

2014-05-17

## **Mental Illness & End Times #1**

Hi all,

Many of us know someone who lives in an ongoing state of emotional trauma, or perhaps even emotionally ill. Statistics in the US state and estimated 26% of adults over age 18 suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder, which is 1 in 4 adults or over 57 million people - so most of us know someone touched by a mental disorder. Yet helping these friends and family become healthy and whole in their emotions and minds is a mystery to most of us. ( <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/the-numbers-count-mental-disorders-in-America/index.shtml> )

Where does the emotional end and the demonic begin? Where do the natural brain processes of chemical and electrical functions end and the demonic begin? What does scripture have to say about the causes and cures of emotional and mental disorders or illness?

### **"Conduct Disorder"**

That was the diagnosis of an 8 year old boy who compulsively lied and believed his lies, with various behavioral issues related to Conduct Disorder. By the time he turned 18 the diagnosis became "Anti-social Personality Disorder". He was a compulsive liar, believing his own lies and version of reality, a manipulator, thief, and would argue violently if someone presented him with the truth.

In his 20's his condition and behavior became more criminal and complicated. He showed no remorse for any of his actions for in mind his scheme was real and everyone else was wrong. "It was a misunderstanding" became the most common explanation for everything from criminal charges he faced to getting fired from jobs to broken relationships.

He was promiscuous as he presented women intricate stories of supposed trust fund wealth and swept them off their feet, only to steal jewelry, cars, and money along with their hearts in the process. For instance: Several times he went to a high end car dealership, took a Ferrari or other exotic car for a test drive, used it for a quick date, then returned the vehicle, only to explain to the woman on the next date the Ferrari was in the shop or he sold it and was waiting for delivery of his next Ferrari.

He spent most of his 20's and 30's in prison for theft, larceny, fraud, and various other crimes.

### **Delusional or demonic?**

He eventually married and seemed to settle down, children came along and life progressed. But he wasn't healed, delivered, nor was his mind renewed by the Word. Christianity held no power nor hope for him and he became an atheist.

He came from a Christian family but was the child of divorce. Was he simply mentally ill and needed healing, or did he need deliverance? What were the spiritual forces at work that led him into mental illness, and how much was willful indulgence and even enjoyment of the scams and intrigue? Just where do the natural and emotional processes of the brain end, and the demonic start?

Remember this example because next week I'll explain how he became that way, and his case will provide answers for others.

### **Suicide and Christians?**

Mental and emotional illness is seen throughout scripture, though other words are used, and in some cases the situation is presented as having demonic influences as the reason for the illness. In the last 10 years I've seen more Christians than ever before battling emotional and mental illnesses, and about once a month someone will email me asking if a Christian commits suicide are they doomed to hell.

My response is that Christians die of a physical illness and we don't doubt their salvation, so why would we doubt a Christian's salvation when a mental illness results in them killing themselves? Also, how many believers are committing slow suicide through obesity, smoking, or substance abuse? A person can be mentally ill just like they can be physically ill while in their spirit, they are born again.

### **Mental illness a sign of the end times**

In this series I intend to trace the process that starts a person down the road to emotional and mental illness, and how to reverse that process with the Lord. We will look at what opened the door for several

people in scripture and look at solutions. I know many people who have triumphed over emotional and mental illness and there are some common elements that were key to their victory, which I'll share in this series.

Jesus and Paul made comments that in the last days people's hearts would fail them for fear, the love of many would turn cold, people would have no conscience, ever learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth, people would be allowed to believe delusions. Paul also said people would become 'past feeling' or have no conscience (no remorse) and so give themselves over to various sins and evil.

(Luke 21:26, Matthew 24:12, I Timothy 4:1-2, II Timothy 3:1-7, Ephesians 4:19)

Mental and emotional illnesses are one of the signs of the end times, yet teachings about this fact are few and far between. Our society is emotionally and mentally ailing and we see the results in the headlines depicting senseless violence on all levels, involving Christians and non-Christians alike.

### **What solutions are there in Christian culture?**

When Jesus said at His return He is looking for a people who gave food & drink to the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the sick and imprisoned, isn't it likely some of those people came to be in those conditions through emotional or mental illnesses?

In popular charismatic circles teachings about mental illness automatically blame demons without looking at other causes the Bible presents. And there are some ministries that tell people they must trace their family as far back as 10 generations to find what ancestor opened the door to demons that now all these generations later, are causing them misery.

Some ministries consider any negative event in a person's life as needing 'inner' healing, and the person is often led with a 'coach' to visualize the event, visualize Jesus coming into that event, and basically re-writing history to include Jesus standing there with great love and healing while they recall that situation.

The prevailing theme woven throughout these efforts is basically 'It isn't my fault', or 'the devil made me do it' or 'my ancestor is to blame for me being in this condition', or 'I would could gain the victory if I could find the one key that my ancestor used to open the door to the demonic in our family line'.

### **The other end of the pendulum**

If attacking emotional and mental illness as always demonic is on one end of the pendulum's swing, the opposite end is treating it as a strictly clinical 'Christian' issue, which to most charismatic's appears 'non-spiritual'. This is what scares many Charismatic's away from a 'Christian mental hospital' or residency program - fear over the combination of natural and psychological help when the assumption is the issue is demonic. Yet success is often found in these programs when they combine the Biblical and medical, which may include medications, with practical skills for the patient to combat wrong thoughts and emotions.

In between these two seems to be a no man's land of mystery, danger and suspicion. So let us start by looking at some people who suffered emotional disorders, conditions, or mental illnesses in scripture, then we'll peer behind the veil of their minds to discern the difference between the emotional, mental, and demonic, and the healing power of God available to all.

### **A few examples to consider**

King Saul - uncontrolled outburst of rage, paranoia, fear - soothed by worship music.

Nebuchadnezzar - believed he was an animal, in modern terms: Lycanthropy, Boanthropy, Schizophrenia.

David, Job, Elijah - suffered from depression at times in their lives.

Gadarene man with 'Legion' - had an 'unclean' spirit (often means sexually unclean), cut himself, naked.

Judas - committed suicide when his plans to force Jesus to prove Himself failed.

Cain - murdered his brother in a fit of rage, but with a well documented path to his decision to murder.

And with this list of just a few people in the Bible I've run out of room for this week. Next week I'll examine THE root need in our lives as taught by Jesus, and the results of a person not having that need met - which can lead to mental disorders. Until then, blessings,

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2014-05-24

## Christians and mental illness #2

Hi all,

Today I'll share the root to all emotional and mental disorders and what Satan uses against us in the emotional and mental arenas of life.

