

The Art of Bible Counseling

By Glenn A. Coon

Dedication

THIS series of studies is dedicated to parents, ministers, doctors, teachers, and all leaders of youth. Its purpose is to share counseling techniques based on eternal principles outlined in the Scriptures. The book is offered as a service to personal workers everywhere, to teach through definite God-given laws, revealed in Holy Writ, just how to help troubled souls. For convenient exposition, the Biblical principles are set forth in seven general concepts.

Southern Publishing Association

Nashville, Tennessee

Copyright © 1968 by

Southern Publishing Association

Library of Congress

Catalog Card No. 68-57817

Contents

1. The Source of Wisdom
2. Center Life Around Christ
3. Christianity Means Joy.
4. Five Other Principles
5. Phil and Linda
6. Preventing a Teen-age Marriage
7. Cure for Hostility
8. Religion Divides a Home
9. The Power of Negative Thinking
10. Peter, the Alcoholic
11. High Pressure
12. The Antagonists
13. Beth and Joe
14. The Story of Alice
15. The No preaching Preacher

1: The Source of Wisdom

LIFE'S great principles have been written down in the Holy Scriptures, but too often they are disregarded, being considered old-fashioned and out of date. Ephraim, a man whose experience is written about in Old Testament Scripture, typifies the person who wavers between advice from God and advice from men. The Scriptures term him "a cake not turned." (Hosea 7:8.) Today we use a slightly different term: "half baked." Of Ephraim the Bible says, "I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing." Hosea 8:12.

Art of Bible Counseling

No one thinks it old-fashioned today to study the owner's manual after he has bought a new car. The maker of the car knows more about it and how to secure the maximum performance from it than does the purchaser. Is it strange, then, that God, who created man, knows more about man's problems than man himself does?

"The priest's [minister's] lips should keep knowledge, and they [the people] should seek the law at his mouth." Malachi 2:7. A minister is the messenger of God, and as the owner's manual gives information about how to operate the automobile successfully, so the minister imparts information about how man can live successfully.

When someone comes to the minister for an opinion about a problem, he is not to offer his own counsel. A messenger boy who altered a telegram would instantly be discharged. So the minister must not alter God's Word. The text previously quoted teaches three principles:

1. The counselor conforms to these laws himself.
2. He presents Biblical principle as the foundation on which the counselee can build his life. "Like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock." Luke 6:48. This represents one, says Jesus, who "cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them." (Verse 47.)
3. The counselor heeds the text which says, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you." Deuteronomy 4:2.

Following the principles found in the Bible will not handicap the effectiveness or understanding of the counselor. Instead, he has the promise, "Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." Deuteronomy 4:6.

Two cases will show how the minister should apply the Biblical method of counseling and how he reduces his effectiveness by failing to use it.

While I pastured a college church, Jack came to me. Standing in the doorway, he said, "I vowed I would never again go to a preacher for advice."

"And yet you have come," I replied.

"Yes," he said, "I'm trying once more because I think your advice will be good."

"Jack," I questioned, "what caused you to be disappointed in former counselors?"

"They didn't stick by the Bible in what they told me."

Though I had not at that time fully developed the principles of counseling presented here, a recent experience of my own had prepared me for Jack's comment. After a close friend had counseled me about a personal problem, I had felt certain that his advice was not correct and not effective. Seeking the reason, I discovered that the Bible did not authorize his ideas. Consequently, I could talk to Jack with a conviction coming from shared experience.

"Jack," I began, "first of all I want to read you a text of Scripture found in Jeremiah 17:5: 'Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.' Instead of trying to tell you what to do, I am merely going to present some Biblical guidelines. We will use these like the stakes farmers used in the winter years ago. The only way they had of following a road in deep snow was by tall, slender stakes driven into the ground along its edges. When between the stakes, they

Art of Bible Counseling

remained safe. They knew they were on the road. Had they ignored the guiding stakes, they would easily have run into the ditch. Following the farmers' example, we shall use Biblical teachings to guide us."

Afterward Jack left the church study as if walking on air. He had discovered why so many of his previous counselors had erred. Good men, well-meaning Christians, they gave their own ideas and opinions instead of outlining God's guidance.

Later, after the concepts of Bible-oriented counseling had more fully emerged in my mind, I had the privilege to help a young married couple in trouble.

The young wife's mother asked me to call at her daughter's home. During a short first visit, I carefully used the Bible as my authority in approaching their problem. The mother arrived a half hour after I left and, as she later told me, heard her daughter exclaim, "Mother, a minister came to my home, and, using only the Bible, gave me more help in five minutes than all the counselors in this area combined."

When the time came for me to leave the area, I recommended that the couple go to either of two well-known counselors. They declined. Finally the young husband explained why he did not feel free to go to either one of the clergymen.

"He is not a Christian."

"What do you mean, he is not a Christian?"

"He offered me poor counsel."

"What kind did he give you?"

"He told me that the man who had come between my wife and me ought to be split down the middle. And that's not Christian."

The minister to whom the young husband referred was not merely a good Christian, but a good counselor as well. He just missed the mark that time. By letting his own feelings of sympathy for his client and his indignation against the extramarital intruder overwhelm him, his emotional comment, instead of helping the young husband, hurt him and ended his influence with him. Time spent defending the minister who gave this poor counsel would be wasted, I thought to myself. I had done worse than that in my time. But I did resolve not to make such mistakes again. Then I referred the young husband to the other counselor in the area.

"No, I can't go to him either."

"Why not?"

"Well, he is not a Christian either," he grunted.

"What did he counsel you?" I questioned, interested to know how one young man could have had such an unfortunate experience with two ministers in the same area.

"Well," he replied, "he suggested abortion."

Both of these fine clergymen failed the young husband because each had failed to find the Biblical answer or suggestion. They had forgotten their duty to present Scriptural guidance. Could the average minister-counselor, as he looks back over his many counseling blunders, not agree with Solomon "every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar"? (Proverbs 30:5, 6.)

Remembering his sacred obligations as a Christian counselor, the minister or trained layman might pattern the introduction to his counseling sessions somewhat like the following:

"Now Mr. _____ may I first suggest that you not accept anything I say unless I read it from the Bible. For the Bible says, 'Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm.' Jeremiah 17:5.

"Moreover, you are under no obligation to believe my interpretation of the principles we find in Scripture or to follow any course of action implied by what I say to you. Your part will be to meditate on the principles and ask God to aid you in applying them to your particular problems. God is your counselor, not I. My role is to present Scriptural principle and explain it as best I can within the limits of my training, experience, and understanding."

2: Center Life Around Christ

THE CHRISTIAN bases his entire counseling theory on Scripture, for he believes that it contains and illustrates life's true framework, which cannot be found elsewhere. But applying the Biblical philosophy involves techniques or guidelines. They can conveniently be reduced to seven.

1. Make Jesus the center of the counseling experience.
2. Make joy the mood of the entire relationship.
3. Encourage faith.
4. Offer hope, especially when all the other person can see is defeat.
5. Proceed from love.
6. Present a choice; do not force a solution on the client.
7. Maintain humility; avoid a feeling of superiority.

