enter here,"<sup>159</sup> because God is not found there. But God and hope are found in counseling sessions centered on the cross and the empty tomb. Pastoral counselors are able to rejoice with apostle Peter, "*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope **through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...***"<sup>160</sup> The truth that Jesus' body is not a layer of dry dust, remnants of a corpse decayed, in the sepulcher of Joseph's Garden, is the remedy and the cure for those lies, the sins that followed, and the consequences further followed and that still linger. Jesus' resurrection empties graves and fills hearts with hope.<sup>161</sup>

The proclamation and application of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave is truth that brings an electrifying, an exhilarating, and an effective and affective energy, liveliness, and vivacity to Christian counseling. The resurrection of Christ Jesus from

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<sup>158</sup> Isaiah 59:2. again, "Your iniquities have separated you from your God."

<sup>159</sup> From Dante's *Divine Comedy*. The 1814 translation into English by the Reverend H. F. Cary is the origin for this phrase in English, although he gave it as the less commonly used 'All hope abandon ye who enter here'.

*Through me you pass into the city of woe:  
Through me you pass into eternal pain:  
Through me among the people lost for aye.  
Justice the founder of my fabric mov'd:  
To rear me was the task of power divine,  
Supremest wisdom, and primeval love.  
Before me things create were none, save things  
Eternal, and eternal I endure.  
**All hope abandon ye who enter here.**  
Such characters in colour dim I mark'd  
Over a portal's lofty arch inscrib'd:  
Whereat I thus: Master, these words import.*

Dante Alighieri wrote this allegorical epic poem between 1306 and 1321. Virgil is the guide who takes the reader through the author's examination of the afterlife, which travels through the Inferno (Hell), the Purgatorio (Purgatory), and the Paradiso (Heaven), <http://www.phrases.org.uk>

<sup>160</sup> 1 Peter 1:3

<sup>161</sup> Paul writes that apart from Christ and His word of promise people are, "...without hope and without God in this world," Ephesians 2:12.

the dead is so powerful, effective, and sure and antidote because it reverse the effects of the venom of Satan's deceptive lies and work. This is nothing more true than that Jesus, who died, lives again and is risen. The resurrection of Jesus **is** absolute truth. It proves all of Scriptures to be true and trustworthy. Paul received and passed on this truth. This truth is what we counselors, in turn, receive and pass on to counselees. Not only is that all we have, that is the enormity of what we have. In the resurrection chapter, Chapter 15, in Paul's first letter to the Christians in Corinth the Apostle Paul wrote, *"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."*<sup>162</sup>

Satan and his lies will be found everywhere in this fallen world. So God's people who are hurt by those lies. They will be bombarded and barraged everywhere all the time. So it is imperative that we share the Word of Truth with them. There is but one source of this absolute truth, God's revealed will and Word, the Bible. The Bible places the cross and empty tomb of Jesus at its center. They are central to our counseling. They are true. Pastoral counselors counsel with the truth.

Counseling with Jesus' cross and empty tomb is carried out on the basis of the conviction that those two events did indeed take place within three days of each other, in time, in actual history. These events are central to all human history, at least from God's perspective, and definitely to bring to completion his divine intervention to save and to bless all people.

God's intention is that his truth touches people in all their needs. The realities of the cross and empty tomb of Jesus were also intended to bring significant impact on individuals in application. The historical events of Jesus' death and resurrection are not just objective truths they are to be applied subjective to each person, to his or her own personal histories. When we counsel with the cross and the empty tomb, the spiritual realities of comfort and certainty are brought to those suffering under their own realities as they are exposed to and feel the effects of the fall into sin. It can be said that the triumphs of the cross and the empty tomb are more real than the tragedies faced in the realities of each person's personal experiences. The former trump the latter!

The resurrection is real history, an historical fact.<sup>163</sup> The accounts of Jesus' resurrection are not merely stories from which the hurting can learn. They are not merely metaphors

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<sup>162</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

<sup>163</sup> Quist, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-21, Quist points out the historicity of Jesus' resurrection from the dead:

*Historical Fact 1. Jesus predicted that he would rise from the dead; (citing Mk 9:9-10; Lk 9:22; Jn 9:19)*

*Historical Fact 2. Jesus was dead; (citing Mk 15:33-39)*

*Historical Fact 3. The tomb was sealed; (citing Daniel 6:17 as an example that describes the purpose of sealing the tomb, "...represent(ing) the power and authority of the Roman Empire; to break the seal was to defy Roman rule – an act punishable by death. Pilate gave the strongest warning possible by sealing that stone," p. 12.)*

*Historical Fact 4. The stone had been rolled away;*

*Historical Fact 5. The tomb was empty; (citing Mt 28:1-7);*

*Historical Fact 6. The disciples claimed that Jesus had risen from the dead; (citing Mt 28, Mk 16, Lk 24, Jn*

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describing a new life or as a sort of springtime for hearts languishing in longsuffering from the winters of their discontent,<sup>164</sup> their variations of *seasonal affective disorder*<sup>165</sup> experienced in their lives. These historical accounts of death and of rising again are not merely purposed to evoke an emotional resurgence, or regeneration, or renewal of peoples' spirits. - *Jesus was pronounced dead at the cross. He became alive again in the tomb and showed himself alive outside of the tomb.* - Jesus did not come to give a metaphorical salvation, deliverance, healing, or hope. The effects of the resurrection are factual, not imagined, not metaphysical.

These historical messages of Calvary and Joseph's Garden speak of miracles that are real. The God/Man Jesus did die as true man and as true God. That is a miracle. The God/Man Jesus took his soul and breath of life back into his body and showed himself to be alive again. That, too, is a miracle. Both miracles are real, as real as the counselees' issues, as real as the forgiveness, the comfort, the certainty, and the hope that they find in these two real events. Pastoral counseling connects these real events and real blessings with real people and their real problems. Actual and factual were Jesus' cross and empty tomb, actual and factual are their impacts and implications. That connection is made when these events are proclaimed and applied by the counselor with and for the counseled.

As the counselees hear the accounts of Calvary and, by the Holy Spirit, see that cross (sin and guilt removed) and the empty tomb (life and comfort restored), their needs are met in so many ways! When pastoral counselors facilitate the visualization of what took place at the cross and in the empty tomb, they are facilitating with God's Word. When the Word of God is used, the Holy Spirit is actively working with that Word, for real, blessed results. The Word of God cannot not have its sway and cause an effect. The Word of God has its bearing both on the souls of people and on the lives of those people. The counseled then, in reality, discover and participate in the same blessings that the first century witnesses of Jesus' resurrection experienced: tears ceased<sup>166</sup>, joy resurged<sup>167</sup>, and hearts burned with wonder, emotion, faith, and excitement.<sup>168</sup> The resurrection of Jesus is a fact that begs to be applied to the hearts and lives of those who are begging for comfort, certainty, and hope. Applying the resurrection to troubled hearts brings real resolve, for the resurrection of Jesus is real.

There is no ruse. There is no faux healing and empowering effect. The counseling is real. To speak of the resurrection to those lacking hope is not merely a technique. The resurrection is real history that has the power to change the real history for those

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21, Ac 1:3-9, 7:55-56, 9:3-6)

<sup>164</sup> As the picture is used in *Richard III* by Wm. Shakespeare

<sup>165</sup> Seasonal affective disorder (also called SAD) is a type of depression that occurs at the same time every year...(the) symptoms start in the fall and may continue into the winter months, sapping your energy and making (one feel) moody...Treatment for seasonal affective disorder includes light therapy (phototherapy), psychotherapy and medications; [www.mayoclinic.org/diseases.../seasonal-affective-disorder/](http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases.../seasonal-affective-disorder/)

<sup>166</sup> John 20:13

<sup>167</sup> John 20:20

<sup>168</sup> Luke 24:32

counseled. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead offers subjective application because it is objective truth.

Those who counsel with the messages of the cross and the empty tomb do so with a proper hermeneutic, a proper interpretation of these real events. That proper hermeneutic acknowledges that the Bible is the true, errorless, inspired word of God and lets the Bible interpret itself. In a sense, counseling with the truths of God's Word is the art and practice of helping the counselee re-interpret<sup>169</sup> self and his or her life by standing beneath the shadow of the cross of dark Good Friday and in the brightness of the sunrise that exposes Jesus' tomb left empty.

We must let the Scriptures present the accounts of Jesus' resurrection as true and allow them to, "...tell us what their purpose is. (We)...let the Scriptures...fuel our presuppositions...(and) let God be God and let God speak! The key difference between biblical interpretation and all other forms of hermeneutics is that this book comes to us claiming to be God's voice..."<sup>170</sup> Counselors who counsel with the Bible actually let God do the speaking. God's voice is the better voice. God's voice is the best voice. God is the best pastoral counselor.

Since the Bible presents Jesus' resurrection as a fact, we take it as a fact and counsel on the basis that it is a fact. Many know of what C.S. Lewis observed in Mere Christianity. Jesus is who he claimed to be. He is not a liar or lunatic. His resurrection proves him to be true.

Jesus once was asked to prove himself by giving a sign that he was indeed the Messiah and that what he was saying and doing was of God. To what did Jesus refer as his credentials? The resurrection! "*Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, "Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you."* He answered, "*A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth...*"<sup>171</sup> The resurrection of Jesus Christ verified who Jesus was, what Jesus said, and what Jesus did.

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<sup>169</sup> Paul Wendland makes some valid points that within the context of the experiences of their lives human beings are prone to make interpretations, have understandings, and come to conclusions about God and what is truth. But he encourages, "(Interpretations need to be)... drawn from the text itself. How does this text present itself to us? What does it tell us about its nature? Its purpose? What does it *mean to say* to us? If there is such a thing as Lutheran hermeneutic, and if there is something distinctive about a Lutheran approach to Scripture, its validity will stand or fall on whether or not that perspective and approach is drawn from the Scriptures themselves." "An Overview of Lutheran Hermeneutics in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," Paul O. Wendland, Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, Volume 110, Number 3, p.184. Counseling sessions conducted by biblical counselors should aim to equip and enable the counselees to learn to apply Scripture, especially the messages of the cross and the empty tomb, in a way that leads to a reinterpretation of themselves and of their lives' experiences.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191.

<sup>171</sup> Matthew 12:38-40

Jesus' reference to Jonah made an unmistakable comparison: just as Jonah came out of the great fish alive after three days, so would Jesus come out of the tomb alive on the third day; and, just as Jonah's living body had to be spewed out of the great fish because it and he did not belong there, so also, Jesus' living body, when it became alive again – when he became alive again – at the conclusion of the Sabbath on that first day of the week, it did not belong there anymore! His body was alive and no longer swallowed up by death. Because Jesus arose alive from the dead the saying is indeed true, "*Death has been swallowed up in victory!*"<sup>172</sup>

The Matthew account of Jesus' discussion of the account of Jonah in conjunction with the resurrection offers further validation of Jesus' authority and message. In Matthew's inspired version, Jesus also offered the testimonies of some dead people: the people of Nineveh, to whom Jonah witnessed, and the Queen of Sheba,<sup>173</sup> who travelled to Israel to marvel at Solomon's wisdom. Jesus could have raised (Matthew 12:41, ἀνίστημι) all those people, from the king on down to the lowliest stable boy, who had put on sackcloth and ashes in repentance in Nineveh to testify that he was a greater prophet than Jonah who had witnessed to them.<sup>174</sup> But Prophet Jesus didn't have to do so because his own resurrection was proof enough. Jesus could also have raised the Queen of Sheba (Matthew 12:4, ἐγείρω) to give authentication that he was a greater King than Solomon. But King Jesus' didn't have to do so because his own resurrection was proof enough. Notice the verbs Jesus used in the discussion!

Jesus' discussions of his power of the resurrection give power and truth to our counseling discussions. The greater Prophet and King is risen. He authenticates and validates our counseling with the message of his resurrection that proves that:

1. He is true God and the Savior of all;<sup>175</sup>
2. God's Word is true in all of its promises;<sup>176</sup>
3. The sins of all mankind have been paid for, the resultant guilt has been silenced because Satan's accusations were silenced;<sup>177</sup> and,

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<sup>172</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:54; Isaiah 25:8

<sup>173</sup> 1 Kings 10:1-9

<sup>174</sup> It shouldn't go without notice that Jonah was alive inside the belly of the great sea monster. Jesus was not alive when his body was placed, by the power of others, inside the belly of the earth. Jesus' coming out was the greater miracle.

<sup>175</sup> In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus, once crucified, but arisen, made rightful claim on all power and authority in heaven and on earth. In the "Great Commission" he promised to accompany those He sent as disciples to make more disciples, "...I am with you always..." Only God can also claim omnipresence. Not bound by time and space with His risen body Jesus can, with His glorified body, be with us all, everywhere, at all times. August Pieper wrote about Jesus, promise, as encouragement for ministers who in turn encourage God's people, by writing: "Jesus becomes our personal Friend, who accompanies us every day, who illuminates our mind, speaks comfort to our heart, and stiffens our resolve," from a work entitled, "Paul, A Model of the Certainty of Faith, Especially for All Servants of the Word," The Wauwatosa Theology, Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997, Vol. III, p. 226.

<sup>176</sup> Jesus not only proved his words and authority to be true with Matthew 12:38-40 by tying Jonah's three days to His three days in the tomb and Jonah's escape to His resurrection, Jesus also showed his authority over the temple (Matthew 12:6), the Sabbath, (Matthew 12:8), and over Satan, (Matthew 12:22-29)!

<sup>177</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:26.

#### 4. Because Jesus rose we will rise from the dead.<sup>178</sup>

On the Thursday evening before the resurrection morning Jesus prayed, “*Father, sanctify them through the truth, your word is truth.*”<sup>179</sup> It has been already stated that there is nothing more true than Jesus’ resurrection. The substance and meaning of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead give a firm platform, base, and foundation for helpful counsel. The Apostle Paul made specific application of the resurrection of Christians to glory, based upon Jesus’ resurrection and his promised return, by saying, “*Therefore encourage each other with these words.*”<sup>180</sup> The resurrection of Christ Jesus from the dead is a remarkable resource for pastoral counselors with which genuine encouragement and genuine hope are offered. The troubled find true hope and resolve in the resurrection because the resurrection is true, is absolute truth. Absolute truth offers absolute healing and hope.

Any approach to the message of Easter that questions the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, of the true Easter message, not only would empty the message of the empty tomb of truth,<sup>181</sup> it would also leave the counseled heart empty of true and real hope. The Apostle addresses the doubters in a straightforward way:

*“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.<sup>2</sup> By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.<sup>3</sup> For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,<sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,<sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.<sup>6</sup> After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.<sup>7</sup> Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles,<sup>8</sup> and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one*

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<sup>178</sup> John 11:25-26. Jesus went to the tomb of Lazarus, Mary and Martha’s brother, having wept himself in complete sympathy and empathy. There Jesus commanded the dead man – dead for four days and already smelling of decomposition with a “bad odor” (v. 39) – “Lazarus, come out!” Lazarus rose. It has been commented that had Jesus not been specific in calling forth Lazarus from the grave, every dead body in that graveyard would have come out of its grave alive. But Jesus’ power would not be limited to just that graveyard but actually could have extended to every grave throughout the world. The Christ of God, Jesus, has full power and authority over death, its root source, sin, and the devil the tempter! This Christ, this Jesus, has power over the same in each counselee’s heart and life.

<sup>179</sup> John 17:17

<sup>180</sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:18. The Greek word, “encourage, or comfort,”(in the Greek, παρακαλέω), affords a beautiful picture to the ministry of biblical, Christian counseling, namely, to “call to one’s side.”

<sup>181</sup> Rudolf Bultmann: “The meaning of the cross is not disclosed from the life of Jesus as a figure of past history, a life which needs to be reproduced by historical research...It would be wrong at this point to raise again the problem of how this preaching arose historically, as through that could vindicate its truth. That would be to tie our faith in the word of God to the results of historical research...But the historical problem is not of interest to Christian belief in the resurrection. For the historical event of the rise of the Easter faith means for us what it meant for the first disciples – namely, the self-attestation of the risen Lord, the act of God in which the redemptive event of the cross is completed.” (*Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate*, [Harper Collins (paper), 2000], 42,44; Wendland, *op. cit.*, “*An Overview of Lutheran Hermeneutics in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*,” Paul O. Wendland, Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, Volume 110, Number 3, p.186).

*abnormally born.<sup>9</sup> For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.<sup>10</sup> But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.<sup>11</sup> Whether, then, it was I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.<sup>12</sup> But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?<sup>13</sup> If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.<sup>14</sup> And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.<sup>15</sup> More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead.”<sup>182</sup>*

Real people with real issues need real hope from the real Christ who really died and who really got up alive from the dead. The real resurrection of Jesus offers real hope.

Paul Wendland observes, “Let it be clear about the reason why many feel so empty today. It was unbelief that caused people to banish God into some distant attic above, beyond the stars, while the ‘natural’ forces worked themselves out below...The answer to humanity’s despair is found in the burning heart of God, a heart on fire with his eternal love for us poor sinners...”<sup>183</sup> The cross and the empty tomb reveal the burning heart of God and connect those who need love with God’s love. What blessings Christian counselors can impart if the resurrection is real; and it is. What sham and empty counsel, if the resurrection is a sham and the tomb is not empty! But it isn’t!

“...It is more pitiable still to have a great hope in the heart all through life, to shape the whole life according to that hope, to crucify the flesh, to fight sin, to war against temptation, to bear the cross, to suffer reproach and many another ill, all for this hope and then to have a vacuous thing, an absolute and utter disappointment...A Christianity without a risen Christ and the sure and certain hope of the resurrection for ourselves, whatever men may say in adulation of its moral influence and good works is worse than none.”<sup>184</sup>

Again, 1 Corinthians 15, “*But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen*

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<sup>182</sup> 1 Co 15:1-15a

<sup>183</sup> Wendland, Paul O., *Now That God Is One of Us: A Study of the Communication of Attributes in the Person of Christ, We Believe in Jesus Christ – Essays on Christology*, Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1999, Curtis A. Jahn, Compiling Editor, pp. 65-67

<sup>184</sup> Lenski, R.C.H., *The Eisenach Epistle Selections*, Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1913, p. 568

*asleep in Christ are lost.*<sup>189</sup> *If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.*<sup>185</sup>

The Apostle Paul uncages the lion!<sup>186</sup> With the Easter victory the Lion of Judah<sup>187</sup> is set free as the undeniable King whose rule and victories are not for himself but for us affected in this sin broken world, for us and for our victories, that we may "...live under him in his kingdom..."<sup>188</sup> Repeatedly Paul employs the verb, ἐγήγερται, a perfect passive indicative. The verb claims that Jesus did rise.<sup>189</sup> There is substance to our counseling. The Christ<sup>190</sup>, God's anointed Son, did the impossible, did what only God could do, he arose from the dead. At the same time, Jesus<sup>191</sup>, our fully human, flesh and blood brother, did what he did, as one of us, in order to conquer and to give the victories we need. Christ Jesus did not die and rise for himself, but for us, so that we might have hope. "Christ died for you and rose again to bring you the message: Peace be unto you!"<sup>192</sup> That is what pastoral counselors herald whether in the pulpit, the classroom, or the counseling session. This hope is for forever, and, this hope is hope for our now. Invert this hope for now and this hope for forever.<sup>193</sup>

More far-reaching than the effects of the lies of the devil and the fall into sin is the truth that Jesus' tomb is empty, that he rose up in victory! "...Christ...the ultimate and eternal Prophet, High Priest, and King, who functions in these capacities...by his substitutionary obedience, has achieved reconciliation between this world of sinners and the righteous God. His redemptive work is perfect and complete and applies to all mankind. Jesus Christ is the only Savior and Lord of mankind...(These aspects of Christology cause us to)...hold that the relationship between belief and behavior is basically a relationship between cause and effect. If a person believes what is correct, that person's behavior will tend to be correct. But if someone clings to what is false, what that person does will reflect and express what is untrue. In short, what we believe has great impact on how

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<sup>185</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:12-19

<sup>186</sup> It is said that the best way to defend a lion is to let it loose to defend itself.

<sup>187</sup> Revelation 5:5, "See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed."

<sup>188</sup> Luther's Small Catechism, Explanation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Article of the Apostles' Creed.

<sup>189</sup> The perfect tense in the Greek works like the perfect tense in the English describing an action that is completed in the past, once for all, that need not be repeated.

<sup>190</sup> The Savior is identified 15 times in the resurrection chapter of 1 Corinthians 15 as the Christ. With that distinct title come authority and power to accomplish what was promised and what was set before him.

<sup>191</sup> Yet, "Jesus," the Savior's name, is used 3 times, still indicating that he is our brother, fully human, who in flesh and blood died and rose, with the same human travails humans experience in order to bring us also with the triumphs that humans need, which he obtained, and which he imparts.

<sup>192</sup> Stoeckhardt, George, Exegetical Lectures on the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, presented in English by H. W. Degner, Fairmont, MN, p. 95

<sup>193</sup> Invert, too, what Stoeckhardt writes in the very next page, 96, "If our Christian hope extends no farther than the life on earth, then we Christians are in a bad plight, in fact, worse off than every other (person) on earth." The blessings of the crucified and risen Christ Jesus are not just for heaven, but are ours now. This we believe, confess, teach and counsel!

we live from day to day...the way we think (the mind), the way we feel (the emotions), and the way we make decisions (the will)."<sup>194</sup>

Jesus' resurrection:

- † Assures us that we are justified before God, "*He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.*"<sup>195</sup>
- † Gives Baptism its power to save, "*...baptism that now saves you...It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*"<sup>196</sup>
- † Permits the Christian to drown his/her natural sinner and to rise with Christ to live in righteousness and holiness as one of God's saints, "*...all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*"<sup>197</sup>
- † Sanctifies our bodies and lives, (in the context of avoiding sexual immorality), "*By His power God raised the Lord form the dead, and he will raise us also,*"<sup>198</sup>
- † And fills us with hope, "*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*"<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Bivens, Forrest L., *How Does Our Christology Impact Our Daily Lives?*, We Believe in Jesus Christ – Essays on Christology, *op. cit.*, pp. 198-199. Bivens delineates the blessings of the Christological truths in peoples' lives in how we:

*THINK:*

1. We enjoy stability of doctrine.
2. We learn to subject our reason and logic to divine revelation.
3. We learn to trust the biblical message of Christ.
4. We derive comfort from the reasonableness of what we believe, pp. 201-202

*FEEL:*

1. We grieve over our sin as we behold Christ taking its guilt and consequences upon himself.
2. We are overjoyed with the reliable news that our sins are truly removed, divine justice is satisfied, and life rather than death is truly our inheritance.
3. We find comfort in his being the eternal, almighty Lord as well as our human brother.
4. We find comfort because Jesus is our sympathetic brother.
5. We face the future cheerfully, pp.204-205

*LIVE:*

1. We resolve to follow Jesus in faith and to imitate him.
2. We are willing to bear the cross chosen for us.
3. We want to share the truth of Christ with everyone, pp. 207-208.