### No root

"And in the same way that which is sown on stony ground are those who, when they hear the Word rejoice and receive it with joy. But **they have no root in themselves**, and so endure just for a time. When affliction (pressure of circumstances) or persecution (opinions of others) arise for the Word's sake, they stumble (offense) and fall away." Mark 4:13-20

**Affliction, or the pressure of circumstances**, affects us all, but those having a root learn to stand against the stresses, pressures, and fears of life. But for those having 'no root in themselves' that pressure which comes to take the Word (Living Word) from our lives, cripples them emotionally and their ability to function and make wise decisions.

**Persecution, which is the opinion of others** ranging from simple gossip to being killed because someone thinks being a Christian is worthy of death, requires root in oneself to stand strong. Most of the time we care what others think of us to a limited degree, and when someone says something that hurts or they think we should do X when we think to do Y, we deal with it and move on in life.

A person with no root in themselves when dealing with 'persecution' will turn inward and turn the opinions of others into hurt, self-criticism or hate. Because they lack root another's opinion takes on greater weight than it should - parents, friends, co-workers, family - and they 'stumble'. So what is that all-important root?

### What is the root that should be in all of us?

"...that Christ may live in your hearts by faith, **that you would be rooted and grounded in love (agape' - unconditional love)**, and then you will be able to comprehend and know that which is beyond knowing, the height and depth and breadth and length of the love of Christ, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." Ephesians 3:14-20

Every child, every teenager, every adult should be rooted and grounded in unconditional love. That unconditional love is to come from parents first, outward to family and friends, and to the church family - everyone who goes to anything called 'church', whether celebrated in the home as the apostles did it and so many do today, or in an auditorium, the 'church' should communicate unconditional love to each person.

Paul said IF a person is rooted and grounded in that unconditional love they will be able to know and comprehend that which is beyond mere intellectual knowledge - they will know in their 'knower' they are unconditionally loved by the Father and the Lord Jesus and be filled with God's fullness.

### Security

That security known in the depths of our being, vanquishes all fear, all pressure of circumstances, places other's opinions as secondary and subservient to the opinion of the Father and the Lord Jesus of us, who love us so!

Being rooted in love means someone can 'cut off' the whole plant of our life, our work, our efforts, and maybe even kill the body, but they can't touch the root. What they say may hurt to the point of death, but we know we are loved unconditionally by the Father and Lord Jesus no matter what man thinks of us. Knowing that is the source of a strength stronger than circumstances or man's opinion.

This is why Jesus said in the Parable of the Sower that a person not having (that) root in themselves, stumbles, takes offense, falls away from His work in their lives - if they don't know deep down that they are unconditionally loved, they can't handle circumstances nor opinions of others.

### An example of rooting destroyed

Last week I shared the story of a boy who by age 8 was in counseling for 'Conduct Disorder', and that he was a child of divorce. For whatever reason, he received the bulk of his dad's anger.

He was 7 when his dad left the family, and consistent with the pattern of blame he felt at his dad's whippings, he immediately took the blame for the divorce on himself. He suddenly believed and stated many times if he wasn't around his mom and dad would still be together, if he wasn't alive they would be together - in his mind it was all his fault.

His dad, through severe anger directed towards him, had destroyed any rooting in unconditional love that boy had, so that when the divorce happened Satan had an easy time attacking him. Affliction and persecution in this case were the divorce and consequences, and his dad's opinion of his son - real or imagined.

### **Satan is all alone**

Jesus said in John 8:44 when Satan speaks a lie he speaks it all by himself. Amos 3:3 asks, "Can two walk together unless they are in agreement?" When we gather in prayer we do so because Jesus said when 2 or 3 are gathered in His name He is there in their midst. The power of agreement is key.

Satan is on the outside looking in. Satan is alone looking for someone to agree with him. We have Christ in us, the Father and the Lord and Holy Spirit all 'for us' and in agreement with the Father's efforts in our lives.

Satan is by himself. He speaks things often like a shotgun blast, crazy thoughts, not knowing if anything he fires at us will stick. But sometimes he and his demons see an opening caused by lack of rooting and grounding, and a simple lie spoken to a person is received and believed by that person, and when that lie is believed by the person there is agreement, and suddenly that lie becomes truth to that person.

When that young boy received harsh punishment because his dad was angry at life, and then his dad left the family, it was a small thing for Satan to speak a lie and find agreement - "This is all your fault. If you weren't around your mom and dad would still be together."

And suddenly the lie once received by that person, became truth, and therefore everyone else was wrong. That opened the door for larger demonic influences and started the boy down the path of mental illness.

### **The truth**

The truth was that boy was unconditionally loved by his mom, siblings, friends and neighbors, but once he believed the lie that it was his fault he could not believe the truth. The fact of agreement is that a person cannot believe both the lie and the truth at the same time.

Many believers lack a root of unconditional love and so down deep inside dislike or even hate themselves, yet they are in misery trying to believe the Father loves them and can't ever seem to 'get there'. It is because they are trying to believe and know the Father's love while holding onto the lie(s) they've believed all their life.

A person must 'un-believe' the lie before they can believe the truth. That always involves revelation from the Father, and those first scary steps at rejecting old thoughts which were taken for years as truth - it's your fault, no one loves you, no one can be trusted - to believe the truth of the Father's love instead.

It is hard because years of life experience seem to confirm the lie which has been taken as truth, but there is no life history to believe God's love (though there is but can't be seen while holding onto the lie)...it must be known down inside in your spirit where things are comprehended that are beyond intellectual understanding.

If a person lacks that root in unconditional love they cannot receive the Father's love past head knowledge, they can't love others as they love themselves because they don't love self...and a vicious cycle of failed relationships and poor decisions happens - starting a journey down the path of unhealthy emotional and mental turmoil that will continue until they learn to reject and un-believe the lie(s) and receive the revelation of the truth...

And we'll pick it up there next week. Until then, blessings!

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### **Mental Illness & Christians #3**

Hi all,

Last week I shared the scripture from Ephesians 3:14-17 that says we should all be rooted and grounded in unconditional love, and if we are, we will be able to understand the love of Christ which is beyond head knowledge.

Jesus said in Mark 4:17 those who are not rooted and grounded cannot stand against the pressure of circumstances and people's opinions, but 'stumble' when these pressures come. In the parable itself Jesus described the hearts of these people as consisting of small stones, in the Greek 'petroles' which paints a picture of a thin layer of soil over the top of lots of little stones.

