

The Christian Counselor

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jer. 29:11)

Vol 10 No 1

dedicated to excellence in Christian counseling

EMOTIONAL HEALING

Previously, I have identified eight stages 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 5 in previous letters. Today I will briefly discuss the remainder of the items, starting with stage 6: Obedience.

Obedience is a foundational attitude for getting healing in life. Obviously, the individual in need of help has been unsuccessful with their own efforts at self-healing. After one has received instruction/guidance and is motivated to make changes, they must be obedient to the counsel they have sought and received. Will they go buy and read the book recommended to them? Will they make the apology to their spouse over the fight they had yesterday? Will they go to Church next Sunday? Will they spend at least 15 minutes in Bible Study daily? Perhaps the assignment is not even perfectly understood. One man I worked with through issues of sexual addiction couldn't quite understand why I referred him to a book on God's grace instead of one on sexual healing. Nevertheless, he was obedient to my counsel, got the book, read it and I believe started to get healing with his problem by beginning to receive God's undeserved love and forgiveness. Point being, the individual will need to be obedient to the process of counseling if they are to make progress. If one feels they can trust their counselor, pastor, or teacher and believe their helper is a spirit-filled man or woman, the individual must be obedient to the work assigned. I am not referring to blind obedience where one does not engage their reasoning, thinking faculties before accepting the assignment. All good work and therapeutic and spiritual assignments must be a sensible means to an end. Failure to be obedient to the work behind the counsel will certainly result in an absence of spiritual and emotional gains. Is this the stage at which the sufferer will get stuck? Will they do the thing asked of them?

Discipline (stage 7) is different. We are all called to be disciplined in different areas of our lives. I teach people that there are two great problems in life: one is fear, the other is discipline. In our suffering, the first (fear) is usually present; the second (discipline) is usually lacking. However, the second (Godly discipline) when consistently done, usually erases the first (fear). Discipline will involve consistently doing the healthy things that are

not natural for us until they become more natural for us. Is a certain woman who does not drink alcohol disciplined? Not at all! She's always hated the stuff. Is a certain man who does not drink alcohol disciplined? Absolutely! He's always loved the stuff. To provide a more subtle example, I like to share something of me and my wife, Tammy. I spend time every day, morning and night, studying my Bible or reading some spiritual Christian-oriented material. Tammy has told me often that I am so disciplined in this. I like to accept the compliment, but in reality it is not true. I, by nature, am fairly introverted and very introspective. My study time is like breathing; I cannot do without it. I suffer by not doing it, like missing a meal. I in no way discipline myself to do this. I can even be selfish about "my" time. Tammy, on the other hand, is very committed to getting to Church, praying together, being involved and staying in constant touch with her friends and family. I can be so undisciplined in these things and she seems so disciplined, but although highly admirable, she really is not. You see, Tammy is by nature very social and extroverted. She cannot not be social. She suffers when she can't connect with her Church, her family and her friends. For us, I must be disciplined to extend myself outside my comfort zone and "not forsake the fellowship." Tammy on the other hand, who is a very Godly woman, must discipline herself to be in God's Word and spiritual study regularly. What must you do that is difficult but necessary? Exercise? Diet? Saying no to others' requests? Saying no to TV? Time with God? Time forcing yourself to play like a child? What will God ask of you? This will be a requirement for getting and staying well. It is developing a lifelong habit. A good counselor can help you with this.

And lastly, and quite obviously, you will also be required to *persevere* (stage 8) in the gains you have made in your healing. After the counselor, pastor, teacher or mentor is long gone you must persist in what you have gained and learned, and exercise this daily. You cannot give territory you have captured back over to the devil. You must work out your salvation daily.

And with this I conclude my letters on the 8 stages of healing. In essence, it's up to you. God calls each of us to be responsible for the decisions we make or don't make in our lives. The journey beckons each of us and will not stop hounding us until we heed the call, thanks be to God!