<sup>195</sup> Romans 4:25

<sup>196</sup> 1 Peter 3:21

<sup>197</sup> Romans 6:3-4

<sup>198</sup> 1 Corinthians 6:14

<sup>199</sup> 1 Peter 1:3

My favorite word in the New Testament Scriptures is the word, "therefore." "Therefore" serves as a stop sign making the reader of the Word pause and look back before moving ahead in application or growth. In a beautiful way, Paul Wendland sent out future pastoral counselors by asking them to pause and consider the wonders of the great resurrection chapter (15) of 1 Corinthians, to look again at the risen Savior's victory, and to marvel at the most awe-inspiring truths of comfort and certainty that an empty tomb affords. Then they were bid to move on to their ministries applying 1 Corinthians 15:58:

Therefore, Paul says, "Therefore..."

Stand firm. Let nothing move you—in Christ and in his resurrection we find stability in this world of shifting shadows. In Christ and in his resurrection, we have found a sure foundation. In him we will stand even when it all falls down, even when heaven and earth pass away. That's why we are determined: we ... will ... not ... move from here, from this truth. There is no progress to a deeper truth, a more profound faith, a richer understanding. Christians make the most progress by standing in the same place. Beneath the cross! Before the empty tomb! Here we will stand, unswerving in this truth.

He lives! In the power of this truth and with mouths filled with this message, we send you out. You are going to hurl this message against the darkness and bring life and immortality to light. By this message you will transform the world. You will make it new! Stand firm in it, and let nothing move you from it.

Then you will also abound in his work. Paul says, "Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord"—a good translation, but a more literal way of saying it would be to translate, "Always abound in, always excel in, always overflow in the work of the Lord." The life that God gives us in Christ—the resurrection—is a life that Christ lives in us is not some kind of half-life. As if here on earth we were stuck in some kind of waiting room, just cooling our heels until eternal life began in heaven. And it's not a still life, as if standing firm meant we should be rooted to the spot, stuck here like saintly statues until the end of time.

The life we live by faith in the Son of God who loved us and gave himself for us is an abundant life, a rich life, a full life. As he himself said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10.)

The resurrection changes everything about our lives right here and now. Certainly, viewed apart from Christ, life is a dried up desert landscape. Everywhere there are signs of lifelessness and death. No wonder the earth on which a human sojourns is often called, a "vale of tears." Death brings tears. But Jesus lives! That fact changes everything. The resurrection of Jesus grabs the human soul and spirit like nothing else captivated by this truth: "Because he lives, I live."

Seen in the light of the empty tomb, life now stretches before us, life unbroken. Each week, each day, each moment is now a rich green landscape bursting with promise, rich with opportunities to live and to live abundantly, to abound in the work of the Lord. Faith is a living, busy, active, mighty thing! Knowing that my status with God is utterly secure, that he is my Father and that I am his child, I am free. Free to live in this moment. Free to love others as he has loved me. Free to serve others as he has served me.

This is the highest skill that any Christian can acquire: to see all of one's life in the light of the gospel. This is the greatest service that any pastor can give to his people: to frame their lives in the truth: "He lives!" To help each Christian see and seize every moment as an opportunity to live by faith in the one who lives! Practically speaking, this means that there is no more important time for me to live than right now, in this golden moment God has given me. There is no more significant activity to engage in than that task that the Lord places right before my hand. There is no better place to be than right here where I find myself. And there is no better person to serve than the one my Savior places right in front of me. God has attached his word to my neighbor and said, "Love him! Serve her!" In our living Lord, our life becomes this extraordinary landscape full of God and rich with opportunities to serve our God.

Brothers, we are sending you out in the firm hope and expectation that you, according to Christ's own promise, are going to experience this abundant life for yourselves. Christ is going to be a living, busy, mighty, and active being in your lives. We could well envy you for the joy that you will know. You are going to see the fruit of his resurrection in your life! And, as part of your calling, you're going to have the great privilege of helping other people into that same joy. You will have the thrill of seeing the light of grace rise for the first time in the eyes of someone who hasn't known Christ. At the bedside of the dying, you will see the power of the Lord's word turn death into life. And you are going to see the power of the resurrection gospel on display in the everyday lives of the people you serve.

Does that mean life ever ceases to be a struggle for your people or for you? That there will be no more trouble? No more trials? No more cross? Hardly! We do not dwell, as one of our writers has said, among ranks of angels where Jesus rules in glory, but here on earth where he was crucified. But even in the time of sorrow—especially at that moment—we must learn the great skill of faith and apply the resurrection gospel to that very thing we are struggling with. We baptize it, and give it a new name in him who lives.

The truth is: right here in this momentary pain, the God of life is at work for our eternal good. Though death may seem to surround us, Christ's life is more abundant still. We are more than conquerors through him who loved us. Faith knows this, and teaches us to seize this moment too, to live for him who loved us.

So stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord. Because you know—you know—that your labor is not in vain. Not in vain. Never in vain. Why?  
Because he lives!<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Wendland, Paul O., Graduation Sermon 2008, *Brothers Stand Firm*, [Delivered at the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Graduation service, May 23, 2008; published in volume 106/1 (Winter 2009) of the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*]

## **The Resurrection Applied – Hope for the Hopeless**

*"Our hope is guaranteed by Jesus Christ, who lived, died, and is alive again. He lives to govern this world in the interest of his church. He lives to sustain us in the midst of trial. He lives to bring us through death to eternal life."*<sup>201</sup>

Visualize Jesus' empty tomb. Vacant! Barren! Empty! Impotent! "He is not here; he has risen, just as he said."<sup>202</sup> What angelic news! Smell the sweetness of that new spring morning. The tomb has lost its purpose, its power, the hopelessness it effected and the sorrow it produced. The grave has lost its sting! That sight and those sounds are ours to bring to the soul, hurting and empty, so that the empty tomb can fill the empty heart and soul with hope. The resurrection was the only thing Job had left. Only the resurrection. The resurrection was sufficient. The resurrection gave him hope. The resurrection is the source of hope for everyone, for anyone, for every individual.

The resurrection was not a matter of imagination but one of absolute, sure, prophetic reality. Job gave testimony and prophesied what his head knew and his soul believed to be true. He was taught by the Spirit to disregard all of the false counsel of his friends and the cursing advice of his wife and to cling to the certainty of the Redeemer's empty tomb. Job voices this confidence in the resurrection and his trust in something that he knew to be true by promise with this beautiful Scripture, "*Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll, that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever! I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I will see him with my own eyes – I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me.*"<sup>203</sup> The promised resurrection of Job's Redeemer prompted such faith and trust and gave him the joy of hopefulness.

To be sure, when Job was suffering, he was in a bad place. He expressed what the state of his heart was like when he being suffocated by his experiences and the false advice. He lamented. His was, "...a heartrending complaint that God is wronging him, is persecuting him without mercy, that he has destroyed him on every side, uprooted his hope like a tree..."<sup>204</sup>

With news that came from each bearer of bad news, hope had been yanked from Job's heart. But the Comforter put hope back inside him. In fact, he was better off, even with all his losses and sorrows, with a better hopefulness and life-perspective. Job's Redeemer would snatch victory from the jaws of the grave's defeat and give him, personally, where he was at, for him specifically, a lasting and deep hope. There was victory for Job, even in apparent defeat! Because his Redeemer lives, real hope, resultant rest and resolution was his in the LORD. Because his Redeemer lived, he would live! Hope, rest, and resolution filled Job's empty heart, soothed troubling

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<sup>201</sup> Lange, *op. cit.*, page 188

<sup>202</sup> Matthew 28:6

<sup>203</sup> Job 19:23-27

<sup>204</sup> Pieper, *Our Great Heritage, II*, *op. cit.*, pp. 142-143

thoughts, and gave light to his dark soul. His Redeemer would rise! And so would he. Future glory gave Job present hope, rest, and resolution. He had peace.

Job was able to then verbalize what he had become convinced of. He expressed his living hope. Job's hope and life dialogue became his witness before others, especially before his naysayers, (his wife and three friends). The resurrection comfort Job knew and confessed was not just from a Redeemer but was from "my" Redeemer. Look at the strength of that personal pronoun! What force in the "my"! What healing "my" indicates!

Add to the gifts of hope, rest, and resolution, the resurrection affords the gift of patience. Professor Rudolph Honsey described why Job, though he was a person of untold suffering, could be a person of such peace and demonstrate such patience:

"As a man who lived on such close terms with God, Job must have known of the Savior to come and the prophecies about his death and resurrection. It must have been faith in his God and Savior that kept him from collapsing under his severe sufferings and trials. As Job looked ahead in faith to his Savior, he could, *for the moment*, forget his present troubles and in faith see what lay ahead for him after his life on earth had ended... Because his Redeemer would again arise from the dead and live, Job was confident that he too would be raised from the dead and see his Redeemer face to face."<sup>205</sup>

Good professor, how well you understood Job! How well you understand our human plight! People are only able to forget, "*for the moment*." But, too easily we remember. Satan makes sure of that. Satan stimulates the memory and he uses the recall synapses to shock all over again and again. We recollect and then re-denial the realities of crises and re-bargain the circumstances with God. The tears flow again, the feelings of hopelessness and helplessness grip anew. What we seem to have resolved yesterday is remembered today as the crisis<sup>206</sup> happens all over again. Then there is the pain all over again. Then there is the hurt all over again. Then the temptation to shove a fist into the face of God with bitterness and resentment is there again! So, in a sense, we need to keep on forgetting, by, "...see(ing) all over again the) Redeemer face to face...", time and time again, one day, one hour, one second at a time, again, by means of a walk to the empty tomb, again and again!

Pastoral counselors take careful note of well how Job ends his Easter sunrise anthem, "*How my heart yearns within me!*" The word, "heart," in the original means kidneys, or, more loosely, "innards." Job's whole "innards" were warmly wrapped in, safely surrounded with, and pleasantly penetrated with the positive prospects found in the rising of the Redeemer from the dead and in his own resurrection which would leave behind all the inglorious suffering for glorious comfort and peace.

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<sup>205</sup> Honsey, Rudolph E., Job, The People's Bible; Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 1992; pp. 128-129; emphasis mine.

<sup>206</sup> I use the term "crisis" as an event or circumstance which generates "a point of no return," through which we and our lives will never be the same.

His insides “yearned.” This word, in the original, has a bit of a yin and yang to it. It is used to mean “to yearn, to waste, to faint.” But the Hebrew for “yearned” is also used to mean, “to be fulfilled, to be completed, to be accomplished.”

The sight of the living Redeemer, the death Destroyer, fulfilled for Job, accomplished for Job, completed Job, like nothing else could. Easter did not just positively impact Job’s future death and bodily decomposition with the promise of his own resurrection of his body on the last day – a fulfilled promise Job said that he would see with his own eyes. Easter also had an immediate impact on Job’s daily life and being. Seeing with his own spiritual eyes, already, the sight of the resurrection assured Job that, for today, for his now, for him for this moment, he had hope. He had the gift of hopeful resolve. Why? Because Jesus, arisen, rules everything: the yearning inside, the beating of hearts, the “innards.” Jesus’ living and ruling effects change and affects blessing. He renews hope. Such hope is at the heart of the message of the Christ, the blessing of Christology. Such hope through the Christ is what constitutes the most beneficial aspects of pastoral counseling.

J. P. Meyer, a theologian of yesteryear, expounded on the powerful impact of Jesus’ resurrection has in all matters, for all people. Pastoral counselors bring this resurrection impact to individuals who’ve been pummeled by the opposite. Meyer wrote:

“Paul presented the resurrection on the last day as being the finishing touches of Christ’s work of redemption. In the resurrection the power of the last enemy will be finally and decisively overthrown. There will be nothing more to do. All that is left will be to gather in the fruits of Christ’s labors. In the judgment to follow, Jesus will separate the believers from the unbelievers, and will deliver the restored kingdom to God, even the Father. — In this connection Paul now discusses a few special questions and makes some special applications.

This is a staggering thought. He who hung on the cross in dismal solitude, He who on the cross suffered the agony of hell, being forsaken of God, He who with parched lips cried, I thirst, He who bowed His head and gave up the ghost: He is made Ruler over all things. It seems incredible. Yet, it is true.

**V. 27:** “For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.”

By mentioning a manifest exception Paul underscores the all of his main statement. Everything else, everything outside of that single exception, is made subject to the rule of Christ. Not only has He the right to rule, but He actually exercises dominion over all things. It staggers the imagination.

There is the physical world. There is the earth with its minerals, its many-formed plant life, its uncounted animals on land, in the water, in the air, from the huge elephants down to the tiniest insects. There are earth and sea and air with their mysterious forces, some of which have been discovered and harnessed only recently, and many there may be of which no man to this moment has any idea. There are the heavens with their millions of stars, with their peculiar laws of motion. All these are under the control of Jesus. The most inconspicuous weed grows because Jesus makes it grow, the canary sings

because Jesus teaches it, the hugest star moves in its orbit because Jesus carries it. At His command even the “powers of heaven shall be shaken” (Matt. 24:29), and great disturbances will occur on earth, earthquakes, famines, and the like.

Also the nations have been put under Jesus’ feet. The nations act as though they were independent. They talk peace, and they plot wars. Natural forces, which could serve beneficial purposes for the welfare of mankind, are turned into instruments of destruction. Yet in all of this nobody can stir hand or foot without the will of Jesus. He offered the world His Gospel, the Gospel of a salvation which He purchased with His own blood. Men despise His gift. For that ingratitude He turns them over to their own conceit. They imagine that they are the captains of their own fortunes, but by His ruling they are caught in their own devices.

Above all, Jesus is the Head of the Church. His Church on earth is threatened by many dangers. As Paul told the Ephesian elders, grievous wolves are attacking from without, while ambitious errorists bore from within. But Jesus rules so that not even the gates of hell shall prevail against His Church, nor shall the devil, though like a roaring lion he seeks whom he may devour, to do harm to our soul. Let us only in faith and in prayer remember that Jesus is our Head, and seek refuge in faithful adherence to His Word.

All things have been put under Jesus’ feet, only as yet we do not see it. It is an article of faith. On the day of resurrection it will become manifest.”<sup>207</sup>

The power of the Christ is manifest in a most magnificent way in his resurrection from the dead. Wondrous victories – over sin, death, devil, hell (and all their ill-effects) – were secured, indisputably, by the Christ who rose up alive from the grave. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead holds the definitive solution for every issue that afflicts any of us. Pastoral counseling that consists in bringing the objective truths of the empty tomb, with their messages of sure hope and of life restored, will have their subjective effect on specific individuals in each and every one of their specific plights. The emergence from the tomb by the Victor of all victors and the Conqueror of all conquerors is not merely the *doctrine* of Jesus’ resurrection, it is also the *application* of Jesus’ resurrection.

Pastoral counselors connect the real doctrine of the empty tomb with real people, according to their needs. Jesus’ resurrection is relevant to every counseling situation. An old devotional book pointed out this ageless relevance of the resurrection:

“Christ showed Himself to men and to women; to few and to many; to the apostles in particular and to the brethren in general; by day and by night; in private and in public; in their houses and on their journeys; in the city and in the country; by the sea and on the mountain; at home and abroad; to learned and to unlearned; expectedly and unexpectedly; to friend and to foe; on earth and from heaven; before and after His ascension...With their eyes they saw Him; with their ears they heard Him; with their hands they touched Him; with their feet they walked with Him; with their tongues they

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<sup>207</sup> Meyer, J. P., *Christ’s Return, Chiliasm, Resurrection of the Dead, Judgment, Hell, Luther on Eternity, Heaven*. Compiled from The Northwestern Lutheran August 22, 1954, Vol. 41, # 17 to April 14, 1957, Vol. 44, #8; WLS essay file, p. 50

talked with Him; with their mouths they ate with Him; with their hearts they felt His burning words; with their memory they remembered the words he had spoken, and they followed His direction. Luke, the physician, one of the world's greatest historians records this – He showed Himself alive after His passion by many proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty days, Acts 1:1-5.<sup>208</sup>

Opened was the grave of the Redeemer. Opened, too, is a whole realm of pastoral counseling. Real people were shown the realities of the resurrected Jesus. Real people saw Jesus really arisen. Real people were filled with real hope because of the resurrection. We have seen and are filled with hope because of the resurrection. We help others see so that they might be filled with hope – *because of the resurrection.*

Counsel at the empty tomb! Let's see the pastoral counseling what and the why and the how.

### Visualize Easter

Only a limited number in the first century actually saw with their very own eyes the One who died and rose that first Easter. Those who physically saw Jesus physically risen from the dead did so in a rather limited time period of forty days, (on one occasion that included 500 witnesses at the same time<sup>209</sup>). But one does not have to see as they did to see the Risen one. Two thousand plus years later, pastoral counselors can assist those who they counsel to see Jesus in with the eyes of faith.<sup>210</sup> The pastoral counselor can make use of an ally inside those Christians he counsels: the mind's eye, that is, the mental picture of Jesus and of Easter that the Holy Spirit has already formulated there. The picture probably has been indelibly painted there on the canvas of the counseled one's memory. That picture probably came about via a Sunday School flip chart picture, or a home Bible storybook. Or maybe the image of Jesus arisen was formulated, as the words were spoken or read, by the imagination. However the Spirit has put them there, each person has his/her picture of the scenes of Calvary and, more than likely, those that took place at Joseph's tomb. Use those images. Tap those seen scenes that are seen with the mind's eyesight. A way to do so is through the technique called visualization.

Visualization is sometimes defined merely as the formation of mental images. That's what was being done with *Rapid Eye Movement Desensitization*. That's what was being done with *Counseling at the Cross*. Do the same with what was seen at Jesus' empty tomb. Visualization is a unique way talking through a counseling issue and applying the Word at the same time. Help the counseled visualize Easter.

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<sup>208</sup> Dallmann, William, *Easter Bells*, Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, \_\_\_, p. 10

<sup>209</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:6

<sup>210</sup> Ephesians 1:18, "I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened\* in order that you may know the **hope** to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints..." \*φωτίζω – means to "give light to," "bring light to," "make to see." That is the work of God the Holy Spirit. He is the One who proceeds from Jesus and the Father to witness the message of the Savior; see John 15:26. Note well that when the Spirit does so it creates hope in the one who is enlightened.

For example, visualize Easter as you visualize this sight:

A group of residents of a nursing home was expressing their fear of death to a pastor. They were sick and knew they would not live very long. The thought of death created anxiety and fear in their hearts. The pastor said, "Suppose I told you that I could lead you from this room into another room. That new room would be one where there would be no more sickness or fear. You would all be healthy. No more cripples, no more pain. As soon as you entered this room you would again be in the prime of your life. But to get into this room I had to lead you through a dark tunnel that would be frightening. How many of you would follow me? Everyone raised his hand. "Well, he said, this is just what death is like. Jesus takes you by the hand and leads you through a dark tunnel. But he leads you right into that room which is bright and beautiful and free from all sorrow. For Jesus said, '*In my Father's house are many mansions.*'" (John 14:6). Yes, because Jesus lives we too shall live.<sup>211</sup>

Imagine seeing that nursing home room full of vintage folk. Scan their faces in your own mental picture. Hear their old, cracking, somewhat squeaky voices expressing what's on their minds each day. They're just expressing their thoughts, "Maybe today is my last on earth." They know what the Psalm says, "...70 or 80 years..."<sup>212</sup> and so many of them in that room are a number of years past the threshold mentioned in Moses' psalm. Hear, too, some coughing; they should never have taken up smoking, they should have stopped sooner; if only they had taken better care of themselves, eaten right, drunk less, exercised more. Now it doesn't seem to make any difference. The word each seems to loath is: "soon."

You can picture those fearful souls in that room, can't you? Once the whole world belonged to them and their potential was limitless; now their world is so narrowed. They only have a few reminders and relics of what they once were and what they once had, tokens of their lives stuck on a shelf in their private rooms. Many of them travelled the world, now they hobble along, some pushing a walker sporting sliced tennis balls, others sitting in wheelchairs, many of which bear the initials of the institution where they are spending their last days; (the spray-painted letters themselves screaming, "Ours! You're only borrowing this wheelchair – for a little while"). Once they were full of zest for life, now they are full of thanatophobia.<sup>213</sup>

Look at them again in that room. Look at their surroundings. Hardly the sight of a life full of zest and potential! There's the tired wallpaper, a backdrop to a tired staff carrying out tiresome tasks, distributing meds from one cart, or picking up meal trays with another. Picture them bent over their walkers, which are sporting sliced tennis balls to help them shuffle more easily along. Some are sitting in wheel chairs that don't belong to them, branded with the unmistakable initials of the institution where they are spending their last days. The painted letters shout out to the eyes, "Ours! They don't belong to you. You're only borrowing them – for a little while."

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<sup>211</sup> Orvick, George M., Forget Not All His Benefits, Evangelical Lutheran Synod, Mankato, Minnesota, 2007; p. 139

<sup>212</sup> Psalm 90

<sup>213</sup> The fear of death.

Once upon a time these old people were full of dreams. What they dreamed in the past, they had the vim, vigor, resolve, and often the opportunity to follow and accomplish. Now, making it to the rest room in time is almost as good it gets when it comes to dreams and expectations. They're young only in their dreams, but those are dreams of the past – or of what they'd wished their past to have been. Once they'd seen the wonders of the world. Now they look out the only window their room has out into the world, looking past the commode sitting against the wall, and looking over the stack of bed pads sitting on the sill. Once their whole life was ahead of them, now most of their life is behind them.

Look at them. You can see them, can't you? You can see the age spots on the faces of the men who no longer sweat, breathing hard, heart pumping strong as they did the work which brought them such fulfillment in life. Now they break into a sweat, get winded, with elevated heart-rate just putting on their socks in the morning.

And the ladies, why they once could turn heads, when they modeled a new "do," slipped on high heels, and wore the latest style. Once each one of these ladies looked better than a "queen for a day," now these ladies come back from the salon with thinned, blue hair. Unsteady hands apply make-up, the rouge blotchy, the lipstick too thick, and neither seems to enhance beauty anymore. The cosmetics merely hide the fading glory. Dressing up means wearing party favors at the next event that the activities director puts together. Denture cups sit on the bedside table next to Golden Anniversary pictures; he's been gone for years.

And the men: they were handsome as they displayed the branch of service through which they proudly served their country. Now their military pictures look unnatural, and their uniforms, if they still have them, don't fit right, too loose or too tight. Once they had a physic of strength and power, now suspenders are a necessary accessory; or they just wear sweat pants. Once they stood tall, now the chairs seem lower and lower when they just try to stand.

Incontinence frequents the room, so also does embarrassment. What is problematic for some is problematic for all. Fresh air is rare or counterfeited with artificial deodorizers.

And down that hallway can be heard the pleas: "Help me! I want to go home! Get me out of here!" Hear the creaking carts, walkers, chairs, beds, and bones. Hear the cracking voices that once sang in choir, rooted for the home team, and shouted out warnings at the sign of danger or with joy at times of elation. Hear, "It's time for your pills."