They grow up letting others see the thin layer of soil while being fearful in themselves, and fearful others may find out there little stones under the surface that they don't know how to get rid of. Each small stone therefore is an emotional issue or thought stronghold that formed when the person experienced events that destroyed unconditional love in their heart, preventing the 'plant' of the Word from taking root.

I shared how Jesus said in John 8:44 that Satan stands alone, and when he speaks a lie he does so by himself - he has no one to agree with him, he is on the outside in the spiritual realm looking in. He speaks things to people to see if any will agree with him, and if they do it opens the door to him having access into their lives. When a person believes a lie, coming into agreement with that lie, to them the lie has become truth. This starts a person down the path toward unhealthy emotional and mental health.

#### **Stumbling in life**

Rooting in unconditional love destroys any possibility of a little stone forming in a child's heart when it first tries to be formed. For example, a boy throws a rock and breaks the neighbor's window, feeling horrible and the thought comes to him from Satan that he is a bad person.

The parent responds to the lie with unconditional love, affirming the child is not bad, that he is and always will be loved, but he did do something wrong and must face the consequences. Any chance at agreement with Satan's lie was destroyed by unconditional love, so any little 'stone' in the boy's heart never has a chance to form because he was affirmed in unconditional love at every opportunity for correction.

The Greek word in Mark 4:17 translated 'they stumble' or 'they take offense', is "skandalizo" which means "to put a snare or stumbling block in the way." This is NOT the Greek word for 'snare' (pagis), but the act of putting that snare directly in the path of someone so they may be trapped or tripped.

Jesus said 'When affliction (pressure of circumstances) or persecution (opinions of others) arises for the Word's sake, they are offended (have a stumbling block placed in their path).' Mark 4:17

Clearly, the stumbling block put directly in their path by Satan is to make that person aware or remind them of their lack of rooting in unconditional love, which causes them to fail, or seem unable to grow in the Lord and as a human being in certain areas. They put up a facade of being solid - letting people see that thin layer of soil - but they hide the many little stones in their heart that prevent emotional roots from growing deep.

#### **Let us see how this works**

Let me go back to the boy I've been using as an example in this series. When the pressure of his parent's divorce happened Satan was able to speak a lie to him that it was his fault, and once the boy agreed with that lie it became truth to him. When he believed it was his fault that 'truth' to him was so hurtful, so destructive that he was the reason his mom and dad divorced, that he built a fantasy world of delusion and altered reality to shield himself from being the fault of any more failures in life.

The resulting emotional damage meant that an 'F' on a school paper was the teacher's fault. "It was just a misunderstanding" would be the story, because the truth would mean he was at fault which would reinforce the pain of the divorce all over again, so he had to tell lies to keep from experiencing emotional pain.

By the time he was an adult the ramifications of telling a lie carried harsher consequences. When he stole nearly \$4000 from a restaurant he worked at, "It was just a misunderstanding" failed and he served

time in prison as a result - still swearing he was framed, it was someone else's fault. That lie can be traced directly back to believing the lie of believing he was at fault for his parent's divorce.

To admit the truth of being at fault for anything would bring the horror (unconsciously) of the root 'truth' that he was to blame for his parent's divorce all over again, and it was just too painful. It was less painful to experience 4 years in prison swearing he was framed than to admit the truth - such is the pain when not rooted and grounded in unconditional love.

### **Another example**

Let us use the example of a young girl sexually molested. That violence against her destroyed any rooting in unconditional love she had. She marries because that is the normal thing to do, but she finds the love of a man unfulfilling because she never resolved the hurt and shame felt when she was abused.

She marries a rather insensitive and at times callous man, and while she loves him on one level, men have always hurt her while no woman ever has. She begins to believe a lie that she needs to explore the love of another woman to fulfill her which leads to divorce and a path of greater confusion and dysfunction.

### **Or**

This same girl might believe another lie, that because she was sexually abused by men, that was her gift, her one talent in life; sex. She might therefore have sexual relations with many other boys and then men as she grows up, looking for that one relationship that will fulfill her deep desire to be loved unconditionally, mistakenly thinking having sex with every guy will one day allow her to discover 'the one'.

### **Or**

A boy or girl might grow up in a home where the man hit the mom. This is not unconditional love by any means, but the child grows up thinking hitting and slapping your spouse is the expression of love. Therefore when they enter into relationships they subconsciously provoke that person to anger, trying to get them to explode in anger and hit them, because down inside that's all they know about how 'love' is expressed.

### **Or**

A child grows up in a household that is too busy. The parents have their careers, the kids are shuffled off to every sport and every school event offered, every church function, and 'family time' around the dinner table in the evenings is something seen only in old movies and old TV shows.

A child grows up without unconditional love, though the parents may feel that love towards their children, but the child is actually trained that love is expressed to the degree they are successful in whatever sport, school, or church event they participate.

The child lives a performance based love, feeling pressure to perform like a trained seal at every music recital, ball game, or church function. This child may grow up shallow and thinking love is performance based - and their marriage(s) become all about what the spouse can do for them.

**Or** that child may realize they weren't really loved unconditionally in spite of what mom and dad said, because the child was wise enough to know mom and dad's work was really what they loved first and foremost. How many preachers, managers, executives, have interrupted dinner for a work phone call, training the children that work/congregation/others are more important than they and their family are?

### **All these examples**

All these and many more scenarios, countless other scenarios, demonstrate the emotional and mental damage done when a person is not rooted and grounded in unconditional love. We as human beings are created to walk with God, to know things spiritually which are beyond head knowledge. But when a person is not rooted and grounded in that unconditional love, Satan stands at the ready to put a stumbling block directly in their path - a simple little lie that lets in still larger lies that lets in still larger ones.

Next week; How to un-believe a lie, how fear moves in when unconditional love is not present in the heart, and how to start emotional healing. Until then, blessings!

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2014-06-07

## **Mental illness & End times #4**

Hi all,

How does a person recover from emotional disorder and illness? How do we un-believe a lie?

### **Elijah or Messiah?**

By the time of Matthew 16:13 people were saying that Jesus was a reincarnated Elijah (or other prophet).

This was a lie, but it is clear people were believing and telling others that Jesus was Elijah, for Lord asked the disciples what people were saying, so it is clear they were hearing these lies about Jesus. Yet when asked what they believed, Peter responded; "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God".

Jesus said Peter knew who He was by revelation from the Father, and upon that rock of revelation He would build His church. All believers have similarly received revelation from the Father that Jesus is the Christ, and we made a choice to un-believe what we had believed about Him - a good man, a prophet, historical figure, a myth - to believe the revelation stirring in our hearts: You are the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God.

