

EMOTIONAL HEALING

Previously, I have identified eight states to emotional/spiritual healing that are common to all. They are:

1. Pain and suffering, 2. A genuine desire to get well, 3. Hope, 4. Instruction, 5. Motivation, 6. Obedience, 7. Discipline, and 8. Perseverance. I have addressed stages 1 through 4 in previous letters. If you are new to this newsletter and desire to receive the last four issues, please let me know. I would now like to discuss the fifth state: Motivation.

I believe that motivation is the greatest predictor of emotional and spiritual healing than any of the other 7 factors. We all have motivation, but it is not always positive. The two greatest motivators in life are fear and love. When fear is the motivator, it leads to ever-increasing regressive states of functioning. When the motivator is love, we move toward ever-increasing progressive states of functioning. A mother, who is terrified of mice, will stand between her child and a mountain lion without hesitation. 1 John 4:18 sums up this principle: There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear...

If an individual does not have the right kind of motivation for wanting to "get well", his or her efforts will most likely be for naught. This is why the success rate for counseling can be low if the individual is forced by the judicial system, a parent, or a spouse to attend professional counseling. Many individuals who have been "made" to go to a counselor terminate their counseling prematurely. The reason is that the motivation for them being there is usually weak. I ask the people I counsel what motivates them to seek healing with a particular problem. Some of their responses sound very good: "I want to change for my wife." "My husband says he will leave me if I don't deal with my problems." "It's for my kids' sake". "I could lose my job". "I hate feeling like this."

These all sound like good motivators to bring about desirable change. I will usually tell them that their motivation is a good one, but not good enough. Changes made with these motivations are usually short lived. If some thing, or accomplishment, or status symbol, or even a significant human being is our primary motivator in overcoming our plight, we set ourselves up for failure. The reason is, though admittedly many such motivators have a root in love, that all of these motivators can be

gone tomorrow. I have seen individuals, for instance, begin to make good changes but their spouse leaves them anyway. They have now just lost their reason to stay sober, or stop the affair or quit the pornography, etc. Unless our love for Christ is our greatest motivator ("because He's asking this of me") to bring about change and clean up our lives, we cannot have hope in lasting change.

I remember one man I was working with who had been sexually inappropriate with his step-sons. He appeared to be remorseful and repentant and we were seeming to make some progress through his own issues of fear and abandonment. His wife, understandably so, decided that she just couldn't be with him any longer and left him. When that happened, the man terminated counseling and I never heard from him again. His primary motivator was to save his marriage. The marriage failed and he no longer saw need for help with his problem. In other words, his motivation for change had moved away. There are many such stories.

After observing how this has worked I came to appreciate the Scripture which talks about loving God more than parents, spouse, children. Once again, "Perfect love casts out fear." While the examples I provided of good secondary motivators- but poor primary motivators- had a component of love, they also had a component of fear-fear of losing something, which in reality was never really theirs anyway. In James 4:3 we hear that when we ask God for something, we receive it, and if we don't receive it it is due to wrong motivations. Our first motivation must be to please our Lord and Savior and abide first by His voice. Seek ye first.. This I believe is the Perfect love. God Himself is this love and when we love Him with all our hearts, minds, souls and strength first, we can be prepared to receive His healing touch upon our lives.

I reiterate, motivation is the greatest predictor of success through our problems. Many people I see are hurting so bad and they just won't embrace this teaching. Fear of their loss, or potential loss, overwhelms them. This is such a sad thing to watch because it is certainly very possible to realign one's motivations to this truth. If we can displace fear with the proper type of love for our Lord and our God, victory over our circumstances is certain.