Can you see those people in that room? Can you smell its smells? Can you hear its sounds? Do you catch the atmosphere? You've been there, visiting. Someday, more than likely, you'll be there, a resident.

But there is the other room that the Preacher depicted. There is that "new room" where there is no sickness or fear. When you think about it, it's not really a bad translation of

what Jesus promised that night before His death in that upper room. “*In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.*”<sup>214</sup>

You can picture those same residents of the nursing home, smiles lighting up their faces as they picture themselves moving from that one room to that other room. They can visualize – and you can with them – moving from the nursing home, with its sights, sounds, and smells, to that other room in the glorious mansion rooms of heaven.

There in that second room is the Lord, and being with him is better than the best they ever experienced before<sup>215</sup>. They experience it now in that new room. There they experience a “takes your breath away” joy and amazement. Hearts pound with endless excitement, elation, and energy. Nostrils breathe in fragrant aromas more wonderful than anything their nostrils had taken in in their former life. What their eyes behold and their ears hear is too brilliant and magnificent to comprehend, let alone put into words. And look who’s there with the Father, with Jesus, with the Spirit! It’s, “Mother! Dad! Son! Daughter! Friend! Apostles, Prophets, Patriarchs, Martyrs! It’s all the myriad of the saved! And look, he’s here?! She’s here?! I thought they’d never make it!” With clear voices they declare, “What grace! God be praised! Glory! Glory!”

That heavenly room and those mansions of paradise have been bought and paid for. That heavenly room and those mansions of paradise are being prepared. Can you see, hear, and smell them? Those are the sights, sounds, and aromas of heaven!

But first the tunnel. First death. Yet, remember who is also in the picture? Jesus. Jesus the divine Trailblazer! Jesus the Firstfruits!<sup>216</sup> Through him death has been reduced, in the preacher’s picture, to a merely unpleasant “dark tunnel.” The people in that nursing home room, bad eyesight and all, can see death differently. The picture is clear! On the other side of the tunnel is that Great Room. The people there in that nursing home room, ears plugged with hearing aids - bad hearing and all, can hear Jesus clearly. In the preacher’s voice is His voice, “*Come follow me. I’ve cleared the tunnel. I’ve passed through, so will you. I’ll even be your Light until you see the light at the end of the tunnel!*” What sweet, sure, tender, confidence-stirring words! In the picture, it’s the blessed voice of the One who loves them the most, whom they can trust the most.<sup>217</sup> It’s the voice of their Shepherd. Through him they will pass through the valley of the shadow of death and dwell in His house forever.<sup>218</sup>

This is powerful stuff! The Word in picture! What power in the Word pictured! Resolution through the Word of God in picture form! What power supreme in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead! Because of his resurrection:

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<sup>214</sup> John 14:2-3.

<sup>215</sup> Psalm 73: 25 “*Whom have I in heaven, but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you.*”

<sup>216</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:23.

<sup>217</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:21

<sup>218</sup> Psalm 23

- 1) The look back – in review – is seen from a new perspective.
- 2) The look at the present – in the windshield – is seen as comfortable enough, or at least what it needs to be.
- 3) And, the look ahead – down the road – looks glorious!

Word pictures of the Word work. Pastoral counselors can learn to use word pictures of the Word for advantage in counseling.

Consider the following picture. It too is powerful. Pastor Paustian defends Christianity with the following. Take in the imagery, the visualization:

Someone has commented that if history is ever to come alive for us, we must resist the perpetual “fast forward.” We do not capture the drama in Independence Hall, do not walk in the frozen boots at Valley Forge, do not see the past through the past’s eyes, or come anywhere near the courage of those days if we are always mentally peeking ahead – “Well, we all know how *that* turned out.” Of course we do.

Those who were there did not.

If you have a Christian heart it could break if you let it visit history’s most miserable Saturday and manage to resist the fast forward. You can at least try to make the day come alive, though it refuses. You see, God the Son was dead. Those who had known Jesus awoke into a Christ-less world, too horrible to contemplate. A sword called grief cruelly jutted from Mary’s chest. A prison called fear contained the disciples in a lightless, locked room. A millstone called shame almost pulled Peter under. It’s a wonder he survived. Judas did not.

Of course, every soul in the upper room could have nursed an inward smile even then. Moments that excluded all happiness might still have held joy. Jesus had made them a promise. He had told them that grief itself would cry tears of sheer delight. He had told them again and again that he would rise. The promise could have been enough for them. They could have merely believed him...and have known how it would all turn out.

Shame on them that they didn’t.

Thomas did not anticipate his own breathless shout, “My Lord and my God.” It caught him by surprise that Sunday morning when the lock of death was broken from the inside.

So very soon Peter would hear the unmistakable Voice call to his boat from the shore. He would pull on his cloak as he would jump into the water (as if he expected to walk across the surface like before) and would sit down to breakfast beside a fire and

be served by Jesus...like always. In the meantime, his was a needless, gloomy sulk. Like ours.

Behind us are the moments in history that tell us how much we are loved by God because of all that he endured. Ahead of us is the renewal of all things which began in a first century tomb. And now because Jesus lives, the fast forward is precisely the button we can always push. The ending is carved in Jerusalem stone.

In circumstances that admit no happiness because of all the wishes that didn't turn out, ours is the joy that looks back and ahead, that rises above the merely now...

That nothing can touch.<sup>219</sup>

"Because Jesus lives," rings out strongly in this picture. "Because Jesus lives," is the counselor's best message. Too often we deal with the periphery. Jesus' resurrection strikes the bull's eye of mankind's worst: death (and its source, sin). I strongly agree with Harold Senkbeil:

Most people think the human dilemma is that our lives are out of adjustment; we don't meet God's expectations. Salvation then becomes a rearranging of our priorities and adjusting our life-style to correspond to God's will...It is certainly true that our sinful lives are out of adjustment. We are all in need of the spirit's sanctifying power. But that comes only after our real problem is solved. Sins are just the symptom: our real dilemma is death...The real problem we all face is death. Physical death, to be sure. But ultimately and most horribly, spiritual death – being cut off from God forever. And everyone must die. You can either die alone or die in Jesus...In his death Jesus Christ swallowed up our death, and rose again triumphantly to take all of the teeth out of the grace. In the promise of the resurrection, death loses its power. When we die with Jesus we really live.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Paustian, Mark A., *More Prepared to Answer, Telling the Greatest Story Ever Told*, Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 2005; pp. 213-214.

<sup>220</sup> Senkbeil, Harold, excerpts from, *Justified: Modern Reformation Essays on the Doctrine of Justification*, volume 1, ed., Ryan Glomsrud and Michael Horton, CreateSpace, 2010.

## **Hopeful Resolve**

*"Is anything too hard for the LORD?" – Genesis 18:14*

*"Is the LORD's arm too short?" – Numbers 11:23*

*"God is such a Craftsman that He has the skill to make those things that would harm and hinder us to help and further us. What would do us to death must serve us unto life; what would bring us into sin and condemnation must serve to make hope and faith firmer within us, to make prayer stronger and more richly answered. For here is the Craftsman who always brings to pass the opposite to the purpose and thoughts of the world, and he uses for good what the world means to be evil. For He is the God who calls that which is not that it be, who changes all things and makes all things new. Certainly, when His Christians are trodden under foot, or when their heads are hacked off, it does not look like honor or glory, joy and blessedness, and it feels like the exact opposite. But I can call into being, saith the Lord, what is not, and from a sad and sorrowful heart I can call forth pure joy. I can say: death and tomb, be thou life; hell, be heaven and blessedness; poison, be tough balm and medicine; devil and world, be thou of better service to My dear Christians than the angels and holy saints. For I can and will build and tend my vineyard in such a way that through all kinds of suffering and calamity it shall become better." – Martin Luther<sup>221</sup>*

*"... You can now resist sin because ye are now in Christ and have received the power of His resurrection." – Martin Luther<sup>222</sup>*

The sights and sounds of the tombstone rolled away and the emptiness and ineffectiveness of what was to be Jesus' came of decay fills the counseled one's would with hope. This is a blessed goal of pastoral counseling: to make the virtual a reality, to impart a gift that the Holy Spirit alone can give: "hopeful resolve."

Hopeful resolve is like a dream come true.<sup>223</sup> If dreams are "remembered perceptions"<sup>224</sup> then counseling with the empty tomb leads to hopeful resolve that is

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<sup>221</sup> Day by Day We Magnify Thee, *op. cit.*, p. 242, (cited from an exposition of John 15, WA, 45, 640f.)

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 279, (cited from a Sermon on the seventh Sunday after Trinity, 1534, WA, 22, 106f)

<sup>223</sup> Psalm 126

- <sup>1</sup> When the LORD brought back the captives to Zion,  
we were **like men who dreamed**.
- <sup>2</sup> Our mouths were filled with laughter,  
our tongues with songs of joy.  
Then it was said among the nations,  
"The LORD has done great things for them."
- <sup>3</sup> The LORD has done great things for us,  
and we are filled with joy.
- <sup>4</sup> Restore our fortunes, O LORD,  
like streams in the Negev.
- <sup>5</sup> Those who sow in tears  
will reap with songs of joy.
- <sup>6</sup> He who goes out weeping,  
carrying seed to sow,  
will return with songs of joy,  
carrying sheaves with him.

nothing short of a revamping or recreation of perceptions. Tomb dwellers who live in the darkness and dankness of their issues can come out into the sunshine and sweet air of a new life. Jesus did. Through him they do the same.

Hopeful resolve is yearning met. Since the fall into sin and since paradise was lost and left behind, the yearning prayer of humanity rises up to the heavens as incense:

Almighty God,  
***you have made us for yourself,  
and our hearts are restless  
till they find their rest in you;***  
so lead us by your Spirit  
that in this life we may live to your glory  
and in the life to come enjoy you forever;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord  
who is alive with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God now and forever.  
Amen. (Augustine)

Each of those who come in for counseling are, in their own way, filled with that same longing, sighing what that prayer sighs, aching and yearning for what that prayer seeks.

Pastoral counselors need to lead restless hearts to Jesus. Jesus gives rest. Jesus gives hopeful resolve. Hearts that rest in Jesus have and experience hopeful resolve.

“Bible-based pastor counseling is all about hope. This is Christian hope that is rooted in God and in His work of redemption for all sinners and that is offered to the individual through the Church.”<sup>225</sup>

What is hope? In the New Testament the common word for hope, “...did not carry the concept of hope as solely an expectation of good...(but also) of bad for the future. All hope was considered dangerous because there was no certainty to the future. It is dangerous to put any confidence in that which was not fact but which was mere hope because it was felt that there is no certainty to both the future and hope. The Greeks believed that only a god could be certain of the future. To the Stoics, hope is simply man’s projection of the future...Secular teaching can teach coping. It can help people learn to cope. But the methods of secular counseling cannot offer people hope that is lasting...You...are able to give people lasting hope in Christ crucified and risen.”<sup>226</sup>

Christian hope, then, is something very good because it is rooted in Scriptures and it rests on Christ Jesus.

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<sup>224</sup> See footnote 14

<sup>225</sup> Siggelkow, Prof. Alan, WLS Summer Quarter, PT 515, Counseling Seminar, 2003, class notes, p. 66-70.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, Prof. Siggelkow cites Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol.II, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans’s Publishing Company, 1964, p. 521.

*“For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”*<sup>227</sup>

*“...the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel...”*<sup>228</sup>

*“For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has?”*<sup>229</sup>

*“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”*<sup>230</sup>

#### Lessons:

- The Scriptures and the Sacraments are the tools that you will use to produce hope. All counseling skills that you have studied in books and learned by experience and all the methodology that is helpful in counseling are not the real effective tools of your ministry as a Bible-based counselor. Skills and methodology are teaching aids. The Gospel in Word and Sacraments is the most effective tool because it produces an eternal hope.
- No other counselor in all the world has more effective tools than the Bible-based counselor to produce and encourage hope in the souls, minds, and lives of people.
- That which produces and encourages and strengthens faith in people, namely the Gospel in Word and Sacraments, is that which produces, and encourages, and strengthens hope in people.
- Use the tools that God has given you to His glory and the good of His people.<sup>231</sup> (See footnote<sup>232</sup>)

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<sup>227</sup> Romans 15:4

<sup>228</sup> Colossians 1:5

<sup>229</sup> Romans 8:24

<sup>230</sup> Hebrews 11:1

<sup>231</sup> Siggelkow, *op. cit.*

<sup>232</sup> But when man has been converted, and is thus enlightened, and his will is renewed, it is then that man wills what is good (so far as he is regenerate or a new man), and *delights in the Law of God after the inward man*, Rom. 7, 22, and henceforth does good to such an extent and as long as he is impelled by God's Spirit, as Paul says, Rom. 8, 14: *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.* And this impulse of the Holy Ghost is not a *coactio*, or coercion, but the converted man does good spontaneously, as David says, Ps. 110, 4: *Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power.* And nevertheless that also [the strife of the flesh and spirit] remains in the regenerate of which St. Paul wrote, Rom. 7, 22f.: *For I delight in the Law of God after the inward man; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.* Also, v. 25: *So, then, with my mind I myself serve the Law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.* Also, Gal. 5, 17: *For the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.* From this, then, it follows that as soon as the Holy Ghost, as has been said, through the Word and holy Sacraments, has begun in us this His work of

- Christian hope is always fixed upon Christ Jesus. It embraces three elements:
  1. Expectation of the Future
  2. Trust (in the grace, forgiveness and promises of God)
  3. Patience in Waiting<sup>233</sup>

Lyon identifies four elements that give evidence that resolution has occurred, is occurring:

The evidence of resolution is one of the most rewarding parts of the work (of counseling). At this point we can begin to understand better what kind of joy the angels of God experience when a sinner comes to repentance. **Repentance, in fact, is the evidence of resolution.** If we remember the definition of repentance, literally speaking, we are talking about a change of mind. The change of mind shows in many ways, but for our purposes we will summarize four of them. **First**, a person whose problem has been resolved by the gospel will no longer seek other forms of attempted resolution. **Second**, a person whose problem has been resolved by the gospel will demonstrate the peace of God that passes all understanding. **Third**, a person whose problem has been resolved by the gospel will seek whatever means are within his capabilities to correct any damage he has done with his problem. **Fourth**, a person whose problem has been resolved by the gospel will recognize that his problem itself can be a great asset in correcting his future. Once he has learned to take his personal trip to the cross, he may recognize more easily that he can do the same thing with other problems.<sup>234</sup>

Scripture:

*"Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us."*<sup>235</sup>

*"Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold."*<sup>236</sup>

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regeneration and renewal, it is certain that through the power of the Holy Ghost we can and should cooperate, although still in great weakness. But this [that we cooperate] does not occur from our carnal natural powers, but from the new powers and gifts which the Holy Ghost has begun in us in conversion, as St. Paul expressly and earnestly exhorts that *as workers together with Him we receive not the grace of God in vain*, 2 Cor. 6, 1. But this is to be understood in no other way than that the converted man does good to such an extent and so long as God by His Holy Spirit rules, guides, and leads him, and that as soon as God would withdraw His gracious hand from him, he could not for a moment persevere in obedience to God. - Lutheran Church. Missouri Synod: *Concordia Triglotta - English : The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.* electronic ed. Milwaukee, WI : Northwestern Publishing House, 1997, Formula of Concord, Paragraphs 63-66, p. 905

<sup>233</sup> Siggelkow, *op. cit.*

<sup>234</sup> Lyon, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

<sup>235</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:9-10

<sup>236</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:12

*"I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death."*<sup>237</sup>

*"Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed...Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God."*<sup>238</sup>

*"Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer."*<sup>239</sup>

*"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."*<sup>240</sup>

*"For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ."*<sup>241</sup>

"Faith and hope describe the joy of Christian living. The hope is certain because it is based upon the all-powerful Creator who has already sent His Son to be the perfect and complete Savior of all people. A hope that is based upon God and not upon flimsy human experience and weak human power and control of past, present, or future, is beyond measure a joy in this troublesome world. This sure and certain hope offers comfort and peace. It is the foundation of Christian Law/Gospel pastoral counseling. This hope is certain of forgiveness of sins past. This hope is based upon repentance that is both contrition for our sins and faith in God's absolution in Christ crucified and arisen. This is a hope that motivates and encourages us to change our lives of sin to lives that are lived according to God's will. This hope enables and empowers change. This hope is the basis for the joy of Christian living."<sup>242</sup>

There is fulfillment in the heart of the pastoral counselor who can be used by the Lord to bring hopeful resolve, with all its changed perceptions, reversed directions, restored rest, peace and joy, to those who couldn't imagine ever having such blessings again! Counselors and counselees are blessed at the same time with hopeful resolve!

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<sup>237</sup> Philippians 1:20

<sup>238</sup> 1 Peter 1:13,21

<sup>239</sup> Romans 12:12

<sup>240</sup> Romans 15:13

<sup>241</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:20-21

<sup>242</sup> Siggelkow, *op. cit.*

## **“Overlapping” the Cross, Christ Crucified**

*“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” – Hebrews 12:2*

*“We preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man’s strength.” – 1 Corinthians 1:23-25*

Now let's get practical. Just as eager as the Lord Jesus was to exit the tomb, he is as eager to enter the counseling session – via the Word spoken, discussed, and applied. He then enter the hearts of the counselees. As Jesus had his Easter Morning, he wants the hopeless and dying to have their Easter morning, every day,<sup>243</sup> with hope and life, in time and in eternity!

“To get practical” does not involve a new how-to solution nor an employment or deployment of some amazing new technique. Not at all! The practical is the pastoral counselor’s case is the spiritual. It may seem to be the most obvious, but bring Jesus into the sessions by making sure to bring in the Word, especially the Gospel of Jesus into the counseling. Hopeful resolve is not a matter of “should, must, and ought to.” Hopeful resolve is not a matter of “Do this...Try that...Work on this...” Hopeful resolve is a matter of belief. Hopeful resolve is matter of what Jesus has done and continues to do. “Since the heart of the human problem is the problem of the heart, rules and regulations are never the solution. *Jesus is.* Behavior modification cannot change the human heart.”<sup>244</sup>

Communicate Jesus. Our Lord God is a God of communication. When God communicates with us and we listen there is blessing. When we communicate with God (pray) and he listens (as he promises), there is blessing, as he answers according to his will and in his grace and power. When people communicate with each other and the message received is the same as the message given, there are wonderful benefits. Pastoral counseling requires good communication. The counseling pastor listens, asks questions, determines the Word of God that needs to be applied (Law and Gospel), and makes application of Word, while the Holy Spirit blesses this communication.

It might be beneficial to expound upon the various aspects, methods, and approaches of counselor/counselee communication. However, to do so would be a study unto itself. Let it suffice to keep in mind two important aspects of communication necessary in the counselor/counselee sessions:

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<sup>243</sup> Lamentations 3:23

<sup>244</sup> Tchividjian, Tullian; Jesus + Nothing = Everything, Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway; p. 119

- 1) Listen. "The first technique of listening is to talk less. The pastor needs to make a conscious effort to talk as little as possible. His goal is to hear his parishioners talk rather than to hear himself talk."<sup>245</sup>
- 2) Talk. "The second important communication skill is talking<sup>246</sup>...sending clear messages."<sup>247</sup>

The work of communicating is as serious a task for the pastoral counselor as it is for the hurting lamb. The lies have to be countered! How important it is for such a lamb to hear the soothing voice of the Good Shepherd call him by name, bidding him to, "*Come unto Me and I will give you rest,*"<sup>248</sup> to hear and hold to His teaching, to know His truth and finally be set free<sup>249</sup> by His healing.

One communication tool that is used is called "*overlapping*." "*Overlapping*" is a term that emphasizes the usefulness of *multiple perceptual systems*<sup>250</sup> a tool to help a counselee describe an event, a person, or both. The use of the technique of overlapping "can help clients bring the problem to life."<sup>251</sup> Overlapping helps a counselee give animation to what is stored in memory. Overlapping helps the counselee express what is remembered by visualizing and verbally recreating the event and person(s) involved, giving it/them verbal form, verbal sound and decibel level, even verbal sensory description (smells, heat/cold). Overlapping may occur as the counselor asks the client to relax, perhaps close his/her eyes, and then have the person describe

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<sup>245</sup> Schuetze/Matzke, *op. cit.*, p. 93

<sup>246</sup> *The Lecture Hall Approach* – didactic and directive. The Bible is read and passages are explained with little counselee involvement.

*The Pulpit Approach* – similar to the Lecture Hall Approach but spoken "with authority as the expert." Jesus did this with the Pharisees in Matthew 23, however, with the counselee it is received as a preaching or talking down to the counselee. So it may be the least effective and in most cases it should be avoided.

*The Band Aid Approach* – a superficial application of the Word to a specific situation. The counselor assumes that he knows what the counselee is thinking and feeling, and applies accordingly. Unreal expectations result in unclear application, or worse, a misapplication of God's Word.

*The Canoe Paddle Approach* – the emphasis is on collaborative effort. In a canoe two occupants paddle, but one steers. The counselor guides through questions and statements. The counselee is led to personally draw out the application of God's Word. It is important to remember that it is the Holy Spirit working through His Word that does the work in a Bible-based counseling session. The river is the Word and Spirit. It is also important to remember that the discussion does not determine the truth of Scripture or the validity of its application to the member's life and needs. Whether structured or spontaneous the lessons taught and the applications made from Scripture cannot be open-ended. (Siggelkow & Terrell, *In View of God's Mercy*, p. 127 – referenced by Siggelkow, PT 515, *Counseling Seminar*, class notes).

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95

<sup>248</sup> Matthew 11:28

<sup>249</sup> John 8:31-32

<sup>250</sup> *multiple perceptual systems* is a term used in intentional interviewing that would ask a counselee to give sight and sound to a person or situation in recall. A counselor may, for example, ask questions about what sights could be seen or sounds could be heard in association with specific circumstances, and the persons involved.

<sup>251</sup> Lankton (1980), from a work entitled, *Practical Magic*. Cupertino, California: Meta Publications, cited by Ivey, Allen E., Intentional Interviewing and Counseling – Facilitating Client Development, Pacific Grove, California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1988, p. 69.

what he sees with his mind's eye. Once seen, and even felt, the counselee revisits an episode in life that may be related to the issues being addressed in counseling and germane to the healing that is being sought. "Through this use of overlapping, you will have recreated the sights, sounds, and feelings of a past situation."<sup>252</sup>

Though he doesn't label it as overlapping, the term seems to describe the unique technique used by Curt Lyon in *Counseling at the Cross* and his "walks to the cross." When someone who is counseled can visualize and express what is seen at the cross, "Gospel resolution occurs when a person realizes that *all his guilt has been resolved.*"<sup>253</sup> Most often it is the demon of guilt that is exorcised in making use of Pastor Lyon's "overlapped" walks.

