

Counsel the Word

The Institute of Soteric Counseling

When I Am Overwhelmed

by J. R. Ensey

The unexpected news shocked me to the core of my being. I felt weak, helpless, not at all in control—in short, overwhelmed.

Has the feeling of being overwhelmed ever washed over you?

Subconsciously, we all are tempted to feel a bit invulnerable. Stuff happens to others... but not to us. That theory is short-lived for most of us. We can go from the mountain peak to the deep valley in one quick slide. One phone call is all it takes to overwhelm us.

The definition of “overwhelm” is (1) “to submerge suddenly by irresistible force; (2) to leave emotionally too moved for speech or expression.” How suddenly we can be submerged in a crisis—an auto accident, a doctor’s unexpected report, a sudden loss, or hurtful words from someone who is dear to us. It can put us under, take our breath away, and leave us emotionally drained.

David said, “when my heart is overwhelmed...,”—not *if* but *when*. Each of us will have our turn at tragedy. What should we do in such a time? David provides the correct answer: “I will cry unto thee...lead me to the rock that is higher than I” (Psalm 61:2). Not “I will call for my psychiatrist... my meds...my security blanket...” but “I will go to the Rock.” But does He understand? Does He really know what I am going through? Does He know the way I feel? The psalmist realized that He really did know: “When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path...[He can be] touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Psalm 12:3; Hebrews 4:15). There is no one else of whom that can be said. He is “higher” than I—or my friends, or psychologists, or medications, or any supposed human remedy.

When we do not know what to do, when the way is not clear, when confusion clouds our judgment, that is the time to “trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:5,6). This should become the standard response to the vicissitudes of life and a major part of our worldview. Do not trust your emotions; they can mislead you. When emotion runs high, judgment runs low. Resist the human impulse to be angry or bitter. Instead, go to the Lord. Take your pain and your problem to God in prayer. Obedience, prayer, and

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the Word combine to apply a healing balm to the situation. They are a “Rock formation” that provides a sense of permanence, stability, and trustworthiness. Resist the thought that your problems are unique in the world or strange to God, or that the simple answers provided in the Word of God are not sufficiently complex. Our problems are actually quite common and will respond to the application of God’s Word, His love and His grace.

Whether it is us who is overwhelmed, or someone who has come to us for help, remember the words of David: “From the ends of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I.”

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- The 3rd Annual ISC Training Conference will be held October 28, 29, 2004.

Editorial

As counselors, we will come across the "control issue" many times, for it is alive and well in a wounded person. Some of the hurting will refuse to give up control and will spend the rest of their lives crippled. When a person's success hinges on the achievement of a goal which can be blocked or which is uncertain or impossible how will he respond to those who frustrate his goals? Often he will attempt to control or manipulate the people or circumstances that stand between him and his success.

One way of manipulating is by hurting those who are trying to help us. Our job as counselors is to take these folks to the Word of God, and help them understand that perhaps what they are terming "success" is contrary to what God terms success. For example, very often we look at lack of pain as success. If we are not suffering...if we are passing through our days without trouble...we feel we have accomplished that goal. But God often leads us to pain and trouble. He desires that we walk through it with Him, emerging on the other side of it as better Christians. Stronger. Like purified gold.

Our job as counselors is not to relieve another person's pain--no matter how much we might like to. It is not a pleasant thing to see another suffer. But it is not our job to make the counselee "feel better." It is to help them draw closer to God, and to become more like Him. When that has been accomplished, we can walk away praising Jesus, resting in the knowledge that He has once again been glorified.

Isn't It Wonderful That Our Kids Are Confused?

The women's studies department of St. Louis University put up a poster of "Christa," a big-breasted female Jesus hanging on the cross. Judith Gibbons, the department's director, said, "The Christian image of Jesus on the cross is always male."

The Queer Nation printed and distributed hand-outs in Chicago stating, "Jesus of Nazareth lived with 11 other men. They slept together, loved each other, kissed and embraced. There was one, the beloved disciple John, whom Jesus especially loved."

After finishing a column on Mario Cuomo, *Washington Post* columnist Richard Cohen asked his computer's Microsoft Word program to check spelling and grammar. The program zeroed in on "he and his wife, Matilda" and advised: "A gender-neutral word like 'spouse' might be more appropriate."

-from *U.S. News & World Report*



A Fence — Or An Ambulance?

by Joseph Maldins

'Twas a DANGEROUS CLIFF, as they freely confessed,
Though to walk near its crest was so pleasant;
But over it's terrible edge there had slipped
A duke and full many peasant.
So the people said something would have to be done,
But here projects did not at all tally;
Some said, "Put up a fence around the edge of the cliff,"
Some; "An ambulance down in the valley."