These statements are not definitive, complete, or exclusive, but they do cover the field rather well. How they work will be shown in a variety of cases.

Christians are prone to center their thoughts on points of doctrine. Truth must be faced, but it is fully effective only when Jesus becomes the center of all knowledge. Doctrine should lead to Christ, not be an end in itself. Theological or spiritual knowledge cannot comfort a grieving heart or ensure salvation. Only Christ can.

Not long after my boyhood conversion, I drifted away from my Christian experience. Unable to account fully for the loss, I can only point to an incident that had much to do with it. One Sabbath the preacher talked about the "seven last plagues." He pictured humanity's sufferings during them as being so terrible that people "gnawed their tongues for pain." What the preacher said was true. He read it out of the Bible-read it in Revelation 16. But as he spoke, one little boy almost gnawed his own tongue for pain, thinking about the terrible events.

The speaker that morning should have made it clear that the plagues do not fall on those who truly love Jesus. He could have read, "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust." Psalm 91:2-4.

He could have told how Jesus will not forsake the Christian when he is in danger. The sermon could have been a Christ-centered study, helping the listeners to fix their spiritual gaze on Him. The minister could have read further in the psalm, "A thousand Shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee." Verse 7. Then, with tender voice and assuring emphasis, he could have repeated, "Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling." Verses 9, 10. This would

Art of Bible Counseling

have made the difference between hope and despair in the minds of the church members. This would have put Jesus in the center of the congregation's thought.

That morning the preacher gave an unbalanced message. Surely many, including myself, went home affected by the torment of fear. The sermon was true, but it left Jesus out. Afterward the minister presented a sermon on Turkey, stating that soon it would be driven out of Europe. When the nation came to its solitary end, then no more repentance would be granted to the inhabitants of the earth. "We had better hurry up and settle our accounts with the Majesty of the universe now," he thundered. "We had better be absolutely perfect; for no one will receive mercy once Turkey is driven out of Europe."

Sitting there petrified, I cried in my heart, "O Lord, help Turkey not to be driven out of Europe until my next birthday." Somehow I thought I could arrange my life by then so that I would be ready for any eventuality.

The preacher that morning read from the Bible. Whether he was right in teaching that "the king of the north" is Turkey, whether his interpretation of the symbol of the River Euphrates was accurate, is beside the point. He quoted from a book entitled "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." And yet he preached terror into the hearts of his congregation.

Several ways exist for the Christian to alienate Jesus from the center of his thinking. It is just as disastrous to dwell on eschatology as it is to dwell on self.

There is no safe substitute for Christ in prayer meeting, in church school, in preaching, in family worship, or in private devotion. To become problem-centered is as fatal as to become self-centered. The same applies to being guilt-centered, or hate-centered, or fear-centered. The answer to these obsessions is Christ. The solution is to remember the Son of God and what He has done for the Christian's present happiness and future salvation. "When once the gaze is fixed upon Him [Christ], the life finds its center." Education, p. 297.

Another favorite fear sermon is based on Daniel 12:1. Often the preacher reads only part of the verse: "And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation," following with a graphic description of the terrors and agony of that "time of trouble" experience, hoping, it would seem, to frighten people out of their sins. What he says about conditions before Christ's second coming is true. But something is lacking. The passage continues, "And at that time Thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book."

Let the minister emphasize that sentence. Let him look especially into the faces of the children and say, "Boys and girls, it talks about 'every one that shall be found written in the book.' When you confessed your sins and took Jesus for your Saviour, an angel wrote your name in that book. The Bible says, 'For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me.' Psalm 27:5. So you will be hidden from terror then. Jesus will protect you." Then the minister should tell some stories about people escaping harm through divine intervention. Such a sermon can prepare the congregation for the future without frightening them. Jesus can be emphasized and little boys and girls can go home from church in peace and confidence.

Every Christian, regardless of age, needs to know how to grow into a Christ like life. This is the counselor's task, the work of every missionary. To learn how this may be done is of the utmost importance.

"In the matchless gift of His Son, God has encircled the whole world with an atmosphere of grace as real as the air which circulates around the globe. All who choose to breathe this life-giving atmosphere will live and grow up to the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus." Steps to Christ, p. 68.

Notice occasionally how some plant or vine which has found its way into a cellar or other dark place never reaches toward the darkness. It always grows toward a ray of light penetrating through a crack or a window. The Christian cannot grow by filling his mind with fear and frustration or dwelling on the hypocritical behavior of phony Christians.

3: Christianity Means Joy

JOY IS so important that the Scriptures command or urge thanksgiving, praise, rejoicing, and joy in some eight hundred texts. Today a writer emphasizes by underscoring or italics. Scripture emphasizes by repetition. For every command to keep the Sabbath there are more than twenty-five Scriptural injunctions to be happy, joyful, or filled with praise and thanksgiving, illustrating the attention Bible writers gave to the subject of man's happiness.

In the book *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 162, Ellen G. White informs us that "the very keynote of the word of God is rejoicing."

God declares that Seventh-day Adventists, knowing the "times and the seasons" the nearness of Christ's second coming should "rejoice evermore" and give thanks for everything. (1 Thessalonians 5: 1-3, 16, 18.)

Again, Christians are commanded to "count it all joy" when meeting with varied temptations and trials. (James 1:2.)

When close friends form a circle and shut one out, he is instructed emphatically by our Lord, "Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy." Luke 6:23.

In the saddest of life's experiences, such as a mother "weeping for her children" and refusing to be comforted over their loss, inspiration pens a special command: "Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears." Jeremiah 31:15, 16.

God commands to call keeping the Sabbath a "delight." (Isaiah 58:13, 14.) He emphatically informs His people to equate His presence with "fullness of joy" and "pleasures for evermore." (Psalm 16: 11.)

At the dawn of creation when Jesus made our world, "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Job 38:7.

At Christ's birth in Bethlehem, the angel of the Lord exultantly cried, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy." Luke 2:10.

And when the redeemed are taken to heaven, Jesus will "rejoice" over them "with joy." "He will joy over ... [them] with singing." Zephaniah 3:17. His happiness and ecstasy will be so great that the Scripture pictures Him as welcoming the saved "with exceeding joy." (Jude 24.)

In sorrow and gladness, in prosperity and adversity, in sickness and in health-in every experience God commands Christians, "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice." Philippians 4:4.

God gives reasons for this attitude:

"The joy of the Lord is your strength." Nehemiah 8:10. [Page 20]

"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine." Proverbs 17:22.

"Count it all joy.... knowing ... that the trying of your faith worketh patience." James 1:2, 3.

"Overcome evil with good." Romans 12:21.

Art of Bible Counseling

"I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving." "The humble shall see this, and be glad." Psalm 69:30, 32.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul: . . . who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases." Psalm 103:2, 3.

The counselor should avoid anything that will create a negative attitude in either his approach or in the person he is attempting to help. It should become a fundamental principle for him to emphasize happiness, especially the joy to be gained through the Christian experience. Emphasizing joy is especially recommended when working for the backslider.