What a blessing when the voice of guilt is silenced! What liberation there is from the bondage of a guilty conscience when the counselee gazes at that blood stained timber and the Suffering Servant who bore the guilt for every sinner?<sup>254</sup> Freedom for an imprisoned conscience! That's Luther's tower experience! The Living One died that the dying one may live; through that walk to the Tree of torture and execution the counselee sees and lives. Resolution for every lie, for every time the sinner gave in to temptation, for every lewd act! There is resolution because the judgment there was shifted from the sinner to the Savior. There is resolution because the sinner is declared, "Not guilty!" through the Crucified.

The cross is the official pronouncement of acquittal from the bench. The death of the Holy One of God, made sin for the sinner, is the key that opens the handcuffs that constricted the conscience. The cross is more powerful than guilt-bound consciences.

"We note that human judges judge only after an act has been committed; our conscience works *before, during, and after*, and thus is a powerful factor in our lives..."

"The first function of the conscience is to bring us to the knowledge of our sins. Here we are speaking of conscience in the wider sense, that is, conscience as the judge together with the spiritual knowledge which conscience uses to make the judgment. This function of the conscience is all-important, even though the conviction that we are sinners will not save us, but is only preparatory. The second and most important function is to assure us on the basis of the gospel that Jesus Christ has cleansed us of all unrighteousness. A third function is to further our Christian life, so that we may live as Christians out of love to him who first loved us. Another important function of the conscience is to make us sure of our salvation, basing our confidence on the solid Rock, Jesus Christ and his word. Only then can we rejoice in the Lord as such who will be able to stand in the judgment – not because of anything we have done, but solely through the obedience of Jesus Christ."<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>253</sup> Lyon, *op. cit.*, p. 20

<sup>254</sup> Isaiah 53

<sup>255</sup> Raabe, John, *The Conscience, Our Great Heritage*, II, Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, Lyle W. Lange, editor, 1998; pp.258-259.

The cross is the key that unlocks an imprisoned conscience and sets it free. There is freedom through forgiveness.

I cannot tell you how the use of this walk has equipped me with a new counseling efficiency and benefitted those the Lord has entrusted to me in the counseling situations. The walk has become counseling “bread and butter” for me. It has, in turn, been used by the Lord to fill hungry souls starving for a morsel of hope but instead finding a banquet of the Bread of Life.

Here is a case study that demonstrates the value of taking the *Counseling at the Cross* walk:

Connie...suffered from a form of paranoia...She tried to deal with her guilt by using her Paranoia...(She made) attempts to find ways to get God to give the strength to carry her own problems. In her case, telling her God had forgiven her sins, whatever they were, was not enough. She was too deeply involved with the process of trying to pay for her sins herself.

As we sat in the office exchanging ideas about how to get rid of guilt and how much more she could do to try to handle the situation, we talked about Matthew 11 and the rest Jesus speaks about in verse 29. But that was just the beginning. Obvious questions remained.

What kind of rest was Christ talking about? He was talking about rest from all this guilt she was carrying, and all the ways she was trying to find to do a better job of carrying it. What should she do about all those weights? She should lay them down. Where would she take them? She would take them to Jesus. Where could she find Jesus telling her in the clearest possible way that he really wanted her to lay them down? She would have to go to the cross of Christ. What would she find at the cross? She would find her suffering Savior. Why was he suffering? He was suffering for her. What was he suffering? He was suffering pain, the agony of hell and death for her. How did the suffering she was experiencing compare with what Jesus did? Her suffering didn't begin to compare with what Jesus had done. How did she know Jesus had done all this for her? She could go on to the cross and see her sins there. How did she know Jesus had finished paying for them? He said he was finished paying for them. How did God prove Jesus was finished paying for her sins? **Jesus rose from the dead.** Did Jesus make enough of a payment for her sins to allow her to lay them all at the cross? He certainly did. He paid for all sins. How would she describe Jesus' work of paying for her sins? He was completely successful.

How was she trying to pay for her sins? She was suffering from paranoia and constant guilt feelings. What good was this accomplishing? She only got worse. What had she done to try to get better? She had tried numerous ways to get rid of her feelings, including seeing a psychiatrist, using prescribed medication, not sleeping at night, not being able to work during the day, feeling guilty because she couldn't do her work, ruining her marriage and family life, making people miserable, driving people away from her, and in general, being a real nuisance to everyone. How was this process working

for her? It wasn't working at all. How were things improving? Things weren't improving, they were deteriorating rapidly.

With the increasing knowledge and faith that Jesus had already taken care of her problems on the cross, Connie realized the rest that Jesus promised her. Her guilt was removed. She was at peace with God and with herself. The paranoia was gone; she felt a thousand pounds lighter. She was anxious to get home and tell her family what had happened. She would apologize to her husband and family and believe they accepted her apologies. She would do her housework. She would sleep at night. She would reduce her medication under the direction of the doctor. Jesus did what no one else could have done, but she had to know how he did it before she could accept the fact that he did it.<sup>256</sup>

"Counseling at the cross brings the sure resolve of forgiveness to the guilt-ridden soul, through Jesus' substitutionary, debt-settling death."<sup>257</sup>

Lyon has his own litmus test which demonstrates that resolve through counseling at the cross has been reached, so, too, at the empty tomb:

**First**, a person whose problem has been resolved by the gospel will no longer seek other forms of attempted resolution.

**Second**, a person whose problem has been resolved by the gospel will demonstrate the peace of God that passes all understanding.

**Third**, a person whose problem has been resolved by the gospel will seek whatever means are within his capabilities to correct any damage he has done with his problem.

**Fourth**, a person whose problem has been resolved by the gospel will recognize that his problem itself can be a great asset in correcting his future...with other problems.<sup>258</sup> (Lyon)

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<sup>256</sup> Lyon, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-86; emphasis mine.

<sup>257</sup> From the thesis of the author.

<sup>258</sup> Lyon, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

### **"Overlapping" the Empty Tomb**

*"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you," 1 Peter 1:3-4.*

*I come to the Garden alone, While the dew is still on the roses;  
And the voice I hear, falling on my ear, the Son of God discloses.*

*He speaks and the sound of His voice Is so sweet the birds hush their singing,  
And the melody that He gave to me Within my heart is ringing.*

*I'd stay in the garden with Him Though the night around me is falling,  
But He bids me go; through the voice of woe, His voice to me is calling.*

*And he walks with me and He talks with me, And He tells me I am His own...<sup>259</sup>*

Were you there when they crucified the Lord? Yes, when God made Jesus to be sin for us there, we were there. Yes, through the pages of the Holy Scripture and the Holy Spirit's instruction and blessing, we were there. By visualizing the cross, you were there.

Were you there when the angel rolled away the stone?<sup>260</sup> Absolutely, through the Word! Mark Paustian takes us there:

Once seven demons had wrapped themselves around Mary Magdalene's soul. That was before Jesus. What had the torment been like, or that release? Think of it to understand how she felt about Jesus...and how she felt when a Roman soldier made sure he was good and dead. That, by the way is one thing Romans carrying spears know how to do. The Christ was really dead.

That was Friday.

Now it's Sunday.

Mary left the house when it was still dark to go and anoint his corpse. But when she reached the burial place, there was nothing to do but stand there and cry. The body was missing. When it had seemed that things could get no worse, that there was nothing left to be taken from her, even his body was gone. "Sir," she said to a man standing by, "if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will

<sup>259</sup> C. Austin Miles, 1912, based on John 20:18, from *Hymns of the Living Church*, Carol Stream, Illinois, Hope Publishing Company, 1974; # 398. This hymn does not compare in depth and wealth of confessional content with almost any and all of the hymns in our hymnals' Easter section. Nor does this hymn match in didactic usefulness. However, I print the words of this hymn not only because it is well-known in cross-Christian circles but also because it attempts to graphically take the listener or singer to the garden and to see the sight and hear the voice of the Risen Lord. The risen Savior does walk with us and talk through us through His Word.

<sup>260</sup> Matthew 28:2

get him." This pathetic heroic plea – as if she were going to hoist his dead weight over her shoulders all by herself. That wouldn't be necessary.

He said, "Mary."

What he said next was, "Do not hold on to me," because that's what she was doing. She was holding Jesus, clutching him, not letting him go, not this time.

And isn't this the very instant we are always needing to get back to: What was the Christian faith in that instant, when Mary's arms wrapped around Jesus, alive just a few feet from his grave? It's a question designed to sweep away two thousand intervening years as if they were nothing at all.

What did it mean to be a Christian just then, at that single, incredible moment?

I imagine Mary's mind could only slowly open up to a thing so immense, or it could only open up slowly to her. It would take a little time for her soul to wrap itself around this...and everything that was given back to her...when he said, "Mary."<sup>261</sup>

You could see it, couldn't you? You could visualize that whole resurrection morn meeting of Mary with the Risen One, Jesus, couldn't you?

When Jesus spoke to her, with what force, what volume, what tone did Jesus say her name, "Mary"? How did Jesus' voice sound to her? Certainly he didn't bark a hoarse correction or disappointment as if Mary should have recognized him, did he? Mary was grieving from the depths of her soul and overwhelmed by the depths<sup>262</sup> of sins' worst. The risen Jesus had left those depths behind by his resurrection. No, there was no hint of condemnation nor judgment in his voice!

It would be a greater ridiculous, incomprehensible, notion to imagine that the force, volume, and the tone of Jesus' voice sounded as if he were asking a question, "Mary?" It's not that he didn't recognize her, or was surprised at a hap chance "run into" with Mary. He certainly did not raise the pitch of his voice in uncertainty or question. The same Jesus who knew the answer to the question, "Who hit you?" (when His divinity was hidden in suffering – as if the blindfold really could have prevented him from knowing the names and seeing the faces of those who struck him) surely knew it was Mary. So his pitch and tone and volume and inflection was to make the point, for her, especially for her, at that point in her life and her grief. Jesus spoke Mary's name with power and love to make clear: that it was he, "...who through the Spirit of holiness was

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<sup>261</sup> Paustian, Mark, Prepared to Answer – Telling the Greatest Story Ever Told, Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 2005, pp.175-176.

<sup>262</sup> לִפְנֵי hell, death, grave, pit

*declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.*<sup>263</sup>

Put yourself in Mary's sad setting and hear her name they way she did, the way Jesus spoke. Adverbs like: tenderly, decisively, warmly, comfortingly, excitedly, joyfully, vibrantly would be the way to describe how she heard her name. Or try the adverbial phrase 'with an inviting tone.' No descriptive word or phrase could really nail down how Mary heard her name from the One who stood there alive for her, alive but with the marks of the nails visible on hands and feet. "Mary!" went through her ears and straight to her heart.

For Mary, "Mary," was the sweetest word she'd ever heard or would ever hear again. She would never forget who she heard speak that word, nor how he said it.

Contrast what and from whom she'd the dark afternoon three days earlier. She had heard Jesus' last words, the equivalent of our, "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep..."<sup>264</sup> Maybe she'd heard the death rattle that followed at the moment Jesus gave up his spirit and his body slumped into dead weight. Those sounds of Good Friday had deflated her of hope. On Easter morning, still thinking that Jesus was still dead, she was drained as the tears flowed. Over and over she could hear her Savior speak his words of forgiveness, of care, of promise, of physical need, of victory, and that final prayer. She couldn't understand. Fear was mixed with denial and doubt. She sobbed on sorrow. He'd been pierced for her. He was dead. She shared the feelings of being downcast that the Emmaus disciples experienced. She could easily have thought, "...I had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel."<sup>265</sup>

Being hopeless is a bad place to be. And that's where she was as she sobbed in the Garden. Hope was in the past tense, there to stay. Hopelessness sees none but a gloomy future. BUT! Then she heard her name spoken that way by that familiar, loving voice! Imagine how quickly Mary's head snapped to attention, how her eyes widened in amazement, how the look on her face, suddenly quick-dried, smiled in joy and changed the course of the flow of any tears that were still running down her cheeks! Sudden shock became instant realization, disbelief became belief, "My Lord!" The wind of God the Spirit inflated her soul with hope again, restored, renewed. It was Jesus! There would be a tomorrow, a forever! in a joyful smile that changed the flow of her tears?

Now you. Go ahead, try and say, "Mary," in the same way you think Mary heard her name from her Savior. Do you hear it? Ask someone close to you, who wouldn't think you're off bubble to say, "Mary!" the way he/she thinks Mary heard her name at the empty tomb that Easter morning.

You're now doing that "overlapping" thing that was done at the cross. But now it's being done at the empty tomb.

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<sup>263</sup> Romans 1:4

<sup>264</sup> Psalm 31:5, "*Into your hands I commit my spirit.*"

<sup>265</sup> Luke 24:21

Yes, walk to the cross. What a wonderful tool for counseling! But then walk to the empty tomb.

Please note that this counseling walk is from the cross to the empty tomb, not away from the cross. The walk to the empty tomb is never too far away from the cross. Some research indicates that Golgotha was on the west side of a Jerusalem stone quarry and the newly hewn tomb that Jesus borrowed from Joseph was on the east side, a reclaimed park site.<sup>266</sup> <sup>267</sup> So the cross was literally, locally, and geographically, perhaps, within eyeshot of the tomb.

The cross must never be far away when walking to the empty tomb in our counseling sessions. Lest we abandon the theology of the cross for an empty theology of glory, mark these precautions:

“...Adam and Eve in the garden were not content with (God’s) righteousness and perfection hidden within them. They wanted to be his equal in glory, to fetch his divine essence in their experience and in their intellect and in their emotions. They chose not to believe the Word. They wanted to see for themselves. And so they fell terribly; they lost innocence, holiness, and righteousness. Yes, they lost God.

...And how is God found again? How does he reveal and then give himself again? In suffering. He promises Adam sweat in this life and the dust of the grave at the end. He promises Eve pain in childbirth and in subjection to her husband. For it is only through suffering and in pain that they will yearn for his grace and goodness. It will be in suffering and death that they will long for eternal life and salvation...

...But when he promises fallen mankind suffering and pain and death, what does he promise for himself? God promises for himself suffering far greater than their suffering. For himself he promises the cross and death when the serpent will bite his heel as he crushes the serpent’s head *for us and for our salvation* (cf. Ge 3:15). Indeed, while our suffering and pain may bring us to a necessary recognition of our need for him and his salvation, it is his suffering and pain that satisfies our need and accomplishes our salvation....

...And it is his pain the world would see, not his triumph and his glory. ***His triumph after the resurrection only a chosen few got to see. Even for those who saw him after his resurrection, the view of his glory was a fleeting one. Since his ascension, that triumph remains hidden in the Word and is seen only by the eyes of faith.***<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> From notes, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Summer Quarter Course, OT 567.1, *Jerusalem Through the Ages*, taught by Professor John Brug, 1996.

<sup>267</sup> John 19:41-42, “At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.”

<sup>268</sup> Deutschlander, Daniel, The Theology of the Cross – Reflections on His Cross and Ours, Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 2009; pp. 114-115, emphasis mine.

“...Despairing of God’s mercy is always the most horrible sin, because it means that we declare God to be a liar.”<sup>269</sup> Hence, as far as possible, we cannot leave God’s people despairing. Despairing people need that walk to the cross for the declaration that the sin of despair is forgiven. They then need that walk to the empty tomb for the resolution to their despair. Resolution can be found when they see vividly that Jesus is God, that Jesus kept His Word, that Jesus did, indeed, earn for them forgiveness of sins and the declaration of “Not Guilty!” and that all of God’s Word can be trusted. At the empty tomb they can believe that Jesus’ victory is more true and more real than all the reasons for their issues, their pains, their longsuffering.

Pardon the following redundancy, but out of sheer necessity, mark this: God’s hurting people need to hear God’s healing Word. Our challenge is to make that word come alive – as much as humanly possible – so that eyes that are as clouded as were Mary’s can vividly see the empty tomb. Through the Word of the empty tomb is the gift of faith, *“...faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”*<sup>270</sup> Losers, Victims, Perpetrators, all ravaged by sins, by their own estimation and their own circumstances, are filled with hopeful resolve at the tomb of triumph in the Risen Savior! They see and believe, for, triumph remains hidden in the Word and is seen only by the eyes of faith.

Swollen and sad eyes need to see the sight of Jesus’ second step of Exaltation! His first step of glory was already taken. After being vivified – made alive – in the grave and before he showed himself outside the tomb, Jesus descended into hell and there marched right down its main street proclaiming his indisputable victory over devil and death.<sup>271</sup> When Jesus descended into hell, his glory was seen clearly by lost souls who’d rejected him in time and that glory could only add to their eternal death, eternal sorrow, eternal regret, and eternal hopelessness.

With that same glory Jesus then appeared in full view to those, like Mary, who needed assurance that death and hell had lost their conquering power. Jesus’ conquering glory can now be seen by those whose issues need conquering. Jesus resurrection glory is conquers for them, too. So show this glory. Help the hurting see Jesus alive and victorious for them. Use the sights and sounds, especially the account of Jesus speaking to Mary by the empty tomb in the Garden. Facilitate them to visualize and focus the eyes of imagination and the eyes of faith on that vivid sight that sees vibrancy and glory of Jesus, ALIVE again!

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<sup>269</sup> Walther, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

<sup>270</sup> Romans 10:17

<sup>271</sup> Colossians 2:15, “And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.” 1 Peter 3:18-22, “For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, <sup>19</sup> through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison <sup>20</sup> who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, <sup>21</sup> and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, <sup>22</sup> who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.”

That sight can resuscitate dead relationships; Jesus' risen power is applied. That sight has the power to be the spiritual AED that electrifies flat-lined hearts to beat strong again; Jesus' risen power is applied. That sight can cause minds to rethink things and cause perspectives to flipped from the pessimistic conviction that the bad will never go change or go away to optimistic view on self and life. There The Spirit will do the work of giving and strengthening faith.<sup>272</sup>

Consider some case studies in which God's hurting people walked to the cross and then on to the empty tomb to find hopeful resolve.

### Bill<sup>273</sup>

Bill had been retired for a number of years, was a sincere Christian man, and faithful in the use of the Means of Grace, that is, in the use of the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. His wife served for many years as one of the volunteer church office helpers. Bill and his wife were settled into their golden years, comfortable, active, and enjoying their children and grandchildren.

But then Bill experienced a heart attack which seemed to change everything. In the regimen of treatments Bill was placed on the prescription drug that produced an awful side effect. The medication caused Bill to experience horrifying dreams. In these nightmares Bill had flashbacks to his service in the European theater in World War II. Bill would wake up from these dreams soaked with sweat and tears. These flashbacks, memories suppressed for years, were then experienced during waking hours. Each recall brought on bouts of weeping, tears no longer dammed up. Bill seemed unable to get control of himself and his emotions. His weeping got the better of him, it was irrepressible. He seemed inconsolable. He reached a low ebb of functionality. He seemed unable to make it through the day. He seemed unable to interact conventionally with others. He was so often overwhelmed with emotion that he was unable to carry on conversations even with those closest, including his wife, his children, his grandchildren, with anyone. It became harder and harder for him to venture out publicly. Even going to church became too monumental a task.

Bill and I talked often. He told me that as a captain in the infantry, he had to order men into harm's way. He cried over seeing again the faces of the boys, sons, brothers, fathers, and friends that he had directed behind enemy lines. He especially sobbed in relating accounts of what took place after the armistice. He spoke of confrontations with allies, the Russians. The Red Army conducted itself with retribution and revenge that was intense, brutal, and vengeful. The Russian soldiers from the East went from one conquered village to another, into homes, in the streets and shops, raping, pillaging, torturing and killing the common folk of the fallen Third Reich.

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<sup>272</sup> "...no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit," 1 Corinthians 12:3.

<sup>273</sup> The names used, of course, are fictitious, and any associations with specific persons are purely coincidental. The case/situation discussions are not verbatim but are reconstructed and may represent composites of counseling circumstances.

Bill spoke softly, while wiping his nose and drying his eyes, describing what atrocities the Russians carried out. He was an eyewitness to their ruthlessness. Allies turned enemies, and Bill was forced to confront them to protect the innocent conquered of Germany. Bill had to order the Russians to stand down. Sometimes they would, other times not. When they wouldn't, shots were fired.<sup>274</sup>

Bill was reliving WWII.

Bill and I walked to the cross. His was a form of PTSD and the guilt was real. Bill was able to nail his sin, even his perceived sin, and guilt to the cross in a "real" way. But the tears kept coming.<sup>275</sup> Bill's issues went beyond guilt. Bill needed to know how he could be able to go on without breaking down so often. He needed to find strength to functionally live. He needed to be enabled to move from drowning in his tears to living jubilantly in Jesus.

It was with Bill that it occurred to me that in order to move forward from that Good Friday walk ought to continue with an Easter Sunday walk, from counseling at the cross to counseling at the empty tomb. So, I tried it. I encouraged Bill to walk on with me to three days later. We took the walk. He verbalized what he saw with word, formed by his knowledge of Scriptures and painted in his mind over the years by imagery he'd taken in, and there we were at the empty tomb. And there was Jesus at the empty tomb. And there he heard Jesus say his name the way he thought Jesus has said it to Mary. And, praise God, the miracle of the resurrection, the miracle of the empty tomb, the miracle of an ah-ha moment, the miracle of a eureka experience was Bill's and mine!

When Bill heard Jesus say, "Bill!" to him the way Jesus had said, "Mary!" to her that Easter morning, it was miraculous and instantaneous! Tears stopped. Hope restored.

Psalm 46 was one of Bill's favorite psalms (and when the Lord called Bill home to heaven, my Christian Funeral message for the family, friends and fellow church members was based on Psalm 46). It was while making use of Psalm 46 with Bill that I stumbled (or, perhaps, was shoved) on to walk further to the empty tomb.

In discussing the last two verses, 10 and 11, "*Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth, The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.*" I asked Bill, who knew his theology well, "Where did

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<sup>274</sup> Bill told the story of coming with his troops to a German village that the Red Army had reached shortly before. They were brutalizing the villagers there. When Bill commanded the Russian officer in charge to cease and desist, that officer held a handgun to the head of a girl about 16 years old, demanding that the Americans drop their weapons. Bill refused. That Russian officer then "...blew that sweet girl's brains out..." Bill described. The Americans opened fire. The Cold War began hot for Bill in that blaze of gunfire. That scene was a repeated flashback and nightmare.

<sup>275</sup> A number of walks were employed. Confession and absolution were given and received. There was the joy of salvation. But the dreams continued, with specific flashbacks frequently recurring.

Jesus prove, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that he was the living, powerful God?" Bill said, "Well, that would be when he rose from the dead."

[Boom! My ah-ha moment! Eureka! I remember the conversation like it was yesterday!]

I went on, "Right! After going down to the grave, tell me Bill, from the Psalm, what Jesus' resurrection did for him before all nations." Bill quoted back to me verse 10 (auf Deutsch, that's how he'd first memorized it).

"Right, again! Jesus was exalted before all nations. That being true, when the Psalm says, "The LORD almighty<sup>276</sup> is with us – who does the "us" have to include?"

Bill: "Me."