But the cry for the ambulance carried the day,
For it spread through the neighboring city;
A fence may be useful or not, it is true,
But each heart became full of pity
For those who slipped over that dangerous cliff;
And dwellers in highway and alley
Gave pounds or gave pence, not to put up a fence,
But an ambulance down in the valley.

"For a cliff is all right, if you're careful," they said,
"And if folks even slip and are dropping,
It isn't the slipping that hurts them so much,
As the shock down below when they're stopping."
So day after day, as the mishaps occurred,
Quick forth would these rescuers sally
To pick up the victims who fell off the cliff,
With their ambulance down in the valley.

Then an old sage remarked; "Its a marvel to me
That people give more attention
to repairing results that to stopping the cause,
When they'd much better aim at prevention.
Lets stop at its source all this mischief," cried he,
"Come, neighbors and friends, let us rally
If the cliff we will fence we might also dispense
With the ambulance down in the valley."

"Oh he's a fanatic," the others rejoined,
Dispense with ambulance? Never!
He'd dispense with all charities, too, if he could;
No! No! We'll support them forever.
Aren't we picking up folks just as fast as they fall?
And shall this man dictate to us? Shall he?
Why should people of sense stop to put up a fence,
While the ambulance works in the valley?"

But a sensible few, who are practical too,
Will not bear with such nonsense much longer;
They believe that prevention is better than cure,
And their party will soon be the stronger.
Encourage them then with your purse, voice, and pen,
And while other philanthropist dally,
They will scorn all pretense and put up a stout fence
On the cliff that hangs over the valley.

Better guide well the young than reclaim them when old,
For the voice of true wisdom is calling,
"To rescue the fallen is good, But tis best
To prevent other people from falling."
Better close up the source of temptation and crime
Than deliver from dungeon or galley;
Better put a strong fence around the top of the cliff
Than an ambulance down in the valley.

Warnings About Psychoactive Drugs

A number of news organizations have recently reported the findings of study groups which show that those who are taking psychoactive drugs, especially children, are in increased danger of being suicidal. One of our own apostolic young ladies agreed to participate in a psychotropic drug program offered by Eli Lilly, the pharmaceutical company that markets Prozac. She allegedly had dropped out of IBC in Indianapolis to join the program to raise her tuition of for the next semester. In just a few weeks she had committed suicide. Scores of others, it has been learned, have met similar fates when taking such drugs. When will our people get the message that the drug companies are more about money than our health?

Depressing Antidepressant News

“In last February's Journal of Clinical Psychiatry [2003], psychiatrist Giovanni Fava, reviewing decades of clinical literature and recent neurobiological findings, concluded that depression treated with anti-depressants has poor long-term outcomes. Some research suggests that the longer people stay on antidepressants, the greater the likelihood of relapse when they discontinue. And depression often recurs within a few months of the onset of pharmacological treatment...

“Fava presents several hypotheses to explain how anti-depressants may worsen depression. Faulty serotonin levels can't just be 'fixed,' he says. Changes in one part of the brain create myriad other chemical and architectural changes” (excerpted from Psychotherapy Networker, Vol. 27, No. 5, p. 17).

Homeopathy Strikes Again

We all eat herbs of one kind or another as standard food, but the way some are marketed and consumed they can be dangerous to your health—mental and physical. Some who promote “holistic” health and alternative medicines may be altogether innocent, but too many are in that field to make a quick buck from the tiny-brained folk.

Now the homeopathy crowd has come up with a new money-making scheme—selling oxygen at Oxygen Bars. I was recently in a San Diego mall and happened upon one of the new enterprises. People would walk up, pay money, and pick up an apparatus which dispensed oxygen and start breathing. They would then go on their way. The promoters claim that infusions of oxygen ef-

fectively prevents pulmonary disease, headaches, infections, flu, colds, and even cancer. Ads say that everyone needs more “vitamin O,” which is not necessarily true. Oxygen levels in the blood can be measured at any hospital, but the entrepreneurs want to sell you some before you know whether you really need some or not. Some are also promoting “electrically activated” oxygen in drinking water, although no one knows what “electrically activated” oxygen means. It just sounds impressive. Several brands of activated oxygen have appeared on the market.

The Rose Creek Company marketed oxygenated water without any measurable oxygen in it. They claimed that it regulated metabolism, aided digestion, relaxed the nervous system, boosted energy, promoted sound sleep, and sharpened concentration and memory. (Note past tense.) The Federal Trade Commission spoiled their fun by fining them \$375,000 for consumer redress and made them stop saying such nonsense.