### **What revelation does**

When Peter received the revelation from the Father that Jesus is the Christ, it shined heavenly light on the lies of others saying who Jesus was, causing Peter to be faced with a decision - believe the lies others believed about Jesus, or respond to the revelation and believe what the Father presented as Truth.

Peter had to be willing to settle the issue in his heart once and for all. Therefore revelation from the Father is the foundation that must be laid down so a person can see a lie for what it is. At the point of revelation a person has a choice. But they must be willing to settle the issue and end all mental gymnastics and fighting against the revelation. They must be willing to stop fighting against the Truth brought forth by revelation.

Hebrews 6:4 says, we have to be 'illuminated' before 'tasting the heavenly gift' of Jesus. Jesus said everyone who first hears and learns of the Father then comes to Him. He said when a person sees the Son, then they believe on Him. That 'seeing' the Son is revelation from the Father. (Hebrews 6:4, John 6:40, 45)

For a believer revelation from the Father is a way of life - Paul prayed for it in Ephesians 1:15-18 and 3:14-20 and Colossians 1:9, among others. Along the way we are faced with receiving revelation about Biblical relationships, the Holy Spirit and tongues, is healing for today, and so much more kingdom revelation.

### **The hard part**

Other revelations come, built upon the foundational revelation, revelations about issues in life, causing us to see our own history in light of the Father's perspective, salvation, and love. Over a life time He provides revelation to us here and there, as we think on decisions we made in the past - we see them as foolish, maybe have to forgive ourselves, and we are shown good and wise ones too.

We often don't realize it is the Father showing us this review of past decisions - but we know it is Him because the memories remain but the pain is gone and we have a third party perspective - and He then goes deeper, to what we think of ourselves and about who we are and our purpose on this planet.

### **Decisions, decisions**

The decision to believe leave the lie to embrace the revelation can be the most difficult thing a person has ever made. Let us use the example of a sexually abused girl who grows up believing the lie it was her fault, that she somehow was too attractive or flirty to her uncle/dad/neighbor, so she at shared the blame for her abuse.

For her to see in the light of the Father's revelation that a 10 year old girl is not responsible for the actions of predatory men, means leaving a belief system that is comfortable and known. She has experienced an ocean of heart ache because believing the lie caused her to make horrible choices in life, but at least it was known, with predictable patterns of success and failure, a cycle of life that had a perverted sense of security.

## **Pain?**

To let go of blaming herself would be a huge unknown - she has never thought like that and she has become comfortable blaming herself not only for that molestation, but throughout life she believed related lies where she blamed herself for any outcome that didn't meet expectations.

For instance - she believes it was her fault a friend died in a car accident when they were teens, in a perverted logic looking for a way for the lie to be true - IF she had invited her friend over to spend the night (though she wasn't thinking of it at the time) then maybe her friend wouldn't have gotten into the car to go drinking that night. And IF she had called her friend at 10pm to see if she wanted to watch the late movie THEN the accident wouldn't have happened - so she found a way to make it her fault her friend died.

To un-believe that lie is to venture into unknown territory. If a person has spent their whole life blaming themselves for every poor outcome or accident in their life and those around them, it looks like hard work and a lot of pain to reject the lie, though that in itself is a lie. The Father's assurances of love, forgiveness, and grace seem too good to be true, so letting go and embracing all that goodness stirs fear of the unknown.

## **Receiving revelation from the Father is the foundation**

Revelation from the Father comes from thinking on Him, His Word, His ways, what He has done in our lives in the past. Getting to know the Father is key.

I encourage people to go through Paul's letters and where you see 'God' substitute 'Father' because that is who Paul is writing about. Ephesians chapters 1-3 in particular are a good place to start. Then spend time thinking on those truths - in 1:3 it says for instance the Father has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies. In 2:6 it says the Father has seated us in the heavenlies next to Him in Christ.

What does that mean? What privilege have we been given that spiritually we are the Father's children, children of light who used to be children of darkness? Think on these things and soon you find your thoughts drifting back to childhood, back to where you parents told you that you would never amount to anything. That you were stupid and dumb and could do nothing right. Yet the Father loves you, believes in you, likes you.

And suddenly you realize all they said was a lie, or if true then, not now, for you are spiritually blessed with every spiritual blessing, and have switched families and blood lines, you are now a child of Royalty and as soon as you say 'Father', you are at His throne with a 24/7 open heaven because He has given you the proof of His Spirit living inside you. You realize you aren't dumb and stupid after all, you have the mind of Christ.

And one day the Father directs your memories to a school chalkboard where you and another student are racing to complete a math problem before the whole class, and you hated the pressure and felt so stupid because kids started laughing at your mistakes because they could see your mistakes as you wrote them...

And suddenly you realize you aren't stupid, you just don't do well under pressure, and that is OK...and slowly like untangling a big ball of string, one tangle at a time, the Father over days, weeks, month or years, walks you down memory lane, giving revelation to you from His point of view, showing the lies for what they are, one lie after another, and you realize one day the momentum has changed inside you, joy arising as you experience freedom, a smile creases your face more easily, and my doesn't the sun look bright today...and you are walking in wholeness.

Peter had to embrace the unknown, to believe and say out loud something that had never been said before: You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Will you embrace the revelation like he did, though it feels strange, is new territory and unfamiliar to you?

Next week, a Bible example of a man who walked it out, and one who didn't...until then, blessings,  
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2014-06-14

## **Mental illness & End Times #5 (my life)**

Hi all,

I don't approach emotional and mental health from a theologically cold academic perspective - I'd like to share about my own life - what we deal with weekly and often daily, and how we maintain a healthy emotional and mental life!

### **From my own life**

Having lived his first 24 years at home, putting Chris in a group home 10 years ago was a huge adjustment for each of us. The home we felt comfortable with and had the peace of the Lord with, was about a 2 hour drive from our home. The first 5 years of him living there were horrible.

Being mentally 4 years old due to the umbilical cord wrapped around his neck in delivery, cutting off oxygen and causing brain damage, though physically 24, he didn't understand why he couldn't live at home anymore. He would call us on the phone and cry, sobbing loudly, apologizing through his tears, "I'm so sorry, I'm sorry I did wrong, I'll be good, can I come home now, I want to come home!" - thinking he had done something horribly wrong to cause us to move him out of his home to live with strangers 2 hours away.

Because of the distance and ministry schedule we could only have him home 1-2 nights every 4-6 weeks, though we talked on the phone often, and we tried and tried to get him to understand he did nothing wrong.