Naturally the average church member is distressed and saddened when someone strays from church fellowship. Attempting to reclaim him, one may be inclined to moan about his lost condition. But no success will come through this approach. The backslider will come back when he sees joy in church fellowship, when he sees he has lost something not found outside the church. That happiness must show in the face and the voice of the messenger.

When a husband becomes involved in an extramarital affair, he can be won back by a wise and clever wife. The man strayed because he thought he saw more joy in the life of the other woman. He will never be won back by a tearful, whining wife, who offers him only unhappiness should he return.

The wife always has the advantage if she is clever enough and selfless enough to refrain from wallowing in self-pity or hurling abuse at him. Let her refrain from tears and court her husband with expressions of love, hope, and joy. Her eyes can say, "You can be happier with me than with anyone else on earth."

Possessing and sharing joy becomes fundamental to husbands and wives having marital difficulties. It has a tremendous drawing power, a force greater than anything else in the world. It can fuse a couple together for life. "With loving-kindness have I drawn thee," the Bible declares. (Jeremiah 31:3.)

For go where you will, you can scarcely find anything with a more potent attraction than a frolicking, loving spouse. Here is courtship all over again—except it is a courtship built on memories of an earlier one, perhaps years previous. It cannot possibly be matched by an illegitimate affair, haunted by a fear of being caught, with all its implications of alimony, child custody, loss of home, and possibly the loss of friends.

The spouse who finds it almost impossible to radiate happiness for a man infatuated with another woman might try following a ten-point program many have found helpful. June Powers, wife of Dr. George A. Powers, recently utilized it.

"I realize, Mrs. Powers," I began, "that it is not fair for me to ask you to express a honeymoon like happiness toward a man who seems to be jilting you. But since you have come to me wanting to know how to win him back, I know that the Biblical concept of joy, combined with six other principles, has often proved effective. One way that I know brokenhearted wives can restore a winning sparkle to their personalities is to make a written list of ten items for which they are thankful. Then after you have them on paper, repeat them audibly whenever you're alone. When in others' presence, speak them in your heart. Sometimes you can whisper them. But continually remind yourself of the ten items you've listed. Perhaps they might be something like this:

"1. Thank You, Lord, for the air.

"2. Thank You, Lord, for sunlight.

"3. Thank You, Lord, for eyesight.

"4. Thank You, Lord, for hearing.

"5. Thank You, Lord, for forgiveness.

"6. Thank You, Lord, for the Bible.

"7. Thank You, Lord, for salvation.

"8. Thank You, Lord, for Jesus.

"9. Thank You, Lord, for my husband.

"10. Thank You, Lord, that he will love me again.

Mrs. Powers promised she would try the program from the Friday night of our interview until the time we could meet at the worship service the next morning. So faithfully did she master the art of thanksgiving that night, and so fully did she put her will and emotion into it, that she forgot her troubles. When I greeted her at eleven o'clock the next morning, June's eyes literally shone.

In the midst of darkness, trial, trouble, and sorrow of all kinds, people can rejoice, if they only want to.

Having found something seriously wrong with one of his eyes, an elderly man contacted a specialist. After careful examination, the doctor told the man as diplomatically as he could that the eye would have to be removed. But he added, "I can furnish you with an artificial eye so natural looking that the average person will never know."

The specialist went on to explain that there would be no aftereffects, no danger physically. Then the eye doctor waited for the old man's response.

"Doctor," began the old man, "I will let you do that under one condition only."

Wondering if the old man had an insurmountable objection, the doctor quickly inquired what that condition would be.

"You must promise me that you will put a twinkle in that artificial eye," said the old man.

Ellen G. White assures us: "Amidst the deepening shadows of earth's last great crisis, God's light will shine brightest, and the song of hope and trust will be heard in clearest and loftiest strains."

"As our Redeemer leads us to the threshold of the Infinite, flushed with the glory of God, we may catch the themes of praise and thanksgiving from the heavenly choir round about the throne; and as the echo of the angels' song is awakened in our earthly homes, hearts will be drawn closer to the heavenly singers. Heaven's communion begins on earth. We learn here the keynote of its praise." Education, pp. 166, 168.

4: Five Other Principles

BEFORE DISCUSSING the five other techniques of Bible-oriented counseling, let us review the principle which makes the Christian counselor different from other counselors. He has a Guidebook which is "quick, and powerful," discerning "the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12.) It contains a perfect law capable of "converting the soul." (Psalm 19:7.) The Bible both performs diagnosis and outlines the cure.

Imagine that the Christian counselor approaches a backslider named Jim. He must frame sentences into thoughts that will make his approach effective, exercising the concepts of faith, hope, love, choice, and humility.

Faith

When confronting one who has turned away from the church, the first impulse is to chide him, to say, "Jim, you disappoint me," or "I have lost confidence in you," or "I wonder how sincere you are, Jim." Such statements may truthfully express a person's misgivings, but what is the effect upon Jim? Consider some different statements.

"Jim, I believe in you."

"Jim, I have confidence in you."

"Jim, I believe in your sincerity."

The concept is simple-nothing complicated about it at all. To follow it may be a different matter. But if the counselor is to bring Jim back to the church, he must express faith in God, faith in the church's doctrines, and even faith in Jim. Many lay counselors will talk about their faith in God, but not their faith in the person involved. If he has no faith in Jim, he had better obtain it on his knees before he visits him.

Hope

A passage in Hebrews 6 speaks of the impossibility of reconversion for certain people who "fall away" from the church. Should the counselor approach Jim with this thought in mind? Should he say, "Jim, you are headed for destruction," or "Do you realize how far you have fallen?" or "Jim, you may have reached the point of no return"? Jim may be in this state, but we don't know for sure. Perhaps he had not known complete conversion. Perhaps he had had unfortunate experiences with some church members.

"We are saved by hope." Romans 8:24. The Saviour told the adulterous woman, "Go, and sin no more," giving her hope of salvation. He could have consigned Mary Magdalene to destruction because of her wicked, lustful life. "He might have extinguished every spark of hope in her soul, but He did not.... Seven times she had heard His rebuke of the demons that controlled her heart and mind. She had heard His strong cries to the Father in her behalf." "It was He who had lifted her from despair and ruin." *The Desire of Ages*, p. 568.

Nothing will be gained by telling Jim of his sins. He knows about them. Perhaps he longs to be able to erase from his mind the supposed wrongs that drove him from the church. Let us speak to him hopefully:

"Jim, I believe you want to come back to us."

"Jim, I feel sure you'll overcome the doubts you're facing."

"Jim, you have the character to rise above the wrongs and slights you've received."

A warm handshake and beaming face tell Jim more than words can. This is the way to bring him back to the fellowship he lost and which, we must believe, he wants to regain. Attacking him with reproof and threats of eternal damnation will only drive him farther away.

Love

Much has been written about love. It has accurately been called the greatest thing in the world. In a sense, love is the beginning and end of soul winning, the one essential ingredient. If you have it, you have all you need to influence others; if you do not, it matters little what other techniques or talents you possess. For successful counseling, the counselor must have love in his heart, be motivated to help the one in trouble because the sinner is a child of God, as is the counselor. They are brothers. Because the

Art of Bible Counseling

counselor loves God, he also loves the troubled one who has sought him for aid. This involves love as a principle.