"Yes, you and me, Bill. And when the psalmist says that the God of Jacob is with us, remember how Jesus said that before Abraham was he was and that he is not the God of the dead but of the living<sup>277</sup>? And do you remember how Jesus said that Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing Jesus' day, how he saw it and rejoiced?" Bill acknowledged knowing those Scriptures.

"Then, Bill, we need to see Jesus so you can rejoice."

"Bill, let's go and see Jesus' tomb on Easter morning." Bill and I had walked to the cross together, so he knew where I was going in our conversation.

"Tell me what you see when you look inside." Bill: "Nothing. Jesus wasn't there. He was risen. There were the folded sheets, though."

"Okay, Bill, look around; is anyone in or around the tomb?" Bill: "No, the soldiers are gone. They passed out, but then went and were paid off to lie. Their explanation for the missing body of Jesus was ridiculous! Fishermen weren't trained in overpowering trained military to steal the body!" (Bill knew his Bible and would often make express his opinions on its application.)

"I know there were angels there," Bill went on.

I asked, "But was there anyone else there around the tomb? Look. Someone is there. Listen. What do you hear?"

Bill: "Crying." "Who's crying?"

Bill: "Mary?"<sup>278</sup> "Why is Mary crying?"

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<sup>276</sup> שְׁבָרֶת אֹזֶן

<sup>277</sup> Matthew 22:32; John 8:56

<sup>278</sup> John 20:16

Bill: "Well, she saw Jesus her Savior die – horribly – and she just wanted to finish burying him...out of love, respect." Bill started tearing with that response.

"Right, the death was horrible but we know what it meant our forgiveness! But, look back again at Mary crying. Who does she think she sees through her tears?"

Bill: "The gardener."

"This person who she thinks is the gardener asks her a question. Do you remember what that question was, Bill?" Bill: "Why are you crying?"

"But who really is that gardener?"

Bill: "Jesus."

"Right, it's Jesus. He says something. One word. Can you hear Him?

Bill: "Mary. Her name."

"Bill, say Mary's name out loud the way you think Jesus said Mary's name to her there in the garden when she was crying

Bill: "Mary."

"Now say your own name the same way."

"Bill." He said it as softly, as invitingly, as comfortingly, as soothingly, as tenderly and, at the same time, with the firmness of transforming power as he had before.

"The Lord of hosts, exalted, is with you, Bill. That's Jesus risen. If he asked you, 'Why are you crying?' what would you tell him?" Bill stopped tearing instantaneously, and looked at me incredulously with what looked like a glare of anger.

Bill: "He wouldn't ask. He knows."

"That's right, Bill. He knows. He knew why Mary was crying too. But he was there, with the answer for her tears, her sorrow, and her pain. What did he want her to know."

Bill: "That he wasn't dead. That he wasn't dead anymore."

"Right. That one word, changed everything."

"Just to make sure: Did he say her name harshly to scold her for being sad when she should have listened to his promises? No! Say her name again for me, the way he said in on Easter morning."

Bill said: "Mary." His tone was a bit raspy from having been intubated. But he said it again.

"Now, your name again." He did. His face smiled with joy and with a glow of victory.

Bill said his own name the way he imagined hearing it said by his risen Savior at the empty tomb. He imagined hearing his name with his mind's ear the same way Mary had heard her Savior say her name. She'd had resolve. He had resolve.

Then with my best imitation of what Bill had just said and the way he said it, I quoted Bill's psalm to him (the way Bill thought Jesus' tone was with Mary), "Be still, Bill, and know that Jesus, risen, is God. I am risen and will be exalted among the nations. I am risen and will be exalted in the earth. I, the LORD of Zebeoth, am with you, Bill; I the living God of Jacob am your fortress."

Bill was shaking his head in agreement. I asked Bill to relive that walk to the empty tomb whenever the flashbacks and dreams haunted him and the crying began again. Like the shampoo bottle, apply, wash, rinse, repeat.

This helped. It really did. Bill had hopeful resolve in the Risen One. His sin was forgiven and he went to Jesus heavy laden and with tears flowing. He'd leave the walks to the cross and the empty tomb having found comfort and strength. The bouts of uncontrollable sobbing dwindled. Bill found hopeful resolve from the risen Christ who dried the tears of Mary.

Cross-check the resolution check list!

#### Resolution Checklist:

##### Expectation of the Future

- Trust (in the grace, forgiveness and promises of God)
- Patience in Waiting<sup>279</sup> (Siggelkow)
- **First**, a person whose problem has been resolved by the gospel will no longer seek other forms of attempted resolution.
- **Second**, a person whose problem has been resolved by the gospel will demonstrate the peace of God that passes all understanding.
- **Third**, a person whose problem has been resolved by the gospel will seek whatever means are within his capabilities to correct any damage he has done with his problem.
- **Fourth**, a person whose problem has been resolved by the gospel will recognize that his problem itself can be a great asset in correcting his future...with other problems.<sup>280</sup> (Lyon)

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<sup>279</sup> Siggelkow, *op. cit.*

<sup>280</sup> Lyon, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

### Mick

Mick was a towering, massive man. To see Mick and me standing side by side was somewhat like David vs. Goliath must have looked like. He was a Viet Nam veteran, a surviving member of a Special Forces unit. Tattooed on his forearms were symbols from his military unit, symbols of death.<sup>281</sup> Mick was a real life Rambo.

Mick had been taught to survive where others couldn't. He'd been taught to kill the enemy not only with all the conventional weaponry, but also with weapons he could fashion. He'd also been taught to "dispatch" the enemy, in multiple ways, with his bare hands. He could kill in ways others couldn't. Mick was a killing machine.

I recall one conversation in which he threw out a number – 62 kills. (62 kills during one incursion into a country our forces had never officially entered. I can't recall if those kills were Mick's alone or if they were credited to the whole unit, nonetheless, there were more than five dozen killed!).

Sometimes I'd notice Mick break into a heavy sweat while sitting in the middle of a church service. Evidence of malaria.

When Mick wanted to talk he would call me up and ask, "You want to go fishing?" That was code for, "I'd like to talk." "I'll pick you up at 5 a.m." Once after he'd made such a "fishing" appointment, I got up during the night to tend to one of our children. It was 3 a.m. I happened to look out the window. There was Mick already parked in our driveway, waiting. His 6' 9" frame was silhouetted against the streetlight. In his hand he was holding the cap off his thermos, filled with coffee. As he sipped the coffee, he glanced a few times at his watch, almost as if to encourage it to speed up. He'd obviously was eager to meet.

Mick had anger issues. When a soldier is on mission for weeks on end, or on alert, or on the prowl 24/7 for days on end, it is hard to turn it off. It is hard to shut down the first response and trained instinct to self-preserve and eliminate the danger. Mick's response, his anger, became defining. His anger threatened his interpersonal relationships in marriage, as a parent and as a co-worker. PTSD, again.

As we sat at the water's edge watching our bobbers, there were a number of walks to the cross. It was important to go back to the cross with Mick again and again. Sometimes it was to show Mick his sin.<sup>282</sup> Anger is a deadly sin.<sup>283</sup> Then it was to

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<sup>281</sup> One symbol depicted a skull clenched by the teeth with a venomous snake slithering through the eye sockets.

<sup>282</sup> Koelpin, Arnold, *The Cross, God's Mask in Human History*, Lutheran Synod Quarterly, Volume 39, No. 1, March, 1999, p. 55. "Because in the cross, God takes our pants down, as it were, and we stand before him naked and exposed. What happened there to this righteous and innocent Son of Man reflects with graphic vividness what is to happen to us. The cross is the ultimate preaching of God's anger over sin [FC:EP V:9]. In it God exposes the root sin out of which all the fruit sins, like disobedience, sexual impurity, pride and selfishness grow [SA III, I, 1f; Galatians 5:19]. The root sin is our total separation from God from birth. Devoid of all true fear and faith in him, we are turned back upon ourselves and, try as we may, cannot keep the royal law of love James 2:8].

show Mick his Savior.<sup>284</sup> But then, with sin forgiven and guilt resolved, the walks were taken for resolution to be able to handle the anger and move on enables. This happened with walks to the empty tomb.

"Mick, let's go fishing." Mick looked at me as if he thought I needed more coffee because we already were fishing. "I mean let's go fishing with five of those fishermen-disciples in the Bible. A short time after Jesus had risen and had appeared to His disciples a number of times, those Galilean fishermen took to their boats and nets. A lot had been swirling through their heads and hearts: Jesus' teachings...Jesus' miracles...the nightmare they'd witnessed on that dark Friday (that we call "Good")...and then the dream come true – he was alive again. Going fishing seemed to them like a lifetime ago. The familiar was a welcome relief. Just getting out on the lake was good, but it would have been better if they'd caught some fish that night." (I told the lead-up story.)

"Then they heard someone on shore, 'Friends, haven't you caught any fish? Try the other side of the boat!' Maybe they thought, 'What's to lose?' So they cast the nets on the other side. It was one of those fishing stories but it was no hoax, there was no exaggeration. They caught so many big fish they couldn't haul them in."

"Peter, James, John, Nathanael, and Thomas were the fishermen disciples in the boat. Mick, which of those five fishermen do you think jumped in and swam to shore because he recognized the risen Lord? Mick: "Has to be Peter." "Yup. But why did you choose Peter?" (Mick was honest and said he didn't know much about a couple of them. He knew about the brothers James and John. So he went with the one he knew the best, Peter). Mick: "Well, Peter was the loud mouth of the bunch. He always spoke up first, so he probably would be the one to jump in."

"Yes, Peter was sort of the reckless one. Do you remember what he did in the garden when Jesus was arrested?" Mick: "Yes. He drew a sword and sliced off a guy's ear." "What was Peter really aiming for and what did he want to do to that man?" Mick: "His head – kill him." "If you were thinking Peter's thoughts, what would they be." Mick: "You don't think. You react. They had their clubs and swords. It's fight or die."

"Maybe that's the point, Mick. Peter wasn't thinking. Do you remember what Jesus told Peter to do with his sword?" Mick: "Put it away...those who live by the sword die by the

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<sup>283</sup> Galatians 5: 19-21, "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; <sup>20</sup> idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions <sup>21</sup> and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God."

<sup>284</sup> Ibid., "But what our natural eyes cannot see in Jesus' cross because of sin's veil, the eye of faith does see. By the Spirit of the living God, we can see that Jesus' cross is our salvation that his death is our life, that his obedience is our rescue. The wisdom of the cross is simply this: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" [2 Corinthians 5:19]. But the work of Christ on the cross would have meant nothing to us if it were not for the work of the Spirit of the Living God. The Holy Spirit is the one who lifts up the cover for us to see, and there he lets us see with eyes of faith the One hidden beneath the veil..."

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sword." "What would Jesus tell you when you get angry?" Mick: "Think. Put it away." (Mick got some key points.)

"Not so easy, is it, Mick? Peter put his sword away but not his tongue. Jesus prophesied that Peter would deny him. And Peter did, once, twice, then cursing, three times. Reckless or well-thought through, Mick? Covering his own back...what was best for Peter, Mick?" Mick: "Like me, huh?" (Mick got it again.)

"Fits of anger are like Peter's denials. Off the cuff, shooting at the mouth, for the benefit of me, myself, and I," and it hurt. But, Mick, there was Jesus risen. He'd made breakfast for those fishermen. Then He talked directly to Peter. What did he ask Peter three times, one for each denial?" Mick: "Do you love me?"

"Jesus was talking to Peter with a voice that had been silenced in death. He was alive and there he was asking that big fisherman if he loved Him. Mick, imagine seeing Jesus here on this shore or you on that shore with Him. Now repeat Jesus' questions to Peter, but try to ask them with the same tone Jesus used."

Mick hesitated, but then, in a soft way, the words came out, "Peter, do you love me...Do you love me...Do you love me?" "I think that's close. Now, Mick, reverse those questions into statements: Peter, I love you...Peter I love you...Peter, I love you, and say those statements with the same voice you did before." Mick did, "Peter, I love you." "But I denied you, Jesus." I pointed to Mick for his response, "But, Peter, I love you."

"Now, Mick, insert your name. I pointed to that big hulk of a man, Mick. Mick: "Mick, I love you." "You flare up, Mick. But..." No need to point. Mick said it, "Mick, I love you." "You hurt the people around you, Mick, with your anger. But..." Mick: "Mick: I love you." The big guy actually did it, "Mick, I love you...I love you...I love you."

"Mick, Jesus was indeed arisen. The grave was left behind. And the reason there are graves is because there is death. The reason there is death is because there is sin. If the grave is not needed, gone is the death, and gone is THE SIN, YOUR SIN, MICK. Jesus did what no one else could. He got up alive from the dead. When you are quick to be thoughtless and angry imagine Jesus telling you what?" Mick: "Mick, I love you." "How can that conversation help you think?" Mick: "Just by thinking about Jesus and Peter I have to stop and think." "And when you're ready to blow up, to lose your cool...?" Mick: "There's Jesus, calm and kind." I would not have even thought of the word but Mick did.

The walk **to** the empty tomb became a walk **with** the Risen Savior. Mick kept the walk in mind and heart, visually and audibly inside, when anger would seek to rear its ugly head. The restoration of Peter and the love Jesus offered and sought became a weapon to which Mick turned. Love became the operative word for Mick. The fruits of the Spirit grew more and more; *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there*

*is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”*<sup>285</sup>

The experience with Mick was remarkable. It was thrilling to see the change from before those walks to after those walks. It was incredible to look at this huge man, crumpled into an emotional fetal position because of the hopelessness he felt over the pain he'd inflicted, spring up in heart zealous and joyful with newfound resolve.

A panacea? No. But this counseling practice sure parallels, or better, applies and empowers with the might and meaning of Baptism, Part IV, Luther's Small Catechism:

**Fourth: What does baptizing with water mean?**

Baptism means that the old Adam in us should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, and that all its evil deeds and desires be put to death. It also means that a new person should daily arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

**Where is this written?**

St. Paul says in Romans 6, “We were...buried with [Christ] through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”

“Through Baptism the Holy Spirit unites us with Christ. He gives us a share in Christ’s righteousness, holiness, life, and glory. He nullifies the temporal interval which separates us from Christ’s cross and the interval that separates us from the return of the Exalted One...Baptism transcends time and space and we are united with Calvary’s cross...Then through the power of Christ’s resurrection in Baptism our new resurrection life comes forth strengthened and renewed. The Christian life is indeed a daily Baptism...Baptism not only unites us with Christ’s passion but also with the final consummation of our redemption on the last day. *The baptized (one) has in Christ already experienced his future death and already has resurrection life...This new resurrection life is not something we must wait for until the last day. We have resurrection life right now. In Baptism by faith in the Risen One we have resurrection power so that we can live resurrection lives, victory lives, free from Satan’s tyranny.*”<sup>286</sup>

**Resolution Checklist:**

- Expectation of the Future
- Trust (in the grace, forgiveness and promises of God)
- Patience in Waiting<sup>287</sup> (Siggelkow)

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<sup>285</sup> Galatians 5:22-25

<sup>286</sup> Schmeling, Gaylin R., Bread of Life From Heaven, Mankato, Minnesota: Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary Press, 2009, pp. 111-112; emphasis mine.

<sup>287</sup> Siggelkow, *op. cit.*

- **First**, a person whose problem has been resolved by the gospel will no longer seek other forms of attempted resolution.
- **Second**, a person whose problem has been resolved by the gospel will demonstrate the peace of God that passes all understanding.
- **Third**, a person whose problem has been resolved by the gospel will seek whatever means are within his capabilities to correct any damage he has done with his problem.
- **Fourth**, a person whose problem has been resolved by the gospel will recognize that his problem itself can be a great asset in correcting his future...with other problems.<sup>288</sup> (Lyon)

Jim

Jim, another Viet Nam veteran, also had PTSD. He was in a firefight which mirrored the horror and gore of “Hamburger Hill.” “Charlie” was overrunning his units position. A satchel bomb was tossed through the sandbags into the bunker and detonated. Jim remembers the blinding flash and deafening blast explosion. He’d instinctively taken what cover he could. He was out, unconscious. When he came to he awoke to a ringing in his ears at a decibel that seemed as loud as if a siren was blasting directly into his ears. When Jim looked around and no one else was left alive. Nobody else was left, only body parts. Not only did Jim suffer from dread shock of the experience, what haunted Jim was “survivors guilt.”

What Jim saw was unimaginable. What Jim felt was unbearable. I walked him to the cross. But it didn’t seem to help Jim. He despaired, “Why me? Why didn’t I die?” Nailing his sins to the cross was to be a lie for Jim. He even said, “I’d be living a lie, Lying to myself, lying to everyone else. I shouldn’t be alive. I should have died.” I told Jim that it was true even if he couldn’t see it, his sins and his guilt were on Jesus. But he shook his head in disagreement. “It’s on me.”

Maybe I shouldn’t have, but I walked Jim to the empty tomb. I did the talking and describing, and maybe that was a mistake, too. But I thought that the resurrection walk to the living Risen Lord, wounded, but alive, would serve to bring light to Jim’s darkness. “Those body parts...” Jim muttered. The glorified body of the Lord was unfathomable to Jim’s shaded life-perspective. Resurrection and rebirth seemed foreign to the pall that covered Jim’s mind, heart, and, probably, soul. I even took him to the closed-door room with Thomas to put his fingers in the wounds that now were scars of victory. “You’re blessed, Jim. See Jesus.” “I can’t see, and I can’t believe.”

Jim was not a member of our congregation. He concluded that the cross thing, the Easter thing, the Word thing was of no use to him, of no help to him. So, Jim stopped coming for counseling. The bottle seemed to be a better counselor to Jim.

No, the walk to the empty tomb (or cross) is not a panacea. Consider Prof. Deutschlander’s observation. I see Jim in it:

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<sup>288</sup> Lyon, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

"The equal and opposite second great obstacle to repentance is despair. The one who refuses to repent is self-righteous; he imagines that he is so good and God's law and gospel so trivial that he needs no repentance. The one who despairs, likewise, has an exalted opinion of himself. He imagines that his sin is so great that not even God can forgive it, not even Christ on the cross could pay for it. [While Romans 4:25 continues from the cross to the empty tomb to assure all Jims that they were declared 'Not guilty!' Jim couldn't, and didn't want to believe it.] His repentance ends in sorrow...(and) never reaches its final goal of trust in forgiveness..."

...Without such trust, a new life under the cross is virtually impossible under the heavy burden of the sins of the old life. In fact, without trust in forgiveness, the despairing sinner really has self-righteousness as his only goal; he hopes to get to the point where he is so perfect that he has no need for sorrow over sin. It may sound strange, but it is nevertheless true: self-righteousness and despair are two sides of the same coin. The one in despair was probably self-righteous before he committed the sin that he now thinks cannot be forgiven...For memory in those prone to despair always seeks to drag the forgiven sinner back either to the old sin or to the old guilt."<sup>289</sup>

Cases like Jim's remind the pastoral counselor to remember to walk his own walks to the cross and empty tomb. When it seems like failure, the evil accuser will accuse the counselor of failure and fault. His mouth is clamped and the counselor's heart is freed at the cross. And, "When all their labor seems in vain, revive their sinking hopes again..."<sup>290</sup> by walking to the empty tomb and hearing Jesus, risen, whisper the counselor's name, filling the pastoral counselor with hopefulness anew, hopefulness to share the more.

### Timothy and Lillian

Timothy and Lillian were in the sunset of life, when they were given a heavy cross.

Lillian suffered from dementia. The dementia progressed. Eventually Timothy could not care for her adequately at home, so he placed her into a secure care facility.

It was always a joy for me to visit with them, bringing the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. Timothy would always get Lillian ready for my visits, helping her prepare for the Lord's Supper, as long as she was able to examine herself.<sup>291</sup> When I arrived we would further prepare by singing German hymns from our copies of *Unser Liederbuch*. Lillian's favorites were: *Weiszt du wie veil Sternlein Stehen*, and, *So Nimm den meine Haende*. How wonderful to witness Lillian's childlike faith as well as a husband's enduring love for his dear wife.

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<sup>289</sup> Deutschlander, *op. cit.*, p. 29

<sup>290</sup> Dear Lord, to Your True Servants Give," stanza 3, # 542, Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal

<sup>291</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:27-29, "Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself."

As time went on Lillian's dementia overtook and clouded her memory. Hymn singing no longer worked to connect with her and her with the Lord's Supper. She no longer could even recognize Timothy. Timothy became more and more downcast. Of course, I still brought them the Word and prayed with them. We still sang Lillian's hymns, but there was no evident response.

After one of my visits, Timothy wanted to meet with me privately, but not in front of Lillian, nor the staff. We found a room where we could be alone and he poured out his heart of grief over the loss of his wife's awareness and communication abilities. Collecting himself he asked, "Pastor, is it wrong for me to pray that the Lord take Lillian home to heaven?"

We discussed Philippians 1:21, "*For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.*" We talked about how for any and all of us to go to heaven would be better by far and to stay here would be of worth and value and service, (for her to be an object of love for him!). I assured Timothy it was not wrong to pray such a prayer, and that, in fact, Jesus had taught us to pray for just that exact petition for ourselves.<sup>292</sup>

Timothy needed peace in the decision to pray such a petition, so I took him to the upper room where the disciples were assembled with doors locked for fear of the Jews. Of what were the disciples fearful,<sup>293/294</sup> for what kind of peace were they seeking? Timothy's fear was that he was failing his wife by praying that she leave his side for Abraham's side. He was afraid, at the same, of losing his wife and of a life ahead without his precious Lillian. There we sat together behind that closed door and Timothy was trembling.

I asked him, "Timothy, what do fear the most by praying that God to take Lillian?" Timothy: "That God says, 'Yes,' and will give me what I ask for. I don't want to lose Lil. Yet, I don't want her to suffer. Am I like Dr. Death?"<sup>295</sup> "No, Timothy, in prayer we always pray, 'Your will be done.' So, finally, the Lord will make the decision. The psalmist says, 'My times are in our hands.'"<sup>296</sup>

"Timothy, you seem very unsettled inside with all this. So let's go somewhere else where you won't be. Let's go to Jesus in a special way. Let's let Jesus come to us the

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<sup>292</sup> Luther's Small Catechism, 7<sup>th</sup> Petition, *op. cit.*

<sup>293</sup> Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, New York, New York: E. R. Hendrick & Company, 1889, Vol. II, p. 643, "Whether they apprehended persecution simply as disciples, or because the tidings of the empty Tomb, which had reached the authorities, would stir the fears of the Sanhedrinists, special precautions had been taken."

<sup>294</sup> Ylvisaker, Joh., The Gospels, Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1932; p. 768-769, "It was natural that they met in a place which was reasonably safe. We may readily picture in our minds the contempt and contumely which were heaped upon them wherever they appeared. We may imagine also that they felt insecure fearing the same fate was in store for them as that which had met the Master. Possibly they have heard the rumors which the watch at the grave, instigated by the elders, had already set on foot (Mat. 28:11ff.), and from these they might infer that restrictive measures would be instituted against them to halt the movement which the message of the resurrection might inaugurate."