After 5 years of that, he was then 29, he gave up the will to live. He got down to a dangerous weight because he refused to eat, and soon refused to get out of bed, refused to take his medicine - he just wanted to die. The real wake up call came when the Manager of the group home told me in the spring of 2008 they needed to discharge him to a nursing home to die, for they couldn't care for him any longer.

We knew it was because he was separated from us - if you know or have known any 4 year old, imagine telling them they can't live at home anymore and moving them a 2 hour drive away. We knew we had to move closer to him which would allow him to come home weekly, rather than monthly as it stood then.

Once we made the move and he was able to come home weekly, he became his old self again. Here we are 5 years later, he is now 34, and we have a bit of a routine. I pick him up on Friday morning, take him to a drive-through breakfast and we park by the railroad tracks to see if the Father has arranged any trains to come through town at that moment. If an ambulance screams by Chris always grabs my hand saying, 'We better pray.' So we pray for the person they are rushing to help, and he ads a hearty AMEN! at the end.

Then we run errands - post office, home to use his own bathroom and change clothes out of 'group home smelling clothes' and see mom, then we take trash to the local dump/recycle, make the rounds of stores as we save things to do so we can do them with Chris. This week Chris got a haircut, and the lady who cuts his hair always gives him a *Car and Driver* magazine from the waiting area. He loves cars!

Chris keeps a running commentary on everything - we slow to a stop at an intersection out in the country and cows are grazing road-side. "Hello cows!" as he rolls down the window and sticks his arm out to wave at them. (In a low voice in response) "Hello Chris, what are you doing today?" "Oh, just shopping with dad, bye cows!" (Followed by laughing at himself and responding to himself, "Cows don't talk, do they dad? Ha ha, no cows don't talk Chris. But some do! You know, when I get to heaven I'm going to talk to cows!"

Chris has never met a stranger and most clerks know him when we roll through the door, so we take our time. If he sees a man with a cowboy hat on, which is common in Grove, Oklahoma, he will say, "Hello cowboy, what are you doing today?" And if someone is taking up the whole aisle as we attempt to roll through he says, "Look out people!" and then chuckle to himself before adding, "Excuse me." If we see a baby he has to talk to it, a dog and we have to pet it. We have fun.

We return home about 4pm (16:00) where Barb is cooking a favorite meal for him, and Chris can settle into his recliner with his drawing board, picture books, and watch some of his favorite shows or movies.

Around 8 or 9pm he is ready for bed. I play a Christian children's music cd, tell him 'By His stripes' and he replies "I was healed!" as I turn out the light.

The next morning a bath is first thing no matter if he stayed dry or wet the bed (he can't get up in the middle of the night to use the bathroom, so I never know what I'm going to find)...but always a bath, then a favorite breakfast while watching his favorite shows or a movie. Donut Man, Gospel Bill, Davey & Goliath, Animated Stories of the NT/OT, Team Umizoomi, Bubble Guppies, some edited Sesame Street, Barney - and for movies, Cars, Cars 2, Herbie the Love Bug, Dumbo - you name it, our house is a Disney vault of movies!

By afternoon after a short prayer over him, we get in the truck, run a couple errands, then I feed him dinner at a place of his choosing and return to the group home about 5pm. That's a typical routine.

Normally I am the one to drop him off week in, week out, at the group home as it is very hard emotionally on Barb. It is on me too but I process it differently. Barb tends towards guilt and feelings of how inadequate the care is, it isn't like mom's care of course. I accept that compromise better.

But each time I tell Chris its time to start towards the group home he grows silent. His energy is gone, he becomes quiet until he has processed the fact he is going back. And he always asks 'So you're coming to get me next week right? You'll pick me up on Thursday?' "No Chris, on Friday I'll get you." "Oh, OK"

I remind him we both have to go to work - he goes to a workshop Monday-Thursday - and he settles in to the thought. But after I return him and sign his medicines back in and talk with the residents and staff and he has transitioned quickly to 'group home mode', he is 'up', talkative, interacting with the staff and residents, yet still needing assurance, "Dad, you come get me next week, ok?"

I assure him over and over I will, the weight of responsibility and his expectations fully hitting me each and every week we do this - I often pray something like "Oh Father, keep me alive and healthy so I can be there for him, and keep me from sin and anything that would shorten my life. Just take him first if before the rapture because he depends so much on me, please allow that grace, but I trust you and your plan." Some or all of those elements are always poured out from my heart to Him as I leave Chris.

I always fight back the tears as I drive away, emotionally down, giving thanks for the provision and good people watching over Chris, for his fellow resident and closest friend Frankie who also loves the Lord, a daughter of a missionary mom who only sees her daughter a couple times a year. But I am down. I must have alone time to work through it.

When I drive I often use the time to call people who have called me or need a call, but I just can't do it after I leave Chris, usually a Saturday. If I walked too far down that emotional path can you imagine where Satan would take it? Satan would take it to depression, hopelessness, guilt overwhelming...

**But I know better.** I counter the emotions knowing this group home and our home so far from our friends and home church in Tulsa is what He has for now. His grace is always present, but grace in someone's life has ramifications in the lives of others, and those in the Tulsa churches have been gracious.

So I worship, I process. Often the ride home alone I am silent other than praying in the spirit/Spirit quietly, me in my thoughts for 30 minutes, alternatively talking to the Father or just thinking. No talk radio, no song selection from my phone. Often I pull into the drive and turn off the truck and sit a few minutes.

This time of year there is a list of things to do, but Barb knows better than to ask me to do anything after I drop Chris off. I need to have alone time, just me and the Father. Then I will myself to redirect my thoughts - the lawn needs mowed, I need to work on my Weekly Thoughts due in 2 weeks, there are Skype IM's to answer, emails to answer, trip to plan, but usually on Saturday nights I just can't bring myself to do any of that though what needs to be done weighs upon me. That evening I need time to be in 'neutral', maybe watch TV, play solitaire on the computer, go work on my boat.

But first, Barb and I 'debrief' when I finally walk through the door after dropping Chris off as we need that together time, talking about some adjustment needed at the group home, clothes Chris needs, etc. Then we shift gears and talk of other things - The emotional cycle complete before it begins all over again next Friday.

So as I interrupt this series with a window into our lives, first, thank you for your patience. Secondly know that being mature in Christ doesn't mean perfection nor does it mean non-emotional spiritual robot living. It means walking through life with Him. Letting Him and His unconditional love that you are rooted and grounded in, continually be brought up before your face with every challenge, every process of emotion. Commune in your heart with the Father, with the Lord, and always bring your emotions back to that love.

Next week back to the series...blessings and thanks!