P. T. Barnum said there was a sucker born every minute. Let's not be one of them.

Blame the Carbs

I just read an interesting tidbit in “The State,” Columbia, SC's premier newspaper dated May 18, 2004 saying that one of the popular singers has come out against carbohydrates. Avril Lavigne said the lyrics to her songs were so angry because she was eating too many carbs, reports MSNBC.com. Avril is out promoting her new album and has given this reason for her former angst.

Resources

Be sure to order your copy of Lynda Doty's newest book, being released this month, THE SEVEN SECRETS OF MENTAL HEALTH. You will want to have extra copies to share with those who come to you with problems. \$11.00 includes shipping, send check or money order to Lynda Doty at PO Box 936, Winnsboro, SC 29180.



Let the Word speak for you

Premarital Counseling

Every pastor, minister or counselor, regardless of his or her title, is called on at times to provide premarital counseling. Many pastors require a certain number of sessions with the couple before agreeing to perform the ceremony. Whatever your requirement, premarital counseling is vital, especially in this time of quick decisions and quick divorces.

Since it is commonly accepted that opposites attract, no two persons will have the same backgrounds, emotional construct, or social philosophy. All couples have to adjust to each other and find a level of acceptance of their spouse's "shortcomings" or idiosyncracies. With all the acceptable differences, there should be a number of critical areas where agreement and harmony exists. A counselor should determine to be quite candid with the couple so there are few surprises in the post-nuptial experiences.

Consider these areas:

1) Culture - Evaluate each other's background, homelife, and family philosophies. Getting acquainted with the future spouse's family is important. What are his/her social graces? How does he eat? How does she dress? What are his or her most annoying habits? If there is a wide disparity between the two parties in their cultural mores, there could be serious clashes in the future. If an owl (a night person) marries a chicken (a morning person) there could be trouble. They are going to need a giving and forgiving spirit.

2) Intellect - If a person with an IQ of 160 marries someone with an 85, there may well be "a great gulf fixed." Couples either grow together or they grow apart. They might be asked questions so they can hear each other talk about things they haven't been discussing when they were alone on dates. Have they travelled? What is the extent of their education? Are they well-read? Do both have a hunger to know?

3) Emotional - Has either of them had problems in this area before? Has either seen a psychiatrist or professional counselor for emotional issues? Either on medications? How stable does each seem? These questions should not be omitted or resented. It is best to know them beforehand than to find out later.

4) Physical health and attraction - Couples should be fully aware of any health issues their future spouse may

have. Surprises in this area are not welcomed. Are they attracted—drawn—to each other? If they are not, I do not encourage the continuation of their courtship.

5) Spiritual - Are they both on the same spiritual level? Both saved? It is not wise to marry someone not of the same faith. Is one inordinately carnal? Spiritually lazy? How do they worship and pray? Is there accord in their walk with God? Do they approve of each other in this area? Hoping for the best, or that the spouse will "get the victory" after the wedding is foolish.

6) Children - Are both of them able to train children? One woman said that her children were more mature than her husband. Such a situation will frustrate the children and may cause them to be maladjusted. Will they be able to agree on the discipline of children? Is one of them aggressive on this issue and the other passive?

7) Financial - Do they come from the same economic strata of society? Is one a spendtrift and the other miserly? Who will manage the family income and pay the bills? Is that person disciplined and/or trained in this area?

Couples who declare that "it is the will of God," regardless of your counsel or too many major differences on the matters above, are asking for many heartaches in the future. They put themselves at great risk of divorce. If they already know it is the will of God, what are they coming to you for? They should cover these items, evaluating their potential mates in cool-headed conversation rather than hot-headed, romantic situations.

More Syndromes

"**Adopted child syndrome**" was cited in defense of Joel Rifkin, who admitted killing 17 prostitutes on Long Island.

"**Fetal trimethadione syndrome**" (sadism stemming from a mother's epilepsy medication during pregnancy) was blamed in court for a teen's brutal murder of a 4-year-old boy in Savona, N.Y.

John Mackovic, coach of the University of Texas football team, says "**post-concussion syndrome**" has impaired his coaching since a Colorado player slammed into him on the sidelines in October. -from *U.S. News & World Report*



Confronting Mental Illness

Following is Pastor Mark Uzupan's article that he wrote in response to the Forward's [UPCI ministers' magazine] article by C. Trapani.