<sup>295</sup> Dr. Jack Kevorkian, a pathologist who was an advocate of assisted suicide, or euthanasia. He claimed to have helped 130 people die in the 1990's.

<sup>296</sup> Psalm 31:15a

way he came to his fearful disciples locked behind those doors out of fear. It was on Easter Sunday evening that Jesus appeared to them. Do you recall how Jesus entered the room?" Timothy: "He walked right through the door." Timothy's head lifted up, he straightened his back, and his eyes widened as he gave his answer. Timothy was engaged, he could see the picture of his Jesus and those disciples.

"As Jesus stood among them what were the first words out of his mouth?" Timothy knew his Bible. Timothy: "Peace be unto you." "Jesus repeated that greeting again, didn't he?" Timothy: "Oh, yes." "Tell me, Timothy, why could the disciples be at peace?" Thoughtfully he answered, "Jesus was there. (pause) Jesus was risen. (Pause) They had Jesus back!"

"If you were in that upper room with those nervous and frightened disciples and Jesus walked over to you, what would he say if he talked just to you?" Timothy: "Peace be unto you..." "Even with your decision to pray for the Lord to take to himself your dear wife?" I asked. "Yes...Yes...Thank you, pastor, thank you," he said. "No, thank our living Jesus," was my response.

That's all it took, seeing and hearing Jesus, risen. At the same time, think about it, look at what it took, something so stupendous, so monumental, as the resurrection! For that moment! For that day! For that man! For his wife! For where both were physically, emotionally, spiritually!

What a powerful application of the resurrection! Timothy made that application himself. Timothy opened the door to leave the room where we'd been meeting and he left with a totally different look on his face. The dead-weight of the world had been lifted from off of him. He was relieved. He was like his old self, smiling. In church the next two Sundays, Timothy looked so at ease. He had such special stillness about him. His sad eyes still glistened with tears, mixed with sadness over his Lil's state, but tears of joy that he, through Jesus risen, had given the matter to the Lord above.

In the middle of that second week after our walk together to the upper room, to see and hear the Risen One, Timothy saw and heard Jesus, glorified, again. It was *Timothy* who received the call home to heaven!

It was not really Lillian who was suffering after all. It was Timothy. Timothy died and lives forevermore in peace. Lillian followed later.

Hopeful resolve was imparted from the throne of Grace through the Risen One. Timothy had peace praying for his wife's entrance into heaven and in peace he went before her.

#### Resolution Checklist:

- Expectation of the Future
- Trust (in the grace, forgiveness and promises of God)

- Patience in Waiting<sup>297</sup> (Siggelkow)
- **First**, a person whose problem has been resolved by the gospel will no longer seek other forms of attempted resolution.
- **Second**, a person whose problem has been resolved by the gospel will demonstrate the peace of God that passes all understanding.
- **Third**, a person whose problem has been resolved by the gospel will seek whatever means are within his capabilities to correct any damage he has done with his problem.
- **Fourth**, a person whose problem has been resolved by the gospel will recognize that his problem itself can be a great asset in correcting his future...with other problems.<sup>298</sup> (Lyon)

### Rick and Lin

Rick and Lin were happily married, had a number of children, and were active in church. The family portrait that appeared church directory depicted a picture-perfect family that seemed to indicate that all was well with them, all were happy.

But then Lin began in with some strange behaviors. Lin's behaviors stemmed from an emerging deep-seated suspicion that Rick was having an affair.

At first she would call him at work to see if he was really there. When work related issues took him away from being on site, her suspicions grew. So then she would actually make drive-bys to check and see if Rick's vehicle was where he said he'd be that day. If his vehicle wasn't there, the suspicions grew the more.

Why would she be suspicious? Why would she think that her godly, sanctified, Christian husband would be unfaithful to her? Why did she grow out of trust in and with him? She became convinced and was certain that he was meeting with other women. Then her distrust escalated. She verbalized her suspicions with direct accusations that Rick was having affairs with other women.

Rick never had been, nor was he then, unfaithful. He was not having an affair. So, in all truth, he denied her suspicions and accusations. He gave legitimate answers to the charges and "evidences" she gave. He explained where he'd been if his vehicle wasn't on the work site. He tried to assure her that he could nor would be unfaithful to her. But Lin didn't believe him. His word was not reassuring enough.

Lin's suspicions were then transferred on to certain women with whom Rick had to interact, during a given work week, even with any woman she'd notice him having a simple conversation while she was present. Jealousy followed accusation which followed her suspicions.

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<sup>297</sup> Siggelkow, *op. cit.*

<sup>298</sup> Lyon, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

The accusations grew more frequent and vehement in expression. No longer were discussions merely discussions. Communications became arguments. Arguments became bitter shouting matches. Rick responded to, defended against, and fact countered all of Lin's rantings. But to no avail. Rick couldn't understand where this all came from and where this all was going. He soon lost patience with Lin. His frustration became anger. Sin breeds sin, distrust produced hatred. It would be an understatement to observe that the situation was not good.

Rick and Lin came in for counseling. After a few sessions of listening and learning, I was left scratching my head with my own whys. I, too, couldn't understand why Lin would think Rick would be unfaithful to her and why she would be so insistent and persistent with her accusations against him.

She was a mess: a mixture of hurt and anger, grieving and vitriol. Her reactions were based on unfounded perceptions and suspicions but they were very real to her. He was a mess: a mixture of consternation, wondering why, of sorrow over a once wonderful relationship, and of hatred, hating the hassle and hating her for falsely accusing him.

But healing doesn't often happen until there is more wounding. Hope often isn't instilled until hopelessness is felt more acutely. Such wounding and such a deeper sense of hopeless happened when the unthinkable happened. **She** decided that she would have an affair, that she would be unfaithful to him. The god of confusion, the devil, convinced her that the lie was true, that she came up with a convoluted rationale, "If you are being unfaithful to me, I will be unfaithful to you. If you are having an affair with someone, I will have an affair with someone. If you are unfaithful to me, I will be unfaithful to you. She went out and had a one night stand, a sordid tryst with man she met in a bar. She became the one who had broken the marriage vow. She became the unfaithful spouse.

Rick was livid. Divorce seemed inevitable, and it would have been Biblical for him to do so. But marriage was too sacred to him. Rick was determined to move on with love and forgiveness. But how hard that would be, since she had been broken the trust. It would be an uphill struggle because all the accusations would be hard to forget. Her affair would be hard to put out of his mind. It would be hard for him not to imagine another man with his wife, and what he – what they – did! It would be harder still to stop asking, "How could she have done what she did?!"

But, determined to make it work, Rick set up a new series of appointments. The initial set of meetings that followed the affair was spent sharing a lot of deeply felt emotions and regrets. He was in shock. He was hurt. He was in bewilderment. "How-could-you?!" was a repeated question. The answer she repeated answer could be heard through her sobbing, "I don't know!" It seemed best to meet with each individually. Ladies first.

When I met with Lin I asked her why she had been so convinced that Rick had been unfaithful to her so many times, with so many women. Her answer was given clearly and openly, and almost with an accusatory tone, "That's all men want, isn't it?" Her

answer held the key to understanding what was underneath and what prompted Lin's distrust.

Lin had concluded that Rick was having affairs with other women because the frequency of their times of intimacy had declined in recent years. There were no physical reasons for the reduced number of times that they were intimate. Aging wasn't really a mitigating factor; they were both in the prime of life. Even Rick's heavy workload didn't seem to pose a hindrance to intimacy, because "fewer" moments of intimacy, in their relationship, meant that intimacy wasn't happening every day, but, "...only three or four times a week."

"That's all men want." I needed to explore what Lin's rationale. When I did so the real issue surfaced. "That's all men want," was her baseline understanding about the man/woman relationship, but what also defining in Rick's relationship with her in their marriage. She'd concluded that if the moments intimacy were not as frequent as they had been, he must be "getting it" with other women.

"That's all men want," came from an incident that left Lin scarred emotionally. When she was junior high age she was raped by a family acquaintance. She was not only robbed of her virginity, it happened in her home, a place where she was supposed to feel safe. What complicated this incident was that she was convinced another family member knew about the rape, and she never could understand why this other family member didn't try to help her or why the perpetrator was never confronted. The message she derived was: "Bury it. Let it alone." She believed that that relative was giving tacit approval to, or acceptance of, the rape. Line felt forced to suppress the rape and to act like it had never happened. She had never talked about the rape, had never told anyone about the rape, ever. She had buried the incident deep within herself.

But that wasn't the only incident that confirmed Lin in the belief that, "That's all men want." Years later, when Lin was a mom, she was out for a walk with her firstborn in a stroller. It was a secluded area. A car pulled up slowly behind her as she pushed the stroller. She sped up. The car sped up and stopped. A man quickly got out and flashed her. She froze for a split second at the man's vile exposure. Then, as she described the scene, "I tore out of there as fast as I could run. But I was in hysterics. When I stopped, I realized that I was dragging the stroller behind me. My baby had been bounced all around. Thank God, I'd strapped him in well." So the threat was to her and her baby.

She had never shared either incident with anyone. Both had shaped her view of men and of husbands. Because she believed that sex was all that men wanted, she believed that that's all that Rick wanted. She'd concluded that if he wasn't wanting it from her as frequently that he was filling his wants elsewhere, with other women. Because she believed that all that men wanted was sex, she also believed her imagination about Rick's affairs.

The healing and hope started when this was wounding was opened. This discovery

and revelation entirely changed Rick's understanding about Lin suspicions, about her accusations, and even about her unfaithfulness. He then looked at her with different eyes and with a different heart. Knowing what had happened to her and how that had shaped her view of men as well as her conclusions about him, Rick had nothing but a deep compassion for Lin. He viewed his wife as the victim of sexual abuse and trauma, rather than as a victimizer. Rick saw her as a victim of Satan's evil schemes. His heart was filled with nothing but forgiveness, with love, with welcome, with tenderness, and with sympathy (in its best sense). All he wanted to do, from that point on, was to understand her and to be equipped to treat her as she needed, with the tenderness and loving care. She was chipped and broken, but she was his wife, his fragile vessel, (as Peter describes).<sup>299</sup>

This was an epiphany. What followed were multiple walks to the cross and to the empty tomb. Through both walks, to the cross and to the tomb, forgiveness was abundant, (found, offered, and received). Of course the hurt and guilt raised their ugly heads, but bloodstained cross and the beautiful Easter morning sights shoved those heads down again, and served to provide another abundance: divine forgetfulness and reassurance afforded by the Risen One. When they found themselves too weak to leave all that had transpired behind and to carry on in renewed zeal and commitment, there for them was the One who claimed that all power in heaven and earth were his, his to give strength.

One walk to the upper room was especially as memorable as it was powerful and effective.<sup>300</sup> Words can hardly capture the image they both were visualizing with the eyes of faith as they described the sacred wounds of the Crucified (on the cross) and Risen Lord (signs of victory). More real than the past experiences were their ever-present Savior, Jesus. Their former sufferings could not be compared to their present, glorious healing.<sup>301</sup> Jesus was no concept, no specter, no dream to them. The Crucified and Risen Jesus there was real "flesh and blood" with real hope and real resolution! No One but Jesus could have kept them united and so in love, with a greater and deeper unity and love like never had they had before. Jesus was real *for* them and *through* them. The forgiveness, strength, and love that they ended up having in their marriage was such that they were not merely carrying on, they were prospering. This miracle can only be attributed to Jesus, whose wounds of suffering and wounds of glory, were as real for them as Jesus is really the Son of God and Savior of all.

Nothing was more heartwarming for me, their servant and shepherd, than to see Rick and Lin kneeling at the Table of Holy Communion,

- † with hands clutching as if they were never going to let each other go,
- † with eyes glistening with forgiving love,
- † and with faces covered with the smiles that spoke without speaking of joy and triumph,

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<sup>299</sup> 1 Peter 3:7

<sup>300</sup> Luke 24, especially verse 38, and, John 21, especially verse 27.

<sup>301</sup> Romans 8:18

There were they, hand in hand, together, receiving the Real Presence of the true body and blood of their Savior who saved them in every way they could be saved!

Resolution Checklist:

- Expectation of the Future
- Trust (in the grace, forgiveness and promises of God)
- Patience in Waiting<sup>302</sup> (Siggelkow)
  
- **First**, a person whose problem has been resolved by the gospel will no longer seek other forms of attempted resolution.
- **Second**, a person whose problem has been resolved by the gospel will demonstrate the peace of God that passes all understanding.
- **Third**, a person whose problem has been resolved by the gospel will seek whatever means are within his capabilities to correct any damage he has done with his problem.
- **Fourth**, a person whose problem has been resolved by the gospel will recognize that his problem itself can be a great asset in correcting his future...with other problems.<sup>303</sup> (Lyon)

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<sup>302</sup> Siggelkow, *op. cit.*

<sup>303</sup> Lyon, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

## **Hopeful Resolve: Destroyed by the Law, Rebuilt by the Gospel**

### ***Christus pro nobis – Christus in nobis – Christus per nos***

*"The love of God does not find, but creates that which is pleasing to it. The love of man comes into being through that which is pleasing to it... The first part is clear because the love of God which lives in man loves sinners, evil persons, fools, and weaklings in order to make them righteous, good, wise, and strong. Rather than seeking its own good, the love of God flows forth and bestows good. Therefore sinners are attractive because they are loved; they are not loved because they are attractive."<sup>304</sup>*

The ultimate aim of the preacher/counselor is to, "...lead his hearers to the assurance that they have forgiveness of sins with God, the hope of the future blessed life, and the confidence to meet death cheerfully... The blessedness of Christians does not consist in pleasant feelings, but in their assurance that in spite of the bitterest feelings imaginable they are accepted with God and in their dying hour will be received into heaven."<sup>305</sup> It is a must for the pastoral counselor to keep in mind the ultimate goal when dealing with the immediate. There is nothing more important for the pastoral counselor than to properly apply both the Law and the Gospel in counseling situations.

Pastor Lyon's *Counseling at the Cross* sharpened me in my counseling technique, especially in applying the Law and the Gospel in the right ways for the counseled. How careful we must be not to leave the comfortable sinner comfortable – Law! How careful, even more so, that we do not leave the uncomfortable sinner in discomfort – Gospel. The pastoral brothers in the conference in which I served worked with one another to hone the skill of properly applying both the Law and the Gospel in personal ways to individual souls in individual situations like in counseling circumstances. The severity of the Law as well as the sweetness of the Gospel must strike the ears and hearts of those who seek counsel. The greatest theologian is the one who is able to properly apply the Law and Gospel. That is true, too, for the counselor. The best counselor is the one who is able to properly apply the Law and the Gospel in personal ways with each one counseled.

I matriculated from the seminary in four years. For twenty years of my ministry I was enrolled in what my conference brothers and I called our "Second Seminary." There is not second seminary graduation. Learning is lifelong, career-long. The pastor-brothers in our conference drove long distances to spend one full day together, each month. For an hour we cracked open the Old Testament Hebrew and translated, no one trying to outshine the other, each trying to augment the other. For another hour we did the same with the New Testament. We spent an equal portion of time in studying the Lutheran Confessions (we used the *Concordia Triglotta*) and in reading C.F. W. Walther's *Proper Distinction of Law and Gospel*. We had lunch and then one of us preached with the rest of us giving encouragements in critique. Each of the hearers was to offer one suggestion where there might be room for improvement by which the preacher could

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<sup>304</sup> Luther, Martin, Heidelberg Disputation, Thesis 28 (*LW* 31, p. 57)

<sup>305</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 308, 312

better preach. Each of the listeners also offered one comment of appreciation for how and what the preacher preached. We would wrap up our time together (during which, through the study of the Word, the Spirit looked under our hoods and gave each of his pastor-vehicles-of-the-Gospel a spiritual tune up) with an optional time slot, often sharing materials, books or papers of with practical and pastoral emphases (e.g. Evangelism, Stewardship, Counseling).

We were thankful our congregations gave us the privilege to take the time for such a day. We cherished our second seminary sessions together as well as the brotherly encouragement and fellowship they fostered. The lessons tools I took with me from our second seminary were invaluable in Gospel ministry.

One tool that came out of our second seminary is what we called the “grid.” The grid had four quadrants which applied the two major teachings of the Bible in two major areas of the Christian life – *justification* (the forensic status of being declared “Not guilty!” by and before the Lord God) and *sanctification* (the ongoing and ever growing life that flows from, but does not contribute to, the finished declaration of justification):

#### Quadrant 1 – Justification Law

Quadrant 1 places each person, as a sinner, in the courtroom of the Holy God, who demands the same of all of us human beings, absolute holiness.<sup>306</sup> The thunder and lightning of Sinai are heard and seen as the Almighty One examines each and every thought, word, and action against his perfect will, his Law, his “Thou shalts,” and “Thou shalt nots.” We don’t stack up. No one is holy. All have sinned. The Lord God has every reason to send each sinner to hell<sup>307</sup> for actual sins. He could do the same just because we are born sinful with natural sin, birth sin, original sin – in other words, sinners are lost just because they are sinners. Through the Law sinners are made sharply, agonizingly, distressfully aware of their sins.<sup>308</sup> God is angry with sinners. In fact, God hates evil and those who do it.<sup>309</sup>

As the individual sinner stands in quadrant 1, made conscious of sin, the declaration from the judgment seat is – “GUILTY!” Again, God condemns the sinner not just because the sinner sins, but because the sinner is a sinner by nature. Every person is a sinner. Every person is sinful. Every person does what is sinful. So every person who stands in this courtroom before Divine Majesty and Justice is declared guilty. There’s no one who does good and is without sin, not one of us, not one human being. All of us have sinned and have fallen short of the glory which has to, in perfect justice, damn the sinner. Even if a sinner attempted to keep the whole will of God but just once,

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<sup>306</sup> Leviticus 19:2; Matthew 5:48; Hebrews 12:14

<sup>307</sup> Isaiah 59:2

<sup>308</sup> Romans 3:20

<sup>309</sup> Psalm 5:4-5; “God hates sin but he loves the sinner,” is not in the Bible. The phrase originated with Augustine, bishop of Hippo, 395 AD, in his work *The City of God*. It would seem that Augustine is encouraging people to hate the sin but at the same time love the sinner, as would God. However, God, **according to His justice**, condemns sin and the one who does it. However, He does not damn the sin to hell but the sinner.

only once, merely once, stumbled and sinned at just one point the sinner would be guilty before God.<sup>310</sup> There is no wiggle room, no plea bargaining. The sin is as great as the One offended by it.<sup>311</sup>

Quadrant 1 does more than just mirror what's wrong with the sinner. It penetrates more deeply than just the surface. The Law also reveals what's wrong inside, exposes what is sinfully amiss there, like an X-ray, a CT-scan, or a MR does for physical issues. Inside, too, the verdict is: "Guilty!"

### Quadrant 2 – Justification Gospel

Quadrant 2 places the sinner in the courtroom again. However, there with the sinner is the only defense attorney who can help, Jesus Christ. As the sinner stands there trembling and without any hope, Jesus steps between the sinner and the bench of divine judgment. He's the perfect advocate.<sup>312</sup> He's the perfect go-between, a priest. "*Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.*"<sup>313</sup>

There is nothing about sinners, about their make-up or character, no litany of good works done, no morals embraced, no ethical behavior, nor good intended that could or would satisfy the burning demand, "*The soul who sins is the one who will die!*"<sup>314</sup> If sinners were to defend themselves, they would have nothing to offer the Judge. Absolutely, NOTHING! Jesus was not using a hyperbole when he made it clear that apart from him we can do: NOTHING!<sup>315</sup> That would include the huge issue of having a right standing before the Lord. All that sinners can honestly plead is, "Guilty as charged." Sinners can only look to Jesus, the Attorney-Advocate-Priest, and to what he alone can offer the Judge.

Jesus, the Christ, offers himself, his life, his death, his resurrection, in the stead of, in the place of the guilty sinners. He presents himself before the court, for each sinner's defense, a defense that only he can provide, offering only what he could do, and giving what only he can give. Jesus, the Christ, offers his active obedience under the Law of God. He kept the law perfectly for all sinners, and covers all their filthy sin with his robe of righteousness<sup>316</sup>. He also offers his passive obedience under the Law of God,

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<sup>310</sup> Psalm 14:3, Psalm 53:3, Romans 3:12, Romans 3:23, James 2:10

<sup>311</sup> Walther, *op.cit.*, p. 332. Walther quotes Dannhauer's Hodosophia. Walther goes on in his 31<sup>st</sup> evening lecture to say, "Small sins become great when they are regarded as small."

<sup>312</sup> 1 John 2:1

<sup>313</sup> Hebrews 7:26-27

<sup>314</sup> Ezekiel 18:4

<sup>315</sup> John 15:5

<sup>316</sup> Isaiah 61:10

punished with the eternal curse<sup>317</sup> and paid the ransom price to set us free from captivity to the power of the devil, the power of sin, and the power of death.<sup>318</sup>

The sinner's Attorney-Advocate-Priest offers, on behalf of the sinner, his three major accomplishments:

- 1. He lived the holy perfect life for the sinner that the sinner could not.<sup>319</sup>**
- 2. He died the eternal death payment for the sinner that the sinner deserved.<sup>320</sup>**
- 3. He rose from the dead to gain the victory over sin, death, and damnation for the sinner's forgiveness, life, and salvation.<sup>321</sup>**

The defense is sure. The sinner is declared, "Not guilty!" by forensic declaration. To be decreed is objective truth. For Christ's sake the sinner is acquitted. As the sinner stands in the second quadrant the sinner is justified, declared not guilty, acquitted, a saint in God's eyes for Jesus' sake. The sinner has done nothing to earn, nothing to contribute to this forensic, objective declaration. The Savior has done everything to earn and impute this blessed ruling from bench of God the Judge.

Again, for emphasis: to be declared not guilty, or, justified is a finished work. The sinner doesn't become justified. Justification is not progressive. The sinner is declared justified. The sinner doesn't earn justification, the sinner is pronounced justified. The court ruling stands, for Christ's sake, not because of righteous things the sinner has done or sins he's avoided, not even because the sinner has made the choice to believe,<sup>322</sup> but because of God's mercy.<sup>323</sup>

What is objectively true because of what Jesus has accomplished for the sinner, in each sinner's place is subjectively made the sinner's very own through faith. Even this faith is not the sinner's doing in any way.<sup>324</sup> Faith, too, is a gift of God's grace.<sup>325</sup>

## **Christus pro nobis!**

### Quadrant 3 – Sanctification Law

Once the guilty sinner is declared not guilty and is gifted with faith in Jesus' perfect life, death and resurrection the sinner/saint asks, "Lord, what would you have me do?" We

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<sup>317</sup> Galatians 3:13

<sup>318</sup> Galatians 4:4-5

<sup>319</sup> Hebrews 4:15; Isaiah 61:10; Jeremiah 33:16

<sup>320</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24; Isaiah 53

<sup>321</sup> Romans 4:24-25

<sup>322</sup> John 15:16

<sup>323</sup> Titus 3:5-7

<sup>324</sup> Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3-22; Galatians 3:6-14

<sup>325</sup> Ephesians 2:8-9

turn to the Law. The law tells us to love, to love God and to love our neighbor.<sup>326</sup> The Law guides to godliness.