The counselor also in some degree personally and emotionally likes his client. But he does not become involved in a personal sense, though he must sympathize, or empathize. The problem is, How does one express love to a casual acquaintance? Jim, the backslider, may not be a close friend. Even with our closest friends, we do not usually say outright, "I love you." Some of us find it difficult to speak so directly even to our own families. But other ways of expressing love are available.

The most effective way is to perform a loving act. After you pull a man's car out of the mud, his heart is warm toward you, and no words are needed.

A counseling session does not provide opportunities for such deeds; nevertheless, any occasion to do so should never be passed by. To show up in overalls at Jim's house some morning when misfortune has brought damage to his home may be the incident that brings him back to the church.

Barring the possibility of open or outward demonstration, the counselor can find other ways even during the discussion session to express Christian love. When God talked with Cain, He mentioned the expression on Cain's face. (Genesis 4:6.) The face reveals what is in the heart. Jim can tell by your face your attitude toward him, whether or not you feel concern for him or merely for the church's membership roll. Your warm, firm handclasp tells him how you feel.

When he begins to tell of his troubles, his resentments, his self distrust, your face should express understanding and sympathy. And you comment, "I can see how hard that was to take; you've had your share, haven't you?" The tone of voice, the whole aspect of your personality, can show your love to Jim. Jim says to himself, "This man understands me."

The counselor should say, "I've missed you," not "You haven't been to church for six months." The latter statement reduces Jim from a vital human individual for whom Christ died to a mere statistic. No one wants to be considered only a number, a figure to be added to church or conference membership records.

Choice

We have all known those who show great vigor and enthusiasm, but spoil their fine efforts by trying to boss everybody. A thirst for authority dwells in everybody. When someone understands a situation, it is only natural that he should expect others to have enough sense to follow his enlightened leadership. So he begins giving directions. Sometimes this method works in external operations. In cleaning up the schoolhouse, preparing for the church picnic, or organizing the distribution of tracts, aggressive management may yield results. But nobody can manage other people's lives.

No genuine change comes in a life through external pressure. It appears only through the volition of the individual, coupled with the aid of the Holy Spirit.

Pressure may seem to influence behavior for a time, but eventually people rebel against having someone run their lives, no matter how efficiently. The counselor should approach our hypothetical Jim with such statements as:

"Jim, I have not come to high-pressure you."

"Jim, I have not come to tell you what to do."

"Jim, I have not come to make your decision."

Art of Bible Counseling

This relieves Jim from human pressure. Then God can bring to him a divine pressure, an influence that conforms to the law of choice. Love, hope, and faith are divine pressures to which the human soul responds. But these divine influences, to be appreciated, must be used on a person who knows that he is not under human pressure.

The opposite approach: greet Jim with

"Jim, I have come to tell you a thing or two."

"Jim, the church has decided to give you so long to change your ways-or else ..."

"Jim, I have some counsel for you."

All of these statements break the law of choice, without which love cannot operate. Love cannot be created by coercion. Nor will it last long under dictatorial authority.

Humility

The Bible says, "Honour all men." 1 Peter 2:17. It does not say, "Honor all men except backsliders," or "Honor all men except sinners." "In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Philippians 2:3.

One can truthfully tell Jim, "If you have made mistakes, I am sure that I have made more. For, Jim, the Bible says that our guilt is determined by the knowledge we have. And in Bible times a priest who sinned was considered as guilty before God as the whole congregation, because he had greater understanding."

Great danger exists that the counselor will approach the backslider with a feeling of superiority, of being in the church while the other has left it. Never should any Christian say:

"Do you realize what you have done?"

"You have brought disgrace on the church."

"Sometimes I wonder if you really care to do right."

Such remarks place the counselor on a loftier level, and Jim does not, cannot, respond by opening his heart. It only closes tighter.

Review

The counselor visits Jim, not to counsel him, but to find the path to his heart. He has not come to warn or reprove him about anything. But he has come to cause him to open his heart to God's Word.

The counselor meets him with a smile and a warm handshake. (Law of love.) He may follow by saying, "Jim, I have not come to tell you what to do." (Law of choice.) And then he might quickly add, "But, Jim, I want you to know that I believe in you." (Law of faith.) These words, spoken with a mellow, tender voice, are magnetic. Then to say, "Jim, I believe you are going to win the battle of life" (Law of hope), puts into effect four of the five counseling principles. But when the counselor adds, "Jim, I wouldn't say you have not made mistakes, but I will say this: I have probably made more," then Jim feels at ease in the counselor's presence. (Law of humility.)

"Jim," he continues, "I just stopped by for a little word of prayer, and to say, If you ever feel you need a friend, let me know. I am as near as your telephone. I believe in you and will stick by you. And I sincerely mean this." Note the absence of any suggestion of shallow flattery.

"True friends who will counsel, who will impart magnetic hopefulness, the calming faith that uplifts the soul,-oh, such help is worth more than precious pearls." Ellen G. White, in Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Vol. 3, p. 1163. (Letter 7, 1883.)

5: Phil and Linda

PHIL, having divorced his wife, Peggy, wandered from girl to girl. Then he had a date with Linda, Pastor Carter's daughter. His disarming manner, his innocent, handsome face, and his youth combined to appeal to Linda, a sober-minded young lass. One date led to another, and while Phil had not become serious, Linda decided she had better ask her father's advice.

When she sat down on the side of her father's bed early one morning, she began to use every persuasive power of her innocent youth to make clear to Pastor Carter that Phil had a perfect right to get a divorce. No one could have been more conscientious than Linda, but Pastor Carter felt that his daughter had been thoroughly deceived by the irresponsible boy. As Linda, her embarrassment cloaked with a smile, continued explaining the conditions that led to Phil and Peggy's divorce, Pastor Carter quietly prayed within his heart.

In his studies he had learned that the Bible contains approximately 3,500 promises or clusters of promises.

He had taught his congregation how prayer releases the potential fulfillment in the promises. Not merely are Christians to do what they have done for centuries-ask God for His help-but they are actually to visualize their prayers as answered. The Bible contains many examples of people who requested God's assistance, and then proceeded as if God had already intervened, showing their faith that God would grant their prayers. Had not Paul and Silas sung at midnight before their release? (Acts 16:25.) Had not the hemorrhaging woman declared she would be healed before her touch of faith could benefit her? (Mark 5:28.) Did not the armies of Israel have to shout for victory before the wall of Jericho would fall? (Joshua 6:20.)

Pastor Carter had also studied some of the Bible principles of counseling, discovering 826 passages enjoining Christians to rejoice, to be happy, and to be thankful. He had noted the great emphasis on the power of love throughout the Bible. In his mind there had formed ideas for a practical application of humility in counseling. And he had discovered the law of choice: people benefit by the ideas and actions they choose for themselves, not those urged upon them by the counselor.

So far in the pastor's experience these concepts had been largely theoretical. Now, with his daughter coming to him for emotional support, he had an opportunity to apply them. Now she sat by his side, telling him how she regarded Phil, justifying his divorce.