I became concerned after reading the article on *Confronting Mental Illness* in a recent issue of the *Forward*. I saw the blurring of lines between physical and spiritual problems, with both being classified as mental illness. I am not a doctor, but I do know that the brain is a physical organ of the body. I also know and understand that the mind controls our physical actions through the medium of the brain. For instance, when there is a head trauma, a physical problem such as a tumor, stroke, Alzheimer's, a birth defect such as retardation, or a true chemical imbalance from major surgery to the body, then a person may not act in a way that we would call normal.

Under the circumstances that I just mentioned I have no problem with using medicine. I also would not necessarily classify these people as mentally ill, because how can the mind, which is not a physical organ, be ill? I am afraid that mental illness has become the catchall phrase of our generation, and the only help for it according to the wisdom of the world is medication or the teachings of psychology and psychiatry.

A few years ago it was popular in the circles of psychology and psychiatry, as well as medical science, to believe that homosexuality was the result of genetic code and the way the brain was supposedly formed—rather than a learned and accepted lifestyle. Homosexuality at one time was considered a mental problem, but this designation was later dropped by the psychiatric community. What about the thief, the alcoholic, the wife beater or child molester? Are their problems the result of a genetic disposition, and therefore are they mentally ill? There has to come a time we take responsibility for our actions, whether we are living in a sinful lifestyle.

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of the sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful...Psalm 1:1-2.”

The author is obviously an advocate for good medicine for the physical body and brain, as I am when there is a physical problem in the body and the brain. The Bible bears this out: “Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?” (Jeremiah 8:22). “Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities” (I Timothy 5:23). Both the Old and New Testament saints believed in miraculous healing, but we also see the use of medicine for a physical problem.

It was also stated in the article that “mental illness” may be the result of God's punishment, or it may be perceived as a

sign of emotional instability—being morally or spiritually weak. Should we take medicine for “mental illness” when it is a spiritual problem? Should a person see a psychologist or a psychiatrist in this case? No, what is needed is true repentance.

If it is not related to a physical problem in the brain or body, then we can assume that the roots of our thinking or actions are a spiritual problem. Depression and suicide are found in the Scriptures, but in that context they are always related to a spiritual problem.

I am not saying that a person should not seek counsel at all, but do we go to ungodly to find the spiritual answers? The fathers of secular psychology such as Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Abraham Maslow, and Alfred Alder were apostates, agnostics, or atheists. Many of their teachings and philosophy, and those of their students, are based upon Eastern mysticism, the occult, and what we would call New Age. It is interesting to note that many psychologists and psychiatrists of today now reject a lot of their teaching.

The Bible gives us warning about following wisdom and counsel from these people: “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night” (Psalm 1:1-2). We should not try to mix worldly wisdom with the wisdom from the Bible. “Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?” (James 3:11).

The author gave the experience of a dear sister in the Lord. While I personally do not know her or the situation she was facing, the author said her problems were from fatigue, stress, and unrealistic performance expectations, and that changes were needed in her lifestyle. But since this was not a physical problem in relation to the brain or body, do we recommend medicine for it and follow the teachings of the world when the Bible has the answers? I do not minimize her problems or those of others with situations like hers. Their problems are real, and these people are hurting. They need compassion, love, understanding, and scriptural direction.

There were people in the Bible who were overwhelmed with the problems of life: “From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I” (Psalm 61:2). It sounds as though David pretty much faced what this dear sister faced. But did David seek medical attention for this problem? No, he said, “Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.” David also faced a time of great depression, but he prayed and fasted and sought God (II Samuel 12:15-20).

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We read the story of Job, but I do not think that we understand the full implication of stress, depression, and maybe even guilt feelings he felt within himself. But did he seek medical or psychiatric attention? No, he still depended upon God: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him" (Job 13:15).

There are times that we may feel alone as Job did: "On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him" (Job 23:9). There are times that we may feel the stress and be physically tired as Jesus was: "And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat" (Mark 6:31). There are times when we are frustrated and angry, as was Jonah: "But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. . . . Then said the LORD, Doest thou well to be angry? . . . And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death" (Jonah 4:1, 4, 9).

We need to get back to the basics and look to the Scriptures and God for wisdom. God does not forbid the use of medicine for physical problems, but outside of a physical problem I do not believe we should cover the problem with medicine—that does not bring true healing to the mind—or turn to the teaching of psychology and psychia-

try. I believe we should go to the Book, the Bible: "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (II Peter 1:3). "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (II Timothy 1:7). "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matthew 11:28-29).

Brother Uzupan is the pastor of the United Pentecostal Church in Statesboro, Georgia, and a graduate of ISC's "Christian Counseling from Scripture" course.

Don't Forget to Register!

The 3rd Annual ISC Training Conference will be held
October 28, 29, 2004.

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