Let's recap Quadrants 1 and 2 (Justification Law and Justification Gospel) with an example.

Quadrant 1: A sinner steals, the 7<sup>th</sup> Commandment demands, "You shall not steal." The thief stands in God's courtroom, caught red-handed. The judgment: "Guilty!"

Quadrant 2: The sinful thief has nothing to offer the judge except:

- a) Jesus never stole and covers the sinful thief's thievery with his holiness; then,
- b) He hung on the cross between thieves to pay the punishment, in full, that the sinful thief deserved; then,
- c) He robbed the grave of its power and victory by rising from the dead. The sinful thief, for Jesus' sake, through faith in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, is declared, "Not guilty!"

Relieved and joyful, he then hears a directive, "*He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.*"<sup>327</sup>

Quadrant 3 is Law again, but sanctification Law. Sanctification deals with the Christian life. To be sanctified means to be made holy, to be set apart. While justification is a done and finished state for the Christian, sanctification is ever ongoing throughout the Christian's life this side of heaven. The Christian will never reach perfection in sanctification while on earth. But Sanctification Law is good, it guides to godliness. The trouble is: "The Law tells us what to do, but does not enable us to comply with its commands..."<sup>328</sup> A note I had written in my copy of Walther's *Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, puts it this way, "The Law tells us to walk but doesn't give us the legs to do so."<sup>329</sup>

Having reached this quadrant, the Christian is met with a quandary. The Christian is still 100% sinner and 100% saint. 100% of the Christian desires to do what God and the Word say, but 100% of the Christian rebels against doing anything God wants. Paul describes the quandary this way:

*I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I*

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<sup>326</sup> Matthew 22:37-40

<sup>327</sup> Ephesians 4:28

<sup>328</sup> Walther, *op. cit.*, pp.13-14

<sup>329</sup> "For the Law says indeed that it is God's will and command that we should walk in a new life, but it does not give the power and ability to begin and do it; but the Holy Ghost, who is given and received, not through the Law, but through the preaching of the Gospel, Gal. 3, 14, renews the heart," Lutheran Church. Missouri Synod: *Concordia Triglotta - English : The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.* electronic ed. Milwaukee, WI : Northwestern Publishing House, 1997, FC, SD, IV,11.

*myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am!*

You can almost see Paul throwing up his hands and shouting out for help with the question: *Who will rescue me from this body of death?*

Then, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he answers his own question. God's answer, God's Word says it: *Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!*<sup>330</sup>

Only the Gospel can enable, empower, and motivate the Christian to will and to act according to the Law in a life of sanctification.

#### Quadrant 4 – Sanctification Gospel

"...Good works done by Christians are God's works...A person never begins any good work of his own accord. God must prompt him and work in him even to will, to desire to do, the good work that he is to perform. Accordingly, whenever Christians seem to do something good, it is by the power and operation of God in them that they do it."<sup>331</sup>

That is exactly what the Scriptures declare:

*For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*<sup>332</sup>

*For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.*<sup>333</sup>

*I can do everything through him who gives me strength.*<sup>334</sup>

*Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.*<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> Romans 7:14-25

<sup>331</sup> Walther, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

<sup>332</sup> Ephesians 2:10

<sup>333</sup> Philippians 2:13

<sup>334</sup> Philippians 4:13

<sup>335</sup> John 15:4-5

***Quadrant 4 has everything to do with hopeful resolve!*** “It ain’t bragging if you can do it,” boasted Babe Ruth. Our boast is in Christ and in that boast we boast that we can. We can do everything through Him who loved us. It is He who works in us to will and to act according to His good pleasure and purposes!

## **Christus in nobis! Christus per nos!**

How else can a grown man stop blubbering when he has flashbacks? How else could a hulk of a Rambo type man control his anger? How else could a survivor be free of his guilt? How else could a man commit his wife to the Lord with settled peace before he commits his soul to the Lord at the end of his life? How else could a spouse forgive an unfaithful spouse, how could they trust each other, could they treat each other with love, respect, tenderness and understanding, and find in and with each other joy and happiness? How else would there be any hopeful resolve except for Christ in us, Christ through us?!

*The Grid*<sup>336</sup>

	<b>Justification</b> ( <i>done, finished</i> )	<b>Sanctification</b> ( <i>ongoing in this life</i> )
L A W	<p><b>“Guilty!”</b></p>	<p><b>Guide</b></p>
G O S P E L	<p><b>“Not guilty!”</b></p> <p><b>“Acquitted!”</b></p>	<p><b>Motivate</b></p> <p><b>Empower</b></p> <p><b>Enable</b></p>

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<sup>336</sup> Not only does the grid help in counseling, it is useful in checking out your sermons, (e.g. in developing applications or in making sure that conclusions are not a mere ‘salad’ – ‘Let us...’ – servings [i.e. concluding with the subjunctive, rather than with the indicative]), et. al.

## **A Resolution Model**

*The justified are due the crown because of the promise. Saints should know this promise, not that they may labor for their own profit, for they out to labor for God's glory. But saints should know it so they may not despair in troubles.<sup>337</sup>*

*"The soul of Christ has returned freely to its tranquility; for though the body and the frame perished on the tree, yet the soul burst through the bands of death. Again in the full stature of a perfect man Christ rose resplendent in glory...the tears ceased; the sorrows were hushed; and henceforward, through the boundless day of immortality, doth he 'walk before Jehovah in the land of the living'...(this Scripture) alludes to the eve of his crucifixion, when worn down with long watchfulness and fasting, his spirit almost fainted in the agony of Gethsemane. Still, oppressed and stricken as he was in soul, he yet trusted in Jehovah, for he felt assured that he would not forsake him...But that dread hour has passed. He has risen from the dead and stands girt with truth and holiness and glory." – William Hill Tucker<sup>338</sup>*

*"...the love of God creates precisely out of nothing. Therefore the sinner must be reduced to nothing in order to be saved...[This] is the hope of the resurrection. God brings life out of death. He calls into being that which is from that which is not. In order that there be a resurrection, the sinner must die. All presumption ended. The truth must be seen."<sup>339</sup>*

Assessing progression or regression in the counseling process is a necessary aspect of pastoral counsel. The Word of God needs to be applied by pastoral counselors so any regression may be stopped, reverted, and further progression might be enhanced – by the Spirit's working. The Word is always the best Assessor.<sup>340</sup> Psalm 32, a Psalm of penitent David, can serve as a good basis for examination.

Professor Siggelkow has made use of Psalm 32 to serve as a "Repentance Model." The Repentance Model employs both the Law and Gospel of Psalm 32. The repentant sinner is comforted. counseled with the declaration of sure forgiveness and the message of Justification then is encouraged to continue to grow in the Christian life of Sanctification. While "the Grid," may be helpful, the Repentance Model applies the Word of God in a more direct way for the one who is counseled. Putting the Bible into the hands of the counseled can never hurt and will always be beneficial.

In applying the Repentance Model Prof. Siggelkow has also developed a process and commentary – not cited here – for applying The Repentance Model in the counseling process as it progresses or as it needs revisiting.

The following, however, is the basic Repentance Model:

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<sup>337</sup> Apology V (III) 242-243, quoted from Jeske, John, Treasures Old & New, Daily Readings from the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2009, p.118

<sup>338</sup> Spurgeon, C.H., The Treasury of David, London, England: Marshall Brothers, Limited, 1904: Volume V, p.288, a commentary of Psalm 116.

<sup>339</sup> Forde, Gerhard O., On Being a Theologian of the Cross: Reflections on Luther's Heidelberg Disputation, 1518, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997; pp. 105-115

<sup>340</sup> 2 Corinthians 13:5

## The Repentance Model<sup>341</sup>

### Psalm 32

<p>1. Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.</p> <p>2. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.</p> <p>3. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.</p> <p>4. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.</p> <p>5. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord" – and you forgave the guilt of my sin.</p> <p>6. Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found; surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him. 7. You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.</p> <p>8. I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.</p> <p>9. Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you. 10. Many are the woes of the wicked, but the Lord's unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in him.</p> <p>11. Rejoice in the Lord and be glad, you righteous; sing all you who are upright in heart!</p>	<p>A. (1-2) Confidence is that God does forgive because of Christ. Objective Justification.</p> <p>B. (3-4) Specific Law is spoken and heard.</p> <p>C. (5a) Sin is acknowledged. The sin is against God. True Contrition.</p> <p>D. (5c) Specific Gospel is spoken and heard.</p> <p>E. (6-7) Faith in God's forgiveness in Christ is confessed.</p> <p>F. (8-10) Sanctified Christian living is discussed. The fruits of Repentance. (vs. 9-10 are a warning not to produce fruits that are driven by Law, but by the Gospel.)</p> <p>G. (vs. 11) The joy of Christian living is experienced.</p>
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Professor Siggelkow's use of the Repentance Model sparked an idea, which I began to employ in my counseling settings. If a Repentance Model proved beneficial, why wouldn't a Resolution Model do so the same? Why not employ the Word in a similar way to gauge the progress of Gospel resolution, especially in application of Sanctification Gospel (see Quadrant 4 of the Grid)? The people that I have counseled often asked, "Now what?" when they found resolve in the forgiveness of their sins. The counselor's office seemed safe compared to re-entry into the real life in the real world – "a world that's broken, chaotic, crazy, capricious – a world that frightens us."<sup>342</sup>

<sup>341</sup> Siggelkow, Alan, *Wasted Bones...Rejoice in the LORD - Christian Counseling*, [Metropolitan North Pastors' Conference, South East Wisconsin District, WELS; January 17, 1994], p.2; WLS essay file.

<sup>342</sup> Tchividjian, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

Add another tool to your counseling tool box. There's the walk to the cross, the repentance model, and the walk to the empty tomb. The counselor may find it beneficial to make the Resolution Model another tool, if for no other reason than as a diagnostic gauge.

The Resolution Model employs a powerful portion of the Word of God. Nothing is more powerful than the Word. The Word of God in Psalm 116 binds the counselee directly to the Risen Lord Jesus, in a verbal review of the whole counseling process and progress made. Psalm 116 moves from malady to resolution through the Risen Lord's own recorded journey. There is closure and encouragement for those who have already been counseled and have found Gospel resolution. Psalm 116 serves to review the progress and assess the impact of the resolution.

The words of Psalm 116 are words of resurrection-deliverance and resolve. The risen Savior is speaking through the words of Psalm 116.<sup>343</sup> Luther wrote that, "The psalmist had been at a great deal of unrest...(and) now having prayed (for prayer hath *vim pacitivam*, a pacifying property), he calleth his soul to rest; and rocks it asleep in a spiritual security. Oh, learn this holy art; acquaint thyself with God, acquiesce in him, and be at peace; so shall good be done unto thee." (Job 21) ***Sis<sup>344</sup> Sabbathum Christi.***<sup>345</sup>

Concerning the Messianic nature of Psalm 116, Professor John Brug agrees the psalm is, "Although this psalm is not quoted in the New Testament as a Messianic psalm, nevertheless, because the whole Passover experience points to the work of Christ, it is appropriate to see this psalm as a reflection of Christ's confidence that he would be delivered from death."<sup>346</sup> Those who have been counseled at the cross and the empty tomb have been so delivered.

In a very real spiritual sense, the Resolution Model, rooted in Psalm 116, brings the counseled soul into an intimate unity with the Risen Jesus. Psalm 116 takes the counseled soul down the steps of humiliation and distress. There, with Jesus, the counseled soul can relate to Jesus' suffering and cries out with Jesus in pain and for help. Then, with Jesus, the counseled soul rises with the Lord, exalted, to the heights of glory and exultation.<sup>347</sup> Through Psalm 116 the darkness – shared with Jesus – is left in the shadows and the brightness of resolution shines with Jesus' brightness.<sup>348</sup> The response to and through the Crucified and Risen One grants the counseled soul the

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<sup>343</sup> Martin, Luther, LW, Volume 11, p, 400, "Except for the first word, (v. 10, line 1, is meant, which is the first line of Psalm 115 in the Vulgate and this becomes Psalm 116 in our numbering) the psalm (Psalm 116) could be understood as referring to Christ throughout."

<sup>344</sup> Present Subjunctive, 2<sup>nd</sup> person, singular of the verb *sum*, "*I am.*" Translation of the entire phrase: "*May you (have) the rest of Christ,*" or, "*May you rest in Christ.*"

<sup>345</sup> Spurgeon, *op. cit.*, p. 296; a quote of Luther by a John Trapp.

<sup>346</sup> Brug, John, The People's Bible, Psalms, Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, Volume 2, p. 179.

<sup>347</sup> Philippians 2:5-11

<sup>348</sup> Philippians 2:15

promise of the newness of Christ, as a new person and with a new life – a “therefore” kind of new life.<sup>349</sup>

Psalm 116 gives voice to the LORD<sup>350</sup> and to his thoughts. The counseled soul hears Jesus speak his thoughts, hears Jesus voice her words. Through the verses of Psalm 116, the voices of the Lord and the counseled blend; what Jesus says in this psalm, the recovered soul can say. To be tied together with the LORD, the God of full and faithful grace, is to stand with the Living One, and to walk side by side with Him who is the great, “I Am,”...

- † Who filled every void for Abraham as יְהוָה יְרַאֵה “The LORD will provide”<sup>351</sup> when Abraham was put to the test, the knife had been raised but then stopped, and there was the ram caught in the thicket; and,
- † Who supplied certain victory for Moses (and-leader-in-training) Joshua, as יְהוָה נָסִי “The LORD is my banner”<sup>352</sup> when Moses couldn’t lead anymore and God provided support in Aaron and Hur, and when the Amalekites were crushed; and,
- † Who promised divine presence and power for Gideon as יְהוָה שְׁלֹמּ “when he was throwing his arms up in the air as he cried, “How can I...?” and consuming fire burned up his offering, and the Midian was delivered into his hands;<sup>353</sup> and,
- † Who is the Shepherd for every sheep, ! יְהוָה רָעֵי<sup>354</sup>

One of my favorite psalms is Psalm 116. I turn to that old friend with those whom I have counseled have made a major break-through and, by the Spirit, have achieved a level major progress. They’ve been blessed with hopeful resolve. It’s then that I we review the process and progress using Psalm 116 and the Resolution Model.

I ask those I’ve counseled to read this psalm out loud, and do so with the encouragement, “Insert yourself into the pronouns, ‘I and my.’ This psalm is about Jesus and it is about you. As you and your life are hidden with God in Christ, Jesus is being described and you are being described.”

This psalm seems to come alive to each one in pain, but delivered. By review and recap, the Savior and the saved seem to interact side by side, the saved in and with him, he in and with them. The psalm bespeaks where they have been and where they have arrived in a very real way. The reading of the Psalm depicts the journey from and

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<sup>349</sup> Philippians 2:12, Romans 12:1

<sup>350</sup> יְהוָה

<sup>351</sup> Genesis 22:14

<sup>352</sup> Exodus 17:15

<sup>353</sup> Judges 6:24

<sup>354</sup> Psalm 23:1

through pain to deliverance. Jesus is the travelling companion along the way, throughout the whole journey. This Psalm reassures the struggling soul that because Jesus has been there and will continue to be there in the future. This translates into hopeful resolution. He in them, they in him.

Other Scriptures confirm such blessing. Paul wrote that the Christian and the Christian's life **is**, "...hidden with God in Christ..."<sup>355</sup> The restored person has been declared "not guilty" and now also has been gifted with hopeful resolve in his/her life. Restored the bruised soul has found that, "*Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*"<sup>356</sup>

With sure, hopeful resolve, won by the Crucified and Risen One, the one who was brought low is lifted up and is empowered, enabled, and motivated to face life, its past, its present, and its future with absolute comfort and certainty.

Harold Senkbeil wrote, "I am baptized into Christ, and I am certain that... 'As Jesus was baptized into (my) death, so (I am) baptized into His death. (My) death meant death for Him, but His death means life for (me). Consigned into His death by Baptism, (I am a)

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<sup>355</sup> Colossians 2 & 3: *"In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.* <sup>4</sup> *When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator...Christ is all, and is in all. Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."*

<sup>355</sup>Romans 5:1-5

<sup>356</sup>Senkbeil, Harold, Dying to Live – The Power of Forgiveness, St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1994; p. 60, adapted.

partner with him in his risen life. Thus Baptism is at once (my) tomb and (my) mother, as the ancient fathers continually reminded the faithful. Holy Baptism is both (my) tomb of death and (my) womb of life.<sup>357</sup>

"Something happens to us when God forgives; **you see.** The forgiveness of sins always brings with it a death and a resurrection – the death of the Old Adam and the resurrection of the new man in Christ. Living always in the forgiveness of our sins, we live in continual renewal in Christ. In that there is solid footing for a new life. Holy people lead holy lives. No, we are not holy in and of ourselves, but the life we live as baptized believers is not our own. It is the life which Christ lives in us. And since it is Christ's life, it is a holy life."<sup>358</sup>

As a Christian counselor you wouldn't have to give me a paycheck for my work when I am privileged to witness what no money could buy: the tears of hope and joy as a cleansed soul emerges from the tomb of death and is born from the tomb of new life – in Christ – through the Word and the Spirit!

What joy and fulfillment to witness the gift of faith that now enables, empowers, motivates, and equips the recovered soul to go forth and go on in life, in life's callings and roles, filled with hopeful resolve, hopeful resolution! Having gone to the cross and then to the unsealed, empty tomb, there is a blessed denouement when applying the following "resolution model" based on Psalm 116. I purposely make use of the resolution model to recap the Spirit's work. It serves as a confirmation that the Gospel of the empty tomb has worked its grace in the face of the curse, its peace in the face of such a time and situation of unrest, its power in the face of weakness, and its joy in the face of such sorrow.

I believe that the hopeful resolve gained in the walk to the empty tomb is seen in a pattern of reviewing the malady, recalling the deliverance, rejoicing in salvation, and in achieving responses that only the Gospel can produce. Since Psalm 116 follows a circular, spiral form – which contains all four aspects of the resolution pattern – so does the resolution model. Throughout the resolution model the child of God and the risen Savior go through their crosses together, but then emerge together in triumph.

As four legs make a table firm and complete, the soul, in hopeful resolution, voices a firm completion as it...

**Reviews (R1)**– *the malady and its origin/source which brought the downfall;*  
**Recalls (R2)** – *the LORD's deliverance;*  
**Rejoices (R3)** – *in the joy of salvation which is acknowledged and expressed;*  
**Responds (R4)** – *with the "therefore" of a sanctified life that is motivated, empowered, and enabled by the LORD and the Gospel.*

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<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163

## The Resolution Model

### *Eris<sup>359</sup> Sabbathum Christi – Psalm 116*

<p><sup>1</sup>I love the LORD, for he heard my voice;     he heard my cry for mercy. <sup>2</sup>Because he turned his ear to me,     I will call on him as long as I live.</p> <p><sup>3</sup>The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came upon me;     I was overcome by trouble and sorrow.</p> <p><sup>4</sup>Then I called on the name of the LORD:     “O LORD, save me!”</p> <p><sup>5</sup>The LORD is gracious and righteous;     our God is full of compassion.</p> <p><sup>6</sup>The LORD protects the simplehearted; when I was in great need, he saved me.</p> <p><sup>7</sup>Be at rest once more, O my soul,     for the LORD has been good to you.</p> <p><sup>8</sup>For you, O LORD, have delivered     my soul from death,     my eyes from tears,     my feet from stumbling, <sup>9</sup>that I may walk before the LORD     in the land of the living.</p> <p><sup>10</sup>I believed; therefore I said,     “I am greatly afflicted.”</p> <p><sup>11</sup>And in my dismay I said,     “All men are liars.”</p> <p><sup>12</sup>How can I repay the LORD     for all his goodness to me?</p> <p><sup>13</sup>I will lift up the cup of salvation     and call on the name of the LORD.</p> <p><sup>14</sup>I will fulfill my vows to the LORD     in the presence of all his people.</p> <p><sup>15</sup>Precious in the sight of the LORD     is the death of his saints.</p> <p><sup>16</sup>O LORD, truly I am your servant; I am your servant, the son of your maidservant;     you have freed me from my chains.</p> <p><sup>17</sup>I will sacrifice a thank offering to you     and call on the name of the LORD.</p> <p><sup>18</sup>I will fulfill my vows to the LORD     in the presence of all his people,</p> <p><sup>19</sup>in the courts of the house of the LORD—     in your midst, O Jerusalem.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Praise the LORD.</p>	<p><b>vv. 1,2 –</b> R3 &amp; R4 R2 R4</p> <p><b>vv. 3,4 –</b> R1 R1 R2 (the LORD used the malady for good intent)</p> <p><b>vv. 4,5</b> R2 R2 R1/R2</p> <p><b>v. 7</b> R4</p> <p><b>vv. 8-9</b> R2/R1 R4</p> <p><b>vv. 10-11</b> { 1<sup>st</sup> interlude: alternate to the LORD are lies }</p> <p><b>vv. 12-14</b> R3 R4</p> <p><b>v. 15</b> { 2<sup>nd</sup> interlude: the LORD’s ultimate goal and joy concerning His saints }</p> <p><b>v. 16</b> R4 R2</p> <p><b>vv. 17-19</b> R4 R3</p>
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{A parallel Scripture that works well in the resolution model is contained is the prayer recorded in Jonah 2<sup>360</sup> to reinforce a child of God who has been blessed with hopeful resolve.}

<sup>359</sup> Future Indicative, 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular, of the verb *sum*, “I am.” Translation of the entire phrase: “*You will (have) the rest of Christ*,” or, “*You are resting in Christ*.”

<sup>360</sup> How well the account of Jonah fits with Counseling at the Empty Tomb! cf. Matthew 12:39-40.

An example:

Becky

Becky came to our church for a funeral. She and her family became prospects. What brought Becky into continued spiritual care and counseling was her husband's death. He died young in his early 50's. She was left a young widow with three children still at home, the youngest in junior high. Becky sought grief counseling. Along with the sorrow over the loss of her husband, she was suffering from an overwhelming feeling of guilt.

Becky's past was defining her present, especially in her grief. When she was 17 she was date-raped. She hadn't even given the hint of a "maybe" when the high school jock took her virginity in spite of her "no." She couldn't talk to her parents about it because they had been pretty clear that she should be a good girl, not lead any guys on, not even allow herself to be found in compromising circumstances. She knew that if she told them they would blame her, so she never said a thing about it to her parents. As a result she also carried the guilt for the date-rape as if she had lead the guy on. She carried this guilt against the perceived backdrop of one her parents' severe lectures.