Having already noticed the developing friendship, the pastor had been deeply concerned over it and had prayed that the daughter's mind would be enlightened about Phil, who appeared to her father to be a philanderer. His negative emotional response to the young man naturally intensified because of Linda's involvement.

Here was an opportunity for Pastor Carter to put some of his theory into practice in a difficult situation, difficult because it involved his own emotional life.

First of all, he exercised faith in the favorable outcome of the crucial interview. Having asked for God's help, now he believed God would intervene, guiding his mind into a mood of joy in anticipation of the

Art of Bible Counseling

solution the Lord would send. Naturally, he felt love for Linda and even an emotional regard for Phil. After finding ways of putting Phil on as high a level as possible, he would present a choice to Linda.

The father's face reflected his thoughts of love, joy, and faith. When she finished, Pastor Carter said, "Linda, I have a wonderful plan for you."

The girl's eyes widened in surprise. As a matter of fact, he did not at that moment have an answer to the problem. But he had faith that a solution would be given him. The Christian must claim and return thanks for the answer to his prayer before he has any outward evidence of its fulfillment. "Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." James 1:6.

The father quickly added, "And I think you will like it," thereby introducing the idea of choice. Linda's acceptance of her father's plan, whatever it turned out to be, would be on her own volition, not on the basis of parental authority. On this point parents often err when they try to use their position to force their own decisions on their children.

Note that thus far the father had displayed confidence and love by facial expression, by tone of voice, and by sympathetic and understanding responses to his daughter's ideas. He had indicated that the daughter would have free choice in her course of action. While he had not yet dealt with the man in the case, Phil, and with his own feelings of antipathy, he clearly indicated with a glowing face and enthusiastic expression that he would have an answer to Linda's problem, should she decide to accept it. The guidance he needed would come when he changed from a suspicious and hostile father to a humble counselor.

"Linda, Phil is a good-hearted boy," Pastor Carter said. "He means well. I can't help liking him." His daughter's face revealed the effect of the humble statement.

"Let each esteem other better than themselves." Philippians 2:3. "The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way." Psalm 25:9.

Christians obtain wisdom by letting God guide their thoughts. As God acquired a greater empathy with man when, through His Son, He became a part of the human race, so in a sense Pastor Carter emulated God's divine acceptance of imperfect beings by speaking well of Phil. Immediately the "plan" he had announced came to his mind. He went on:

"And, Linda, you know that Peggy is a good girl, too. She is a registered nurse. She dresses neatly and has most pleasant ways—a girl any man could be proud of." Having heard her father speak well of Phil, Linda readily accepted his statements about Phil's divorced wife. Her face showed agreement.

"God has brought you into Phil's life." Linda could scarcely have been more pleased. "This is what you are going to like," he said, referring to his plan. "Suppose that you had been Phil's wife. And suppose that through some quarrel you and he had been divorced. Do you know, Linda, that you and I would be praying that some girl would come along and send this wonderful man back into your life, because he would have belonged to you?"

With an expression of definite and entire confidence, Pastor Carter looked into his daughter's face and said, "God has brought you into Phil's life to send him back to his wife. I make a prediction that the next time you have a date with Phil; you will say to him, 'Phil, you had one of the finest wives in all the world. God gave her to you. You can find none better in the world for you. I suggest, Phil that you return to Peggy and court her all over again. Then, at the appropriate time—and don't hurry it you propose all over again. And I predict that Peggy will say Yes and that you will have a happy home.'"

"Daddy, do you think I could do that?" Linda queried with a smile which revealed that she saw merit in his idea.

Her father nodded happily. "You surely can. I know you can."

They prayed. God used Pastor Carter to inspire his daughter with a hope that she could be used to save a shattered home. The principles of faith, hope, love, choice, humility, and joy had combined through the pastor-counselor to prevent the daughter from making a great mistake.

At her next date with Phil, Linda did what her father suggested. Phil accepted the idea. Some time later, he and Peggy remarried.

6: Preventing a Teen-age Marriage

CONNIE'S PARENTS, respected churchgoing people, felt a genuine concern for her happiness. Yet, by their own failure to succeed in marriage and in life, they had created an atmosphere of bitterness and frustration that led Connie to seek release through a series of infatuations with various boys. Now, recoiling from a recent rejection, she considered herself ready, at nineteen, to become serious about an attractive and worthy boy, despite the fact that he was younger.

Pastor and Mrs. Orford had three fine cultured, well-brought-up sons. Knowing Connie's background and experiences with other boys, the Orfords feared what might happen to their naïve oldest son, Dick, in the cunning girl's hands. She might lead him into an unfortunate marriage, possibly an elopement.

Trying an arbitrary approach, they saw at once that their opposition to the courtship would force its concealment. Then they became more diplomatic. But the resulting growth of the emotional attachment terrified them. They prayed and worried, not knowing which way to turn. Pastor Gordon came to town with a series of evangelistic meetings. Here, they thought, was their answer. He would know how to solve their problem.

Could anyone really blame Connie for admiring Dick, the tall, handsome, sixteen-year-old high school sophomore with the noble bearing? Could anyone blame her for wanting to marry him? Dick's career plans involved medical training. He faced two more years of high school, four of college, and four of medical study—a total of ten years before he could even work as an intern. He had no trade. With family finances as they were, an immediate marriage would cut off all chance of Dick's medical education.

Pastor Gordon believed that Dick was completely unaware of any danger to himself or his career. He just enjoyed being with Connie. Furthermore, it appeared to him that Connie was far from the conniving female fatale that the boy's parents envisioned. The evangelist saw only a jilted, love-hungry girl who had found a wholly admirable and lovable boy to provide her with affection and emotional support.

She may not even have focused her feelings to the point of wanting marriage, Pastor Gordon reasoned, let alone harboring a sinister plan to capture Dick for herself, regardless of his future plans.

Still, Connie was in no frame of mind to reason out her position or her desires. Her world being in a state of confusion, emotion would likely override reason at any time. The evangelist assessed the situation as critical, though he could not accept the grounds for fear which motivated the Orfords. Neither could he accept their plan to help the young couple.

The Orfords had worked out in their minds an approach for him to follow with Dick and Connie. He would go to them, have a chat, make clear the disastrous results of the course they were unconsciously

Art of Bible Counseling

charting, and persuade them to end their relationship immediately. But he knew such an approach would be contrary to some of life's rights.

The parents' plan violated the couple's right of choice. The moment Connie and Dick thought anyone was trying to rule their lives, they would resist the interference. In spite of the Orfords' urgency, Pastor Gordon felt obligated to make clear to them that Connie and Dick must voluntarily come to him for counsel. Until they did so, anything he had to offer would be rejected.

Night after night the evangelist held his meetings. Dick and Connie attended. The visiting minister preached on the need for obedience to the principle of choice and related themes. As Connie and Dick sat and listened, they began to feel drawn to him. Maybe here was someone with whom they could share their personal problem, they decided.

The evangelist had tried to encourage the Orfords with the promise, "I will save thy children." (Isaiah 49:25.) He had explained to them and to the local church how to use the A B C's of prayer (Ask, Believe, Claim). And he had tried to impress on the congregation the importance of the third step to successful prayer: accepting God's promise that He will answer prayer.