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2014-06-21

## **Mental illness & End Times #6**

Hi all,

Today we look at the first of two men, one successful in never believing lies about him but rather believed what God said about him, resulting in maintaining good emotional and mental health, and the other who refused to enter the process of un-believing the lie, leading to demonic oppression, paranoia, depression, sudden fits of rage, and end up committing suicide. Both were kings in Israel!

### **The future king David**

David grew up as the 8th son - 7 older brothers! By the time he was a teenager and as the youngest, he was given the relatively simple task of watching a few sheep. We have this romantic picture of teenager David with the sheep, worshipping God on his lyre - the sun is shining, flowers blooming, the sheep are happy, lambs are jumping around the field, water from a brook flows gently along...

There may have been days like that, and it is probably in those times David countered his family culture and lies his family accused him of with what the Lord said about him, what he knew in his spirit was a larger purpose and call on his life. It was this refusing to believe the family culture of lies about him that built the emotional and mental foundation that enabled David to fulfill his destiny. And it was a process over years.

### **Consider this fact about his family life**

Samuel was the Judge of Israel, the Head of State, and when he came to Jesse's house neither Jesse nor David's mom nor his brothers even considered that he might like to be there, or should be included!

Can you imagine hosting in your home the Head of State for your nation and not a single family member thinks enough of the teenaged youngest child to let them know of the visit?!

When the Lord kept telling Samuel each of the 7 brothers were not who He had chosen to be king, Samuel had to ask if that was all Jesse's sons. Only when pressed did the family mention David, the youngest, 'who keeps the sheep'. It wasn't that David was out of town and couldn't be contacted, for Samuel said, "Go get him, for I will not even sit down until he arrives." He was nearby, yet left out. (1 Samuel 16:5-11)

### **Consider the family culture**

We are told in 1 Samuel 16:18 that David was good looking, a worshipper, and capable as a soldier, yet in his family's eyes he didn't even exist! Look at the reaction David's oldest brother had towards him when David in obedience to his father, brings his brothers supplies at the front lines of the army:

"Why did you come here? Why did you leave those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your pride and your evil\* heart! You just came here to see the battle!" (\*Hebrew: Badness, to be so wicked, evil) 1 Samuel 17:28

We can tell from Eliab's accusations he felt his little brother was prideful and did things with ulterior motives, and thought he had an insignificant job of watching a few sheep. Here again David had been left out, as his 7 brothers were considered worthy of fighting for their country, but David had been rejected! And when he heard Goliath and was moved to join the fight, even then he had to argue his case before King Saul.

How many children and teens grow up in a family culture in which they do not count! A culture of accusation of having ulterior motives even when they are doing the right and proper thing! Where every effort to only try and help is met with anger, disgust, and rejection!

How many grow up in a family where they aren't even noticed, or at the least not considered to be an important enough member of the family to be included! How many grew up constantly being given menial tasks just to keep them busy and away from the family so the family could go and do their thing?!

### **Emotionally damaged?**

David had every reason to be at least emotionally damaged, and at the worst a dangerously depressed loner, angry enough to explode in violence like a ticking time bomb. Bullied, rejected, family outcast - he was rejected on all levels! Yet we know David's walk with the Lord was strong, solidified in the wilderness, from his own heart and in his own words expressing songs of worship and praise to the Lord.

Why didn't his family see these good things in him? How many children grow up longing for a family member or anyone, to see the good in them, to see the potential in them, but that longing is only met with condescension, accusation, and a family culture that screams at them, 'Your life doesn't count!' Or perhaps it is just that they were too busy with careers and church and sports to even notice them.

David could have gone the other way, believing in the rejection presented him, believing he had no hope, no future, and that maybe he was in fact evil and did things with ulterior motives. But he didn't. He believed the Lord's opinion of him over and above what his own dad and brothers thought of him.

### **The down and dirty on how to reject a lie**

David knew himself and what good was in him. That is the first step. Often even before a person meets the Lord, He (unknown to them) tries to get them to know themselves, to know their potential and believe in themselves even when no one else does, by putting in them a knowing that they are called to a bigger and better purpose than what everyone says about them. Satan tries to squash that inner knowing however.

What David believed about himself was confirmed when alone in the wilderness, for he told King Saul that he had fought off both a lion and a bear - he knew himself, and he knew what he was capable of.

I know our righteousness is as filthy rags before we were born again, but this isn't about righteousness, it is about knowing oneself, knowing and believing in the call to put off those filthy rags and fulfill the Lord's plan in our lives. To do that we first must know and believe we have a divine purpose even when we don't see it.

Satan gets people to reject even the good they know about themselves - he gets them to believe what the family culture says about them. David however, rejected that opportunity to believe the lies, and instead knew himself and knew areas of his life in which he had been successful. He remembered the successes.

### **But I'm way older than a teenager**

You may think it is too late for you because, "I've lived my life believing a lie(s)." But I can tell you the process of un-believing the lie is the same path David took in rejecting lies about him from the start.

You have to take stock of yourself, of your successes, of your gifts, of your talents, of your character, and know yourself. Stop focusing on the failures and look at the good the Lord has put inside you, and the successes He has given you. Get that inside you by spending time thinking on these things. I know, Satan makes you immediately feel guilty for praising yourself or finding something good about yourself - such is the depth of the lie(s) you have believed these many years!

But you have to break through that - to say that yes, it is ok to see the good things God put in you, of the good things you have done, of the successes you have made - even if people or circumstances outside your control destroyed or ruined your good efforts - acknowledge the good!

When confronted by King Saul - King Saul is like the devil confronting David about his youth and inexperience - David stood up to him and told how he knew himself, how he knew his past successes with the lion and the bear, and that Goliath would therefore end up like them. You must do that. Know yourself, and know the good in you and the little successes you've had. And remember, those aren't successes the world saw and applauded - when David killed the lion and bear no one saw him but the Lord.

The final part of this week's Thoughts is this - David approached Goliath with confidence because he not only knew himself, he not only knew his successes, but he knew God was for him. He knew unconditional love from the Father and our Lord even when he received only hatred from his family and he believed in the love more than, and rather than, the hate and rejection.

So start talking to the Father, worship, soak in His presence, let Him take you in His arms and tell you how much He loves you. Then let Him bring up the good things in your memory, and the memories of successes you have accomplished in this life - no man saw these things or knows your heart, but the Father does...so let them bring them to remembrance and let Him affirm you in this way.

More next week...until then, blessings!