She no longer felt like a "good" girl. She was sure that she now had the reputation of a "bad" girl, and she felt guilty about that, too. So since she felt what she felt, and perceived that she had the reputation to match the negative label, "bad girl" she became one. She acted out as a "bad" girl would. For her it was *The People of the Lie* all over again: she did what made her feel guilty, because as long as she was feeling guilty, she might as well do what made her feel guilty.

Becky grew up and resolved to commit herself to a sanctified relationship. She married. But, after what seemed to be a good relationship, her husband was unfaithful to her. She felt, God was punishing her for having once been a "bad" girl. She divorced.

Then she met the one she knew would be faithful. They loved each other. They did things right. They married. His children became her children and they had children of their own. Their relationship was good. Life was good, not that it didn't have its challenges (including a diagnosis and treatments for Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma, which went into remission). The cancer served to draw Becky and her husband closer.

But then Becky's husband died unexpectedly and at such a "young" age. Again, she thought, God was punishing her. Her skeletons had taken on flesh again, she thought, and God was sending them out of the closet to haunt her. She described life this way: "...Life is...cold, cruel...hard, harsh...BIZARRE!" She said, "It seems that God doesn't hear me at all...It seems that God isn't even there."

Counseling at the cross was powerful and effective for Becky. Counseling at the empty tomb brought life back to her wilted soul, spirit, and body. She talks about how when the devil wants to rob her of comfort and certainty she'd, on her own, walk again to the cross in her mind and heart to again take in the sight of the Savior's cleansing blood.

On these walks to the cross she especially listened again the Crucified One voicing his prayer for forgiveness for those who crucified him, his pronouncements of paradise to the thief and yearning with thirst in his body. But she listened especially to the sound of Jesus' declarations of a finished salvation and victory even in death.

When she feels the persistent badgering of the evil one to make her feel the guilt again, to lose hope, and to be overwhelmed by the thought, "I can't go on," she walks to the empty tomb. In her mind and heart again and again, she hears the risen Jesus speak her name, "Becky," in the same soft, sure, vibrant, and inviting way that he had spoken the Mary's name at the empty tomb. It continues to amaze her to be blessed by how real the risen Savior is, and how real he is for her with his peace and resolve.

In a sense pastoral counselors never "releases" the counseled "patient." The frequency of visits may be fewer, but "check-ups" need to continue. Affirmation that there is resolution is as ongoing as is growing in faith.<sup>361</sup>

Sandwiched inside the word affirmation is another word, "firm." The use of Psalm 116 as the basis of a resolution model firms up what God grants through the living Lord. Reaffirmation is repeated in order to confirm what the Spirit of forgiveness, grace and strength gifts a person like Becky with her past, in her present, and for her future.

*An Application of the Repentance Model with Becky*  
*{making use of Psalm 116}*

Recall the resolution Model Key:

**Reviews (R1)**—the malady and its origin/source which brought the downfall;  
**Recalls (R2)**—the LORD's deliverance;  
**Rejoices (R3)**—in the joy of salvation which is acknowledged and expressed;  
**Responds (R4)**—with the "therefore" of a sanctified life that is motivated, empowered, and enabled by the LORD and the Gospel.

Becky loathed the coming of spring. Why? She still had her marriage and her husband during winter. Spring always told her that she needed to move on. Each spring was another spring away from their last winter together.

When springtime came she couldn't understand why everyone's spirits picked up. Hers drooped. When springtime was opening up the ground with new life and buds were blooming beautifully on the plants, she longed for the frozen ground, the cloudy skies, even the dirty snow. Think of what that meant concerning the celebration of Easter! Christmas was associated with her husband, but not Easter. When Jesus was getting out of his grave, she was feeling more like climbing into her husband's just wanting her pain over and to be with him.

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<sup>361</sup> 2 Peter 3:18, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

See what the “father of lies”<sup>362</sup> can do? A good dose of the truth with a re-visitation and review of the malady and the help and healing of the Lord is the answer to the lies. Psalm 116 was like smelling salts for Becky.

I had Becky read verses 1 & 2, “*I love the LORD for he heard my voice, he heard my cry for mercy, so I will call on him as long as I live.*” **R3, R4.** Is that true for you in springtime, Becky?

“Yes.” Why? “Because God doesn’t change and his mercy doesn’t change, even when the seasons do.”

Read on: “*The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came upon me; I was overcome by trouble and sorrow. Then I called on the name of the LORD: “O LORD, save me!” The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion. The LORD protects the simple-hearted; when I was in great need, he saved me.*”

I know that springtime is hard for you, Becky. You grieve all over again. Do you feel guilty about that? “Yes. Christians aren’t supposed to grieve like everyone else, right?”<sup>363</sup> But I can’t help it. I still miss him so. I still think he might walk through the door. Every time I do something around the house that he did, I get angry with him, with God, with what is...” Entangled all over again, right? **R1** Let’s re-read that last verse. “...he saved me.” True, still? “True, still.” **R2**

The next verses say it all. Let’s read them, “*For you, O LORD, have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before the LORD in the land of the living.*” Be at rest, once more, O my soul. Repeat that, Becky, only say it the way you hear Jesus saying your name. “Be at rest once more, O my soul.” (She says in that sweet Jesus risen and appearing in the Garden voice that she can reduplicate from how she hears Jesus say it to Mary in the ears of her soul. It is a joy for me to hear her speak as she imagines Jesus would to her). **R2, R3**

No need to explore the Psalm further in this application of the resolution model. No need, either, to chide her for listening to the other voices (first interlude: verses 10-11), nor look at her husband’s death from the LORD’s point of view, (second interlude: verse 15). We needed to jump right to verses 17-19, which Becky read.

Let’s offer a prayer of thanksgiving. I will start and you continue. Becky even gave thanks for springtime and asked that she be able to share in and promote the joyful exuberance her family, children, and grandchildren were finding in spring and in “moving on.” **R4**

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<sup>362</sup> John 8:44

<sup>363</sup> Satan was accusing Becky of grieving as if Christians do not grieve. The difference between a Christian’s grief and an unbeliever’s grief is that the resurrection of Jesus gives the Christian hope, even in the midst of sorrow. Christians grieve, but not without hope, 1 Thessalonians 4:13, “*Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.*”

## **Conclusion**

*God hides life under death, heaven under hell, wisdom under folly, and grace under sin. – Martin Luther<sup>364</sup>*

### **Craig and Tammy**

Craig served in Iraq, a Marine. Life seemed on track for Craig. Then, when he went to serve his country, his life derailed for him. It seemed fair for Craig to think that while he was off doing something right and good, what was right and good should be awaiting him back home, right and good should come back to him in life.<sup>365</sup> But while he was away, the girl he'd left behind found someone else. He had pledged his heart and thought he'd be spending the rest of his life with her. He thought he'd come home, they'd be married, have children, and live happily ever after. But things didn't turn out to be as story-book as Craig imagined. He was more than just terribly hurt. He was angry. Without her, life was a tragedy. He couldn't let go of the hurt, the dissolution, the anger.

Craig was decimated. He felt deceived. He lived with a chip on his shoulder because life had cheated him. He could not see how he could be happy ever again. He wasted a few years working a mindless and aimless job only to earn enough to party and get wasted on weekends. "Marines don't cry, they just die," he told me. He wouldn't cry, so he was choosing to die, in his own way. Then he met Tammy.

Tammy needed a man who would be faithful, dedicated, and committed to her. Her father had died when she was a little girl. The boy friends of her young adulthood played at love when what they fundamentally wanted was sex. At best, she felt disappointed by the men of her life. At worst she felt used and discarded by the men of her life. One guy even physically assaulted her when she wised up and confronted him about his true motives. She expected no man would ever meet her needs. Then she met Craig.

"It is what it is!" became "What was meant to be!" when Craig and Tammy found each other. They found solace in and with each other. They found what their hearts yearned for in and with each other. The hurt that both had experienced seemed to be left in a distant past. They married. They had a child together. They even made spiritual activity part of their lives. They seemed to be facing a hope-filled future.

Enter Facebook. In a whimsical search Craig checked out what had happened to his old flame. "The dumbest thing I ever did," he'd later say. The search found "her" and soon the two of them were in dialogue with each other. The contact seemed harmless at first, they were just catching up. But her marriage was not going well. She communicated that her needs were not being met in her marriage, and whether she

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<sup>364</sup> Day by Day We Magnify Thee, *op.cit.*, p. 343, (citing sermons from the year 1527, WA, 17, II, 274f)

<sup>365</sup> Some refer to this thinking as Karma

intentionally or incidentally sowed the seeds of discontent, Craig began to see similar negative parallels in his marriage with Tammy.

Tammy found out that Craig was communicating with "her." The old "demons" of doubting her man and of her insecurities arose. Maybe Craig was going to discard her too. Insecurity became accusation. Accusation became argument. Craig now had tangible proof that his relationship with Tammy wasn't good, so he concluded, that what "she" (the other woman) was right. He concluded that Tammy, like "her" husband was wrong for "her," was wrong for him. The other woman had come in between Craig and Tammy.

But good Marines make good on their oaths. And good Marines also take action. "Let's have another baby!" Craig convinced Tammy. That was Craig's answer to their perceived difficulties, even the other woman's divisive words. That would prove his commitment to Tammy and Tammy's to him. Having another baby would bond them more closely together and solidify their marriage. Tammy was delighted. She concluded that Craig certainly wouldn't want another child if he really didn't love her and if he really wasn't committed to her and their marriage. The marriage seemed to be okay for a while. But man-made solutions are never lasting.

But the other woman hadn't given up on her interference Craig and Tammy's relationship and "she" kept offering her negative commentaries, inputs, and persuasions. Contacts kept happening and more frequently. When Tammy, then expecting the baby whose birth was to bring them together more strongly and permanently, found out that the other woman was renewing contacts with Craig, there was a major confrontation and blow up.

The result was that Tammy went back to her parents with their first child, and carrying their second. Craig thought it was over. But he went after Tammy and their children. He was able to convince her to come back home. He thought he'd make a new start. Craig even contacted "her" (the other woman) and demanded that there be no contact ever again. Things seemed good for a while. The second child was born. But "missing in action"<sup>366</sup> in their troubled marriage was the third strand, Jesus.<sup>367</sup> They didn't know the binding and the buffering Jesus can bring.

Every once in a while Craig would have thoughts of "her" again. The thoughts were not of being with "her" or leaving Tammy to do so. That relationship was over in his mind. He'd expunged "her" from their lives. But when he was thinking of "her" it somehow showed on the outside and Tammy would pick up on the signs. How Craig showed that his thoughts were on "her" was that he became very quiet, pensive, even withdrawing. Tammy knew. When Craig became that way, Tammy would ask, "Are you thinking of her?"

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<sup>366</sup> A term that Craig would no from his active duty service.

<sup>367</sup> "A cord of three strands is not quickly broken," Ecclesiastes 4:12.

Marines are honest, so he would answer in the affirmative. Craig's "Yes, but..." was a blow to Tammy's heart and her trust in Craig. She never heard Craig's, "but..." in answer to her question. So Tammy would feel betrayed again, betrayed by the man in her life. All of her insecurities resurfaced. She lashed out at Craig in what became the argument of arguments. She left Craig again.

In response, Craig called "her," (the other woman). Coincidentally, or unfortunately, Craig happened to call "her" on the day "she'd" left her husband. Craig decided to meet "her." He was vulnerable, she was determined. But both made the choice. Swept up by all the emotions and the moment, Craig became unfaithful to Tammy and broke their marriage vow.

Craig immediately felt guilty. He immediately realized that he did not love "her," but that he really did love Tammy and wanted to spend his life only with her. He also realized how sinful his actions were. He was contrite. He wanted Tammy and his family back.

The Lord used that splash in the face of the cold realities of his sin, with all of its baggage, as well as all of baggage of the past that each of them had brought into their marriage to generate a desire to do what was right. He convinced Tammy to reunite the family with the promise that they would work out and work on everything.

The cold realities also caused them to realize that they'd bottomed out. They had nowhere else to turn, so they turned to the preacher of that church located on the corner that they'd always driven by. Would their marriage have a "snowball's chance?" Was it doomed.

That preacher led them to the Word. They studied and were led, by the Spirit, to the Lord. They professed their faith in Jesus as their Savior and the One who could heal their hearts and lives. Their family was together with associated with a family of believers that embraced them. They counseled. They embraced each other. The walks to the cross and walks to the empty tomb worked the miracles they both needed. Now good marines, like Craig, and their wives, like Tammy, continue to be filled with hopeful resolve through Jesus' Gospel-motivating, Gospel-empowering, and Gospel-enabling resurrection.

As Christians who know that the struggle is ongoing, they keep on fighting the good fight, too. What Tammy continues to deal with her insecurities. What Craig continues to deal with now are severe bouts of guilt as a result of Satan's accusations. The evil one does a good job of pulling those sins off the cross and slapping them back on the sinner. When that guilt is resurrected, the Resurrected one seems to be dead again and resealed in the tomb. Return visits to the cross and the empty tomb affix the guilt to the Crucified again and leave it behind in the tomb again. When the insecurities pay their visits (with their resultant sinful responses) there are visits to the cross and the empty tomb in order to discard the sin and insecurities once again where God discarded them. Divine maintenance!



It has been opined that the age of the “generalist” has passed and that we now live in the age of the “specialist.” In the medical field the General Practitioner will refer to the specialist. So it is in the counseling field. There will be counseling situations and occasions which will need specialists. In fact, sometimes when issues with which the Shepherd’s sheep struggle are far beyond our expertise or experience, faithfulness to the call of serving as a pastoral counselor requires that we refer some of those whom we counsel to specialists.<sup>368</sup>

But general practitioners are still the first line in counseling. Pastoral counselors are not only the first line, they are necessary to the counseling lifeline – even and especially when referrals need to be made. The pastoral counselor is well-equipped with what could be called “...the now-power of the gospel (for those) in the crucible of excruciating pain.”<sup>369</sup> Pastoral counselors, equipped with the Word of the Cross and the Word of the Empty Tomb are well-equipped to counsel those in that crucible.

As the carpenter has his favorite tools in his tool box, so do the representatives of the Carpenter of Nazareth. Use those tools.

Walk to the cross. Walk to the empty tomb. “Overlap” the cross and the empty tomb. Help the counseled see what was and what is through him who is the beginning and the end, the alpha and the omega, the One who was and is and is to come.<sup>370</sup> Facilitate them in finding the sure stability in the only One, Jesus Christ, who can claim to be and is the same yesterday, today and forever.<sup>371</sup> He backs up his promise with a bloody cross and a slightly used grave: “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”<sup>372</sup>

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<sup>368</sup> For example, in some cases in which I counseled God’s saints who experienced eating disorders I referred them to specialists and group support. The counseling was triangulated: pastor – specialist counselor – group. Make sure that releases are signed and that the counselor is one you can trust to uphold, not counter, the spiritual counsel you would offer. In the circle of biblical and confessional Lutheran pastoral counselors with which I associate, a trusted network can be found in the *WLCF – Christian Family Solutions’ “Member Assistance Program,”* (MAP). Currently the MAP option would connect the counselee with a resource made up of three doctors and seventeen specialized counselors, all of whom hold masters degrees and are licensed.

<sup>369</sup> Tchividjian, *op. cit.*; p. 11. The author goes on to explain this “now-power of the gospel”: “It’s almost as if, for me, the gospel changed from something hazy and monochromatic to something richly multicolored, vivid, and vibrant. I was realizing in a fresh way the *now-power* of the gospel – that the gospel doesn’t simply rescue us *from* the past and rescue us *for* the future; it also rescues us *in* the present from being enslaved to things like fear, insecurity, anger, self-reliance, bitterness, entitlement, and insignificance...(God) had stripped me down – wrecked me afresh! And when he does that to a person – when you actually feel like you have *nothing* – Jesus becomes more to you than you ever could have hoped or imagined...because Jesus was strong for me, I was free to be weak; because Jesus won for me, I was free to lose; because Jesus was someone for me, I was free to be no one; because Jesus was extraordinary, I was free to be ordinary; because Jesus succeeded for me, I was free to fail.” pp. 23-24. “God has us fully covered: past, present, future.” p. 177

<sup>370</sup> Revelations 1:8

<sup>371</sup> Hebrews 13:8

<sup>372</sup> Hebrews 13:5

Then give thanks when you hear: *The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man (or anything or anyone else) do to me?*<sup>373</sup>

Use the tools the Lord of the Church has given pastoral counselors, the Word and Sacraments. They are tried and true tools. They are our best tools. They work. They're the Comforter's tools! Their use makes us competent to counsel. Employ the repentance and the resolution models. As long as you have the Word with you, it's "have office will travel" whether it's in a front room, kitchen, hospital, hospice, or a funeral home.

Counseling at the empty tomb, by the Spirit, gives hopeful resolve. Hold forth to those...

- † overcome by sadness and sorrow the living Jesus who says, "Mary,"
- † who are afraid the living Jesus who says, "Peace be with you!"
- † whose hearts have lost joy and exuberance for life, whose faces are downcast and reveal the questions and thoughts surging behind them, "What's the purpose of it all?" "Life's cheated me," "I've wasted my life," "I'm a failure," who need the living Jesus who rose and proved all the testimonies in the Scriptures about him are true; who need their hearts re-ignited with the fire of the Spirit's love and confidence so that their faces will glow again with an Easter Sunday glow;
- † who doubt the living Jesus who bids, "Touch me and see...blessed are you when you do not see and yet believe;"
- † who need multiple affirmations of forgiveness and multiple confirmations that life does go on, does have purpose, and that they can move on and will move on in the strength and power the risen One there is the new morning breakfast of daily bread and a one on one talk with the Savior Who restores<sup>374</sup>;
- † who are scarred by life, needing the blessed scars left by the nails and spear in living Jesus that forever are the emblems of glory and victory; and,
- † who are empty nesting, are retiring, are new parents, are lonely, are going through or point of no return (a crisis) or any kind of unwelcome, uncomfortable, draining, fearsome transition.

All of them need the wonderful news that Jesus lives!

And when they come to you tired with a fatigue that no physical sleep can invigorate, herald the Shepherd's invitation, "Come," and apply His "rest."

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<sup>373</sup> Hebrews 13:6

<sup>374</sup> See 1 Kings 19 and what The Angel of the LORD provided a depressed Elijah, daily bread and His presence.

And when all of them who have been filled with the hopeful resolve they'd experienced at the empty tomb throughout their lives are finally in the hour of death, declare to them again:

*If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.*<sup>375</sup>

Then announce, powerfully and with a tone and confidence befitting the full impact of the promises contained in the words of the One who raised from death a little girl, a widow's son, and a four-day-dead friend, that the Lord Jesus promises:

*"Because I live, you also will live,"<sup>376</sup> "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die."*<sup>377</sup>

Pray with all your heart that, in your counseling the motives, the words, and the actions, you bear deeply within your heart a sincere love for each sheep, "...no matter how torn and bruised that sheep is...."<sup>378</sup> Work as hard as you are able to do your very best (dependent on the Lord, of course) to serve, undeservedly, in the ministry of the Word and Sacrament – especially as a pastoral counselor – to help people through this life and to the life of the world to come.

Get a grip on the reality that none of us is indispensable<sup>379</sup> as we often presume ourselves to be and that the ministry far transcends the minister. Then be confident that "...(He)... is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, **according to his power that is at work within us.**"<sup>380</sup>

And when you have done all that you can do, and you have said all that can be said, commend all of those you have served and counseled to, "...him who is able to keep you (counselor and those counseled) from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen."<sup>381</sup>

The art of effective pastoral counseling is really all about Jesus and connecting Jesus with those sinking in the quagmire of a sin-affected life with its pits, graves, death, and

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<sup>375</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:19-20

<sup>376</sup> John 14:19

<sup>377</sup> John 11:25-26

<sup>378</sup> Walter, *op. cit.*, p. 72

<sup>379</sup> One of my sons posted a quote of Charles De Gaulle, "Graveyards are filled with those who thought themselves to be indispensable."

<sup>380</sup> Ephesians 3:20

<sup>381</sup> Jude 24-25

hell.<sup>382</sup> Jesus came to pull us from the pit, open the grave, conquer death, and douse the fires of hell for those we counsel and for us who give counsel.

Always, always, always point the troubled heart, soul, and conscience to Jesus. When you do your effort in counseling will never be in vain, ever. Talk Jesus. Talk the cross. Talk the empty tomb. Take them to Jesus. Take them to Calvary. Take them to Joseph's lovely garden. When they're tired, give them Sabbath. When they've been through "hell," give them heaven. When they have lost hope, counsel at the empty tomb and give them hopeful resolve.

As you do, remember:

"Those who serve the Lord of the Church always have as their goal the joy of heaven. Only that promised joy can propel us past the seemingly impossible predicaments that life immediately in front of us. The Lord's resurrection leads us to work toward our own. Such long-range motivation is not pious, pie-in-the-sky rhetoric. It is spiritually pragmatic, godly practical, and all and only what we need to keep at the work...When St. Paul urged such dedication based on Christ's resurrection, he pointed to the Lord: "Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm, let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain," (1 Co 15:58).<sup>383</sup>

God will bless your counseling at the cross and at the empty tomb! "*For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again,*" 2 Corinthians 5:14-15.

Only keep a firm hold on Me. Through My Word I have made a beginning with you and brought you to Myself. But if you wish to give proof that you are abiding in Me, you will have a hard struggle at first and will think that you are alone, and that I have forsaken you and left you in the grip of fear and misery. But only keep a firm hold and I will give you proof that I love you, and you will feel in your heart how well-pleased God is with your faith, your suffering, and your witness. From such experiences you will increasingly understand who I am, and what I can do, and what My plan is for you, and I will reveal Myself to you from day to day until you are so strengthened through temptations that in the name of Heaven you can defy the devil and beat him off. This power to defy the devil comes from experiencing in times of temptation the doctrine which we already believe. Thus we perceive that we are in Christ and Christ in us. And where there was previously wrath and anger there is nothing of that kind now, for Christ is our dear Bishop and Mediator with God and He alone is our Master and Lord, and no one shall accuse or frighten us, or teach, or rule us. – Martin Luther<sup>384</sup>

*"Read the Bible daily. Pray hard. Work as though there is no tomorrow. Rest your body, mind, and soul; and the Lord will bless your ministry according to his wisdom and will."*<sup>385</sup>

<sup>382</sup>

<sup>383</sup> Mueller, Wayne, We Believe in Jesus Christ, Essays of Christology, What Do We Mean , Jesus is Lord of the Church?; Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1999; p. 44

<sup>384</sup> Day by Day We Magnify Thee, *op. cit.*, p. 347 (citing Luther's *Exposition of John XIV and XV*, WA, 45,600f)

<sup>385</sup> Advice from Wayne D. Mueller to Candidatum Reverendi Ministerii David P. Russow written on a blank card and given on seminary graduation day, May 28, 1980. The recipient keeps the card in a pocket of his working Bible and returns its encouragements on a regular basis.

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"God does everything through people who understand they're nothing. And God does nothing through those who think they're everything."<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>386</sup> Tchividjian, *op. cit.*, p. 20