About this necessary part of prayer, Ellen G. White writes: "For any gift He has promised, we may ask; then we are to believe that we receive, and return thanks to God that we have received.

"We need look for no outward evidence of the blessing. The gift is in the promise, and we may go about our work assured that what God has promised He is able to perform, and that the gift, which we already possess, will be realized when we need it most." *Education*, p. 258. (Italics supplied.)

"As surely as the oak is in the acorn, so surely is the gift of God in His promise. If we receive the promise, we have the gift." *Ibid.*, p. 253.

The evangelist had for years illustrated the process of claiming a prayer's answer by comparing it to a tree. Every normal acorn contains an oak tree. The trunk, two leaves, and tiny roots are in the acorn. It is an actual tree within the seed, even though it would take a magnifying glass to see it.

The same thing is true of an apple seed, or the seed of any other tree. They only have to grow until one can see them. God's promises contain their answers, first in invisible form, and then someday, under proper conditions, in visible form.

This, he suggested to Dick's parents, was their part. They must pray for Dick and Connie, and not merely pray, but consider their prayer answered.

When Pastor Gordon saw that he had gained the young couple's confidence, he recognized the germinating answer to Dick's parents' prayer. But the parents had to wait in faith, because two laws—choice and faith-operated: choice, in waiting for the young people to make up their own minds, even about coming to Pastor Gordon; faith, in taking God at His word.

One day Dick came to the evangelist, asking for an appointment. When his parents learned about the request, they were jubilant. Now was to be the chance, they felt, the one opportunity to prevent the disastrous marriage. Here was the chance to make Connie and Dick break up immediately. But it was a false alarm, for Dick and Connie had come merely to ask how to win her parents to the Lord. The visit proved valuable, however, in enabling the evangelist to understand Connie better.

Since they had not come to ask about their personal problem, he did not even intimate that they had one. Outwardly, he evidenced no concern for their love affair. Silence was not easy. It was a mighty fight to obey the law of choice. But he did not just sit idly by, waiting and hoping that they would ask for advice.

Art of Bible Counseling

As he counseled Dick and Connie about her parents, he tried to use to the fullest the rest of the seven Biblical guidelines to successful Christian counseling. He expressed faith in them. He beamed love to them. He esteemed both of them highly. But in obedience to the law of choice, he did not give them advice they did not ask for. While he avoided human pressure, the love he radiated, the faith he expressed, the hope he built in them, brought a more subtle pressure from within.

When the interview ended and the young couple had gone on their way, the Orfords lost no time in inquiring about the results, only to feel keen disappointment when informed that Connie and Dick had not mentioned their relationship. The future seemed dark and foreboding to the heartbroken parents. Pastor Gordon had, in their estimation, missed the best opportunity to counsel the youths.

But it can be said to the Orfords' credit that as he once more covered the A B C's of prayer and obedience to the law of personal choice, they trusted to his judgment.

Disappointed, but still trusting, would be the best way to describe the worried parents. They continued to pray for Dick and even for the mistrusted Connie.

As the last weekend of the meetings approached, the youths came and asked if it would be possible for them to see the visiting preacher again before he left their city. He explained to them that every minute had now been packed full with the exception of the Sabbath School hour the next day. He would be more than delighted, however, to take that time with them if they would like to step over to his motel.

As Connie and Dick knocked at the door the next morning, he admitted them with a friendly smile. Within his heart he felt that this was the hour of their decision. He had claimed God's assurance that He would work things out and had declared it to the Orfords. Now the time had arrived. The young people had come on their own. Not until inside the room did they indicate the purpose of their visit.

They lost no time in coming to the point, knowing the evangelist's busy schedule. They wanted his counsel regarding their relationship. Should they continue their engagement even though they would not be married for five years? So it had come to an engagement, Pastor Gordon thought. But they had enough foresight to think of waiting for five years.

Before they went into the details of their plans, the evangelist hastened to state, "I want you both to know that when you leave, you're in no way indebted to me for the advice I give you. There is absolutely no obligation. I want you to reject anything not Biblical, or that you yourselves think not good."

Connie and Dick had already anticipated that this would be his attitude. His sermons had stated it, in effect, again and again. In their previous visit he had demonstrated it.

The conversation was friendly and uninhibited. Dick's statements about the couple's plans made the evangelist confident that he had no other thought than to wait five years. He would then be twenty-one and nearly through college. They could make it on their own after that. The minister did have doubts about Connie's complete support of this plan, or her ability to keep things under control for so long. Feeling sure of the couple's confidence, he pointed out the hazards in the plan: that the closeness of the engagement relationship would be likely to lead to familiarities that would urge an earlier marriage.

He then suggested, repeating the principle of choice and emphasizing their freedom in accepting or rejecting as they chose, that it might be fairer to each other and a way of relieving emotional pressure from being exclusively together—if they would permit each other to plan some other dates. Their strong devotion would prevent any danger of losing one another.

Seeing from Dick's face that he, at least, approved the suggestion, Evangelist Gordon pointed out that by permitting additional dating, they would be providing a chance to find out if either one would come to love someone else. It would be fortunate that this would happen—if it were to happen at all—before

Art of Bible Counseling

marriage, rather than afterward. Dick agreed wholeheartedly. Connie went along with the idea, but obviously without enthusiasm.

When the conversation drew to a close, the evangelist casually turned to Dick and asked, "How does this appeal to you?"

Without a moment's hesitation Dick answered, "It is good, and I'm going to follow it." No one had said that this meant breaking off the engagement, but all knew that, factually, this was what it meant.

As the counselor-evangelist turned to Connie and asked her the same question, he noticed that she responded with some effort. "I think it is all right," she finally said. Somewhat disappointed, she tried not to reveal her real feelings.

They prayed together. The minister told the Lord of the great future the young couple faced (offering hope). He spoke glowingly in his prayer of his confidence in them (demonstrating faith). His tone revealed love. Pastor Gordon had given them the opportunity to make a choice. Even in prayer he did not high-pressure them. During the entire interview, he never once told them what to do, did not lecture them, and did not condemn them by intonation or word.

When Dick and Connie left, they thanked him warmly for the advice. Dick seemed much relieved. Connie, not exactly satisfied, grudgingly agreed to everything.

That afternoon the Orfords met the evangelist in a Sabbath School room after the closing service. They had noticed that Dick and Connie still talked together, apparently as friendly as ever. The Orfords appeared disappointed, fearing that the evangelist and their prayers had failed. But even as they related their fears, someone knocked on the closed door. When the pastor opened it, Dick and Connie stood there. They had come, they said, to let their parents and Pastor Gordon know that they had taken the suggestions and had talked together, working out their plans for the future. Their voices and their faces revealed the utter honesty of their statements. Pastor Orford and his devout wife, relieved, accepted Dick and Connie's explanation.

The next morning the evangelist and his wife left for other cities. As they traveled, they continued to pray that God would free Dick so that he could finish his education.

About three weeks later, Pastor and Mrs. Gordon visited their daughter's home some distance from the Orfords' residence. Learning where the Gordons stayed, Mrs. Orford telephoned them. During the conversation Mrs. Orford referred to Connie and Dick.