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2014-06-28

### **Mental Illness & End Times #7 (Saul)**

Hi all,

Wouldn't you think the presence of God in a person's life would cause a person's emotional and mental health to change for the better? Our question is; How can a person allow the anointing (manifest presence of God) restore their mind and emotions?

Jesus said in the last days sin will be increasing, but at the same time the gospel will be preached in all the world. That means as the gospel is preached, some of those people who come to Him do so emotionally and/or mentally damaged or ill. How can the anointing heal our emotions? (Matthew 24:12-14)

#### **King Saul**

When Samuel confronted King Saul he said: "When you were little in your own sight, didn't the Lord make you the head over all the tribes of Israel, and anoint you to be king over Israel?" (I Samuel 15:17)

"When you were little in your own sight" is the key to understanding King Saul's descent into mental illness, and it presents us with the two truths every believer faces: What I say versus and what God says about me.

#### **Little in his own sight**

Saul's story begins I Samuel 9:1-2 where it says he came from a very wealthy family, that he was taller than anyone else and the most handsome man in Israel. Yet he was small in his own sight.

We aren't told about his home life, how he failed to be rooted and grounded in unconditional love, we just know that was the case, for he didn't see himself as he should. This opened the door to the 'fear of man', an inability to stand against the pressure of circumstances and other's opinions - exactly what Mark 4:17 & Ephesians 3:17 say of those not rooted and grounded in unconditional love.

King Saul became a paranoid man, known for depression and outbursts of anger, and then just as quickly turn emotionally 'up' and tender to the Lord. Today we might call him bi-polar, certainly anti-social, paranoid and delusional. But as I said, he became that way - he didn't start out that way.

#### **Not able to see the facts clearly**

When Samuel told Saul he was called to be king, he replied Samuel must be wrong, for he was merely a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes, and his family is least of all the families in that small tribe.

Notice that Satan often speaks half truths, yet a half truth is a whole lie. The tribe of Benjamin was a small if not the smallest of the tribes. Yet his dad was very wealthy, not the least of the families as he stated - but that is how he saw himself and his family, and as a result he couldn't believe God's good plan for him.

This is what self-hate or being 'small in your own sight' will do to you - you will see facts construed through the eyes of self-loathing and find reasons why God really doesn't want to use you, reasons He doesn't really want you and love you. That's what Saul was doing when Samuel spoke to him of the call on his life.

### **Where healing starts**

Healing the emotions requires more than a simple choice, it requires an experience with God's presence. Saul was told God's plan, but then God showed up by coming upon him so he prophesied. The Father doesn't want us to believe without evidence, He provides His presence in our lives.

You cannot use logic on an emotionally damaged or mentally ill person. For every scripture you show them to say for instance, that they are saved, they will show others they think proves they are not. But like Saul, the presence of the Holy Spirit is what the Father expects the person to believe and upon which to focus.

When I was a teenager and dealing with a horrible self-image, fear of man and lack of confidence, I remember barely feeling His presence inside me. I felt my emotions and own thoughts MUCH more than His presence within. But I remembered those 'prayer meetings' I went to and His presence I felt all around me. I remember disciplining my mind to say that Presence lives in me even if I don't feel Him. I remember doing that over and over again. Gradually I could detect that same presence I felt in the meetings down in my spirit.

At first it was hit and miss. Like tuning an old radio, I was trying to find His wavelength by seemingly going just past Him on the dial and turning the knob too far on the turn back. Gradually I became aware of His ever-abiding Presence in my spirit, and that became stronger than my own thoughts and emotions.

### **That is a process Saul never attempted**

In chapter 10 the Spirit of the Lord came upon him and he prophesied with the prophets. Yet when he saw his uncle and talked about some of the family business, 10:16 says: "But of the matter of the kingdom Samuel told him about, he told him not." Again, it isn't just logic of chapter and verse the Lord expects us to use to regain mental health, but along with that, experiencing His presence as proof. Saul didn't let his time in the anointing change him, so he was still afraid to tell anyone about the call and Presence on his life.

When the time came to gather the nation and anoint the king, Saul hid himself. Through a word of knowledge, 10:22 says, "He was hiding among the stuff." In other words, the whole nation is gathered in one area, but they have pulled their animals and supplies into another area aside from the meeting area, and Saul was hiding among all that 'stuff' until the Lord told on him and he was discovered.

Saul is wrestling with what he believes of himself versus God's call and presence in his life, and he was not letting the presence of the Lord change him. He didn't let it 'stick'. He never let the Presence and experiences in the Lord become evidence enough for him to change his thoughts and emotions.

### **Fear of man the result of poor self-image**

In I Samuel 11:6, after news of an impending Ammonite attack reach him, "The Spirit of the Lord came upon him" - giving Saul an opportunity to move in his calling as King, and for the next couple of years Israel successfully fought enemies all around it. We would think moving in this anointing over these years would have changed him.

But if a person refuses to believe what the Lord tells them at each experience with Him, **and** refuses to believe evidence of His presence in their life, they will not be able to change. Everyone around them will see evidence of His presence in their life, but they will refuse to admit it, and become more despondent and conflicted as a result.

What we find is that the Lord moves us along anyway, according to His call and plan, and expects us to deal with our internal issues along the way. He expects us to 'commune with our own heart' and let His presence change us, let all we have seen and all we have done in Him, change us. But whether we do or whether we don't, He moves on in our lives as if we are changing on the inside.

### **He finally admits his issue**

By the time of I Samuel 15 the Lord asks Saul to finish a promise He had made to Moses some 400 years earlier, to destroy every Amalekite from the face of the earth because though cousins to Israel, they fought against the fledgling nation just after leaving Egypt. Saul disobeys, allowing the people to keep the best of the livestock as spoil, and keeps the king of the Amalekites alive. (Exodus 17:8-16, Genesis 36:12, Amalek was a son of Esau)

Saul finally confesses his issue in 15:24: "I confess. I have disobeyed the command of the Lord and your instructions because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice (instead).

Being little in his own sight and having the fear of man is where his story opened in chapter 9. Here we are in chapter 15 with him having been king for years, yet Saul never let God's Word nor His presence change him.

He never internalized, never thought through and allowed the great mercy and grace given him change him. The Lord rejected him as king that day, and Samuel mourned greatly for him - he remained king, but the Lord moved quickly to anoint a teenager named David as a replacement for Saul.

Samuel's mourning for Saul can be likened to our own disappointment in ourselves when we miss it, When we fail God or when He uses us and yet when we are alone, we come to grips with the fact we still battle self-image issues. That is the point, the point of mourning, where we should repent and change our thinking to believe what He says about us.

