



"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 6 No 1**  
**counseling**

**dedicated to excellence in Christian**

## A LOOK BACK AND A LOOK AHEAD

Happy New Millennium! For many of us, the experience of going from 1999 to 2000 was rather anticlimactic. Nothing really happened. Many of us stayed up until midnight to see what might happen. Would all the lights go out? Would the toilets not flush? Or would we perhaps have a new sense of spiritual awakening? As I watched the ball drop on TV with my family, I was struck with a sense of ordinariness. Nothing significant happened to me or my household. I was glad but I also had a strange sense of mild letdown, even though I was one who felt pretty certain little would happen.

As I started back into the counseling in early January, I observed that life had continued on. People's problems had not changed by the passing into a new century. Something I did notice was that some of my counselees exhibited a new form of mild depression. I believe that many people longed for something significant to happen with the change to a new century. The media and many "experts" enthusiastically announced that we would experience everything from minor bumps in the road to a catastrophic melt down of our nuclear plants. We were told there would be a shortage of food, water, and resources due to the mass panic over the Y2K phenomenon. Many people (Christians in particular) seemed well informed and over-prepared for something to happen, and absolutely nothing of any significance occurred. I actually found that people were grieving the loss of an unmet expectation they held. They expected something to happen. And even though it may have been rather unpleasant, they still experienced let down. The message I take from this is that many of us are desperately looking for something to change our lives. For numerous individuals, life simply cannot continue on its present course. In a peculiar way, the Y2K phenomenon provided a spark of enthusiasm for those desperately needing change.

I think that nearly everybody has a personal feeling inside about Y2K and the new century. For me, I am reminded that a day is as a thousand years to God and a thousand years as a day. In other words time, years, and dates mean very little to God. I again see that life is a journey in which we, as travelers, are faced with many choices along the way and each and every choice, no matter how insignificant, carries with it positive and/or negative consequences. We are responsible for those choices. There is no getting away from that. It is a law of

God's.

With the new millennium, I had a need to reflect on what I do as a counselor, and what I want to be doing. I suppose for me each symbolic land mark that I cross, such as Y2K, causes me to reflect on God's will and how I might better fit into it. I have come to a conclusion that my job as a counselor is not only to seek, find and illuminate the Truth, but to help those who seek counseling with the sometimes difficult task of making choices in life that will bring about positive consequences. As I looked back on my 12 years of counseling ministry, I have changed my views regarding a few things. One I feel is particularly significant. I used to believe that we must go down deep into a person's subconscious and change certain "bad" feelings before their lives could be enhanced. I believed, and still do, that these "bad" feelings are a result of faulty beliefs. But I felt that until we could change people internally, it would be impossible for people to change externally. Many come to counseling with this same assumption. This, I have come to learn, is erroneous. Numerous individuals who seek counseling are wanting those undesirable feelings to change so they can then quit drinking, or love their spouse again, or quit fighting, or experience joy again, etc., etc. Larry Crabb has written an excellent book called Inside Out. I believe that this title can be misleading. I now firmly embrace the concept that most change occurs *Outside In*. If we take a close look at Scripture, we will find this heavily supported. For instance, when we are told to love our wives as Christ loves the Church, love our neighbors as ourselves and even love our enemies, the same word *agapeo* is used. This translation of love is a verb, meaning what we do -by action, not by feeling. It is commanded of us. I now strongly encourage my counselees to feel their emotion (don't deny it) but paradoxically to do contrary to it (See Romans 7). In many cases, *Fake it 'til you make it* and *Just do it*, though simplistic, is not bad philosophy if Truth and Wisdom are present. I have observed inner healing in those peoples lives who abide by Biblical Truth regardless of how they feel inside. Those who have used this counsel have found that feelings can and do begin to change when they first seek the Truth and abide by it even if their feelings may disagree, as in the case of loving your enemies. I'm not saying that taking a deep look inside ourselves is meaningless, the insights can be quite helpful; however, these scrutinized insights into our feelings rarely bring about the healing that making immediate, consistent, and persevering behavioral changes can.