"Let me tell you what has happened since you left," she said.

"Last weekend Connie and Dick dated. Dick gave Connie several nice gifts. They seemed to be enjoying themselves. Then just as Dick let Connie out of his car at the close of the evening, she said, 'Dick, I just wanted to invite you over to my wedding next Monday evening. I'm marrying Jack Brown.'"

One can only speculate why Connie could have dated Dick, accepted his gifts, and then at the conclusion of the same evening, announced her marriage to someone else. Perhaps Connie's better judgment and spirit of fairness suggested that Dick should not marry immediately, but should be given the privilege of finishing his education. For him to marry her now would definitely prevent the fulfillment of his highest ambition. She did love Dick—as much as teen-agers can and her love led her to release him to pursue his life's goal to become a medical doctor.

Yet Connie's emotions still remained a vital factor. She longed for sympathy and love, for understanding and for fellowship. These she received from Dick. She did not dare to let go of these cherished props to her life until she could find them in someone else. Connie found them, she thought, in Jack Brown.

But how could she spend that evening with Dick, knowing all the time her plans for two days later? This is a mystery. Yet, if one puts himself in Connie's place, he can see that she did not want to hurt Dick. Doubtless she asked herself, "How can I tell him?" She did not know he would flood her with gifts that evening. But they only made it more difficult for her to make her announcement. Hard pressed to know what to do, she did the best that a frustrated nineteen-year-old girl could do.

One must admit to a temptation to censure Connie severely. But Christ would not have done such a thing. It is better to believe that she determined unselfishly to give up Dick, a noble six-footer with an angelic face. No one will ever know the mental turmoil she went through. A later check on Connie's marriage with Jack Brown reported, "They are happy. Can you imagine that?"

7: Cure for Hostility

MARY DRASCO had a deep-seated hostility toward her husband. Four years before, she had sought a psychiatrist because of her periods of severe mental depression. She later wrote of that therapy experience, "Working with the psychiatrist helped me solve numerous problems, but I couldn't seem to control or resolve my feelings of resentment and revulsion toward my husband."

One day she made an appointment with me. At the first interview, I learned of her attitude. How should I proceed, I wondered, seeing the intensity of the hostility and its control of her life.

Never before had I thought of using joy as a form of therapy to overcome hostility. That love dispels hatred is a well-known axiom. But would joy? Scripture texts, such as "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts," had often helped hostility-ridden individuals.

For some I have suggested a program based on Matthew 5:44. This involves kneeling down with the text open before one and reading, "Love your enemies." Then the hatred-obsessed patient would say, "Lord, I love," naming the one against whom he had hostility. Then reading the next part of the text which commands, "Bless them that curse you," he would enumerate to God the good point or points of his enemy.

The third step contained in the verse is, "Do good to them that hate you." The patient would then perform some kind action for the person he disliked. Action and motion affect emotion. Try running sometime when excited and see how it can intensify the mood. Children skip when excited. Doing good to someone creates a feeling of goodwill toward the person. Each act of kindness intensifies the feeling until the hostility is overcome.

The fourth command contained in the text is, "Pray for them." Never have I seen a person who carefully, sincerely took that counsel who was not at least temporarily delivered from hostility.

Yet I did not feel impressed to use such an approach with Mary's problem. Instead, following such Biblical injunctions as "Rejoice evermore" (1 Thessalonians 5:16); "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (verse 18); "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10); and "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine" (Proverbs 17:22),

I suggested to Mary that she systematically take things around her and express her appreciation, pleasure, or joy in them before God and man. She would begin with ten things. Mary later wrote, "Next morning when I awoke, I wished I hadn't followed your suggestion. The task of finding ten things to be thankful for seemed impossible, and besides, I didn't want to be thankful. I waited until my husband went to the office and my son to school. No more excuses now, I thought. It was almost a matter of gritting my teeth and forcing myself to be thankful. Well, I decided, I could certainly be thankful for

Lucie, my little daughter. So I started, feeling foolish, but determined. I thanked God for her. Thus it went all day, until by the tenth 'Thank You' I felt ashamed for having ever been unhappy. By the second day all the resentment and revulsion vanished, and with God's help, I determined to make our home full of divine love."

Mary announced two days later that she considered herself completely cured. The antipathy, the resentment, toward her husband that had plagued her for several years ceased. Wondering how a problem that had troubled her for four years vanished in two days, she came to me, asking what had happened.

"The Bible says," I explained, "that God dwells in the praises of his people. (Psalm 22:3.) Praising Him, we develop a spiritual climate conducive for Christ to dwell in us. Therefore we must believe that as we enter this program, God's presence submerges us, fills us, leavens us, and brings us happiness and an emotional and mental health such as we have never experienced before. It is difficult for man to be happy without God, but when He is with us, we can know infinite joy." Months later we conducted several meetings within a few hundred miles of the Drascos' home. Twice Mary and her husband came. "Did you see her holding his hand?" my wife asked with relish.

"No, I missed that," I answered. "Let's go and see them sometime and find out just what has happened since last year."

When we called their local pastor's wife for directions to Mary's place, we were thrilled to hear her say, "I just want to tell you that Mary Drasco's life has been completely changed."

"I'm glad you told me," I said.

"Well, whatever else you did here last year," she continued, "I thought you would be happy to know that she is a wonderful Christian, a delight to be around. Really, that is true."

In her home two hours later, we met Mary once more. Her face reflected all that the pastor's wife had suggested. "Wait a moment," Mary exclaimed with delight, "till I call my husband at the office and tell him you are here."

Her husband, a doctor, left an office full of patients to hasten over and greet us. She commented, "You remember last year I asked you if it would last when you were gone?"

"Yes," I answered, "I surely do."

"Well, it has," she said, her face revealing her happiness. This form of therapy has God's endorsement. He underwrites its success. It is not a substitute for other laws of life, such as careful eating, sleeping, and exercise, but an addition to them. God said, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do; do all to the glory of God." 1 Corinthians 10:31. He also said, "The joy of the Lord is your strength," Nehemiah 8:10.

The strength of religion is its joy. The strength of the happy young couple is joy. That joy comes only through a consciousness of the presence of Jesus. Without Christ, mankind falls prey to every surge of emotion, every ebb and flow of mental depression and elation. Christ is the source of true mental health.

8: Religion Divides a Home

LUCY HAD recently united with the church. But before long her husband, Henry, violently persecuted her for her decision. He threatened her, hated the church, and cursed its members.

Art of Bible Counseling

When my wife and I came to Lucy's city, the local pastor took us over to see if we could help her bear her husband's persecution. She told us her problems, while we prayed silently that God would grant us His wisdom, a practice of ours as we counsel others. According to divine instruction, we are then to believe and claim God's promised help. "The gift is in the promise." Education, p. 258. If we will accept the special insight God makes available, it belongs to us in any unselfish counseling we do.

As Lucy continued her story, it seemed that we were getting nowhere in understanding Henry's violent antagonism toward her faith. Lucy certainly seemed a better wife than before she joined the church. We asked one question after another in a vain effort to discover the problem.

Suddenly I felt impressed to ask, "What about your sexual relations with Henry since you joined the church?"