Next week I'll close the series sharing about how to let the anointing change us - practical steps. Until then, blessings,

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2014-07-05

## **Emotional/Mental Illness End Times #8**

Hi all,

In the last 2 weeks I've talked how the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives is the evidence He provides of His unconditional love and purpose for us. His presence along with His written Word and all else 'Christian' in our lives work together. But without actually experiencing Him, 'God' becomes just a formula.

### **A process**

The world and culture carry more weight in a life than a God someone learns about in an hour of church, Sunday School, or youth group once a week, but never truly experience.

In order for God to make a profound difference in our life (or a child's), we must experience Him - not about Him, but experience HIM. At the point of experience "His opinion" is expressed - that which is felt, that which is perceived in our hearts, that which is felt in the worship, in prayer, in sitting in His presence - MUST carry more weight than the people and culture who destroy or prevent a person from knowing His love.

### **Great, but how?**

Jesus had just fed 4,000 men, plus women and children, then He and the disciples got into their boat and headed out across the lake. When they got to the other side they were immediately besieged by the Pharisees demanding He give them a sign from heaven. But Jesus didn't respond, and instead they got in the boat and started out across the lake again.

While on the water Jesus told them to beware of the yeast of the Pharisees, talking about not being part of the crowd that constantly seeks signs from heaven, but they thought He was talking about the fact they forgot to bring anything more than a single loaf of bread with them.

When He reminded them how He had fed thousands with 7 loaves, He asked: "How is it you don't understand?" The Greek is: "How is it that you haven't put it together?" (Mark 8:1-21)

The multiplying of the food was a miracle in their lives He expected them to consider, to let the amazing things they had just witnessed sink down in them and change their thinking.

Notice He didn't tell them to let the written Word of the Old Testament sink into their hearts and minds. He didn't ask them to pull notes from something He or John the Baptist had earlier taught. He expected them to think on and consider the miracle He did in their lives right then, in their presence. He asked them to consider His presence as manifest in the miracle of multiplied food so they could change their thinking.

This wasn't the first time Jesus had multiplied food, for just 2 chapters earlier He had fed 5,000 men plus women and children from a boy's lunch.

After that miracle Jesus came walking on the water to their boat in the early morning hours, and when they saw Him walk to their boat and the wind and waves go calm, 6:51-52 says they were "...astonished beyond measure because they had not considered the miracle of the loaves."

The Lord expected them to 'consider the miracle' and 'put it together' by thinking on the miracle immediately after they witnessed it, and let that experience change the way they thought. It isn't just the written Word we believe, but the Living Word we see all around us everyday in our lives, because we know Him. We must notice and believe His ongoing presence in our lives, and His ongoing miracles in our lives. All these work together to help us un-believe the lies and assure us in His unconditional love, restoring emotional health.

### **Therefore...**

When we looked at David and Saul, we saw different events over months and years in their lives how the Lord moved them to the next step in their lives by some miracle, some evidence of Him in their lives. In between those 'benchmark' miracles of His presence, He expected them to think on what He had done in their lives to the point it made a difference in how they thought about themselves.

David wrote many of the Psalms at those benchmark points\*. Several were written while being chased by King Saul. One was written after Ziklag had been burned and they feared for their wives and children. One was written after his sin with Bathsheba was revealed. What do you do to mark the 'benchmark' miracles or experiences with the Lord? (\*I Sam 21:10-15/Ps 34/Ps 52. I Sam 22:1-5/Ps 56. I Sam 22:35/Ps 35. I Sam 24:1-8/Ps 57. I Sam 30:1-6/Ps 4. II Sam 12/Ps 51, for a few examples)

When my dad left our family it crushed my world. It also crushed my self-image, as like a lot of kids, we blamed ourselves for mom and dad's divorce. I thought I had failed him by not doing the chores, not greeting him with the love and enthusiasm he expected each night when he came home from work, and so on.

I dropped out of all activities or didn't continue in them very long from age 12-16. I flunked my freshman first semester of Algebra as all my grades nose-dived. I just didn't care about anyone, anything, and I didn't care about myself. I started, then dropped out of Boy Scouts. Started and then dropped out of Scuba lessons. Started and then dropped out of flying lessons. The list goes on. I would have dropped out of school if mom had let me, as I really didn't care at all for it.

When my friend Janny, who is still a very close friend to Barb and I, led me to the Lord while telling me about Jesus in German class (then I led Barb to the Lord), I latched onto the Father. I could feel a change inside, a new enthusiasm, a vague sort of life or energy or love or something - it was all new, but I was being changed.

### **Build a history with God**

My life was real life. My dad had really walked out. I really didn't give a care about anything. That was real and it was internal, down inside of me. Now suddenly He was there, telling me in the Word that He loved me and had a purpose for my life. But I still struggled to believe Him because I saw no evidence of a plan or purpose. I expected a big 'flash' and suddenly my internal hurt would be healed. Not!

There were little 'benchmark' experiences, healings and miracles I saw, coincidences that were more than mere chance, feelings I felt down in my spirit, that one by one built a history of God in me, and slowly I started to believe in His opinions about me while letting go of what I had been thinking about me.

I remember talking to the Father one day and saying this: "Father, I don't mean to seem ungrateful or anything, but is this all there is? I figured to be born again and have you inside me it would be more...powerful...and I can't deny there is something in me saying there is more...Is that right?" (I actually prayed that, at the time the most afraid I'd ever been while praying, asking the Father is that was all there is!)

Then Janny and her boyfriend (and future husband) told Barb and me about the Baptism with the Holy Spirit. When we received that, our whole world changed. The Word came alive. That vague awareness of Him inside became an overriding presence, so much so anytime day or night I could just shift my attention



to my spirit and feel Him there - though the process of doing that took most of my senior year of high school.

It was then my poor self-image faded in the light of the PROOF of His presence in me. I reasoned, I can't be that bad because Jesus died for me. I can't be that bad because He has put His Spirit inside of me...and that reality, combined with the written Word, combined with various miracles and evidence of His activity in my life, brought me from the brink of emotional and possible mental illness.

It is a process, but we must 'consider the loaves' in our own lives as evidence of His love, His abiding Presence and involvement in our lives, and then we begin to believe Him more than what we believe about ourselves.

In these end times people are becoming more and more unhealthy emotionally and mentally. How many times have you wondered what you'd do without Jesus as that Rock in your life? The way to maintain or recover from emotional or mental difficulties is always to center back to that unconditional love, and make all your thoughts go back to that love. He has invested in us for the ages to come...amazing grace!

This ends this series, but a related topic next week...blessings!

John Fenn

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