"They're not much," Lucy replied. "I have been so happy in my newfound faith that it seems to me that nothing else is important."

"Do you think," I added, "that this might be causing Henry to resent your church membership?"

After a bit of reflection, Lucy agreed it might be.

"Do you think," I continued, "this might be the source of his dissatisfaction? Maybe he thinks the church took his wife away from him."

This was a new revelation to Lucy. We had found the root of the problem. Opening our Bibles, we read from 1 Corinthians 7:1-10. Using a few cases to illustrate, I explained to her that it would be well to conform to the Bible's teaching regarding the marriage relation. Rightly understood and respected, sexuality is from God.

The Bible contains some clear injunctions regarding the physical fellowship of love between married couples. "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled." Hebrews 13:4. The original New Testament word for "honourable"—*timios*—is translated just one time as "honourable." Eleven times it is translated as "precious." One definition of the word precious is: "Of great value; very dear." Synonyms for precious are "costly, valuable, beloved, dear, inestimable."

"Marriage is beloved." It is "dear." It is "inestimable." It is a part of love. Since God ordained it, man cannot consider it sordid or sinful. God meant it for a blessing, and man must accept it as such.

The solution of Lucy's problem came to me when God brought other counseling experiences to my mind. I recalled Amy, who had come to my study about her husband, David. She related how he used to be kind to her, but a few years earlier became abusive and difficult to live with. He snarled, threatened, and cursed, acting more like an angry lion than like the loving, tender husband he had once been.

Amy, like Lucy, had been greatly concerned for her mate. After she came into the office, she launched into her narrative of David's unkindness. Then I did something which I seldom do—I interrupted her.

"Amy, I beg your pardon for interrupting, but if you don't mind, I am going to make a stab in the dark. If I have not hit the crux of the problem, then you go right ahead and continue your story."

She paused.

"How is your sexual relationship to your husband?" I asked.

"Oh," Amy responded in an offhand manner, "I've not been interested in that for many years. When I became a Christian, I was through with sex."

"Amy," I counseled, "if you will return home and be a wife to your husband, it will be worth more to him than many Bible studies. He will doubtless be a kind, loving husband in a matter of days."

Art of Bible Counseling

My suggestion had not been based on personal ideas or theories. It was based on Biblical guides. Using the Amplified New Testament, here is what the Apostle Peter has to say on the subject in one of his letters to the early church:

"In like manner you married women, be submissive to your own husbands—subordinate yourselves as being secondary to and dependent on them, and adapt yourselves to them. So that even if any do not obey the Word [of God], they may be won over not by discussion but by the [godly] lives of their wives, when they observe the pure and modest way in which you conduct yourselves, together with your reverence [for your husband. That is, you are to feel for him all that reverence includes]—to respect, defer to, revere him; [revere means] to honor, esteem (appreciate, prize), and [in the human sense] adore him; [and adore means] to admire, praise, be devoted to, deeply love and enjoy [your husband]." 1 Peter 3:1, 2, The Amplified New Testament.

It is interesting to note that this helpful translation is largely the work of a woman, Frances E. Siewert, and that she should see in the original what she brings forth in this translation.

Lucy and Amy were not the first instances of saintly women misunderstanding Scripture's position on married love. The institution of marriage has been continually attacked and distorted through the centuries. Every possible deviation has appeared at one time or another.

A number of years ago a doctrine called "New Light" appeared briefly. It taught that husbands and their wives should have no sexual intercourse except to fulfill a desire for children. Such a theory shatters a vital marriage bond and reduces sex to nothing more than procreative breeding. My father once exclaimed, "That doctrine has broken homes, led to fornication and adultery, and originates with the devil." And he knew. In his community a preacher and his wife had married, agreeing to live "like the angels." They would refrain from physical relations. Before long, under the great emotional strain imposed by such a pact, the minister committed adultery. Expelled from the ministry, he had to resort to teaching public school to earn a living. Other experiences could be related of similar results from the adoption of similar theories.

The Apostle Paul says, "Now let me deal with the questions raised in your letter. It is a good principle for a man to have no physical contact with woman. Nevertheless, because casual liaisons are so prevalent, let every man have his own wife and every woman her own husband. The husband should give his wife what is due to her as his wife, and the wife should be as fair to her husband. The wife has no longer full rights over her own person, but shares them with her husband. In the same way the husband shares his personal rights with his wife. Do not cheat each other of normal sexual intercourse, unless of course you both decide to abstain temporarily to make special opportunity for fasting and prayer. But afterward you should resume relations as before, or you will expose yourselves to the obvious temptation of the devil." 1 Corinthians 7:1-5, Phillips.*

"The wife cannot claim her body as her own; it is her husband's. Equally, the husband cannot claim his body as his own; it is his wife's. Do not deny yourselves to one another, except when you agree upon a temporary abstinence in order to devote yourselves to prayer; afterwards you may come together again; otherwise, for lack of self-control, you may be tempted by Satan." 1 Corinthians 7:4, 5, New English Bible.**

Several years ago a young man engaged to a lovely young woman came to me for help. The mother of the girl had told her daughter that under no conditions should she engage in sexual intercourse except when desiring children. Then the mother added emphatically, "It is too late in the history of the world to have children."

Art of Bible Counseling

For them to have married while the woman held her mother's beliefs would have invited disaster. Something had to be done for them before it was too late. Using the Bible, I showed these young people what the marriage relationship should be.

Continually during my ministry I have come in contact with men or women who have committed adultery. In many of these cases one married partner ignored the Biblical teachings approving of marital sex. A wife who forbids sexual relations does not realize the danger she places her marriage in.

A coed living in a home seduced the husband after he had been married more than twenty years. She had deliberately set her trap for this fine Christian gentleman, she boldly told me later. But his wife unknowingly contributed to the temptation.

"I just neglected my wifely duty," she confided to me afterward. Of course the husband was demoted in his church work and stunned by his awful sin. He even considered suicide. While he suffered public embarrassment, his wife maintained her good name in the church, receiving great pity and sympathy. He was considered a sinner, she a saint. I wonder how God would decide.

Recently I received a letter from a clergyman whose wife had decided that sexual intercourse in marriage is sinful. "What am I to do?" the clergyman inquired. "I am a normal man. I love my wife. But she has no interest in one particular feature of marriage."

A young woman, comprehending the situation, offered herself to the clergyman. He refused; but had he yielded, his wife would have been largely responsible.

This experience is sometimes reversed. Occasionally the husband has innocently deprived his wife of her marital rights, perhaps because of absorption in work or hobbies or because of physical exhaustion from overwork. Several Christian women have brought this problem to my wife and me, seeking counsel.

In either case, the partners forget that the Bible says, "They two shall be one flesh." Ephesians 5:31. They read it, "They two shall be one spirit." But the Holy Scriptures say nothing of the kind.

Is sexuality, in the proper setting, sordid? Let anyone who answers in the affirmative quarrel with God. He made the human race male and female. He designed physical love, with other principles, to hold husband and wife together.

An attractive woman related how she kept a clean house, prepared the finest meals, and dressed neatly; but her husband had extramarital affairs. She did not stop to realize that what she was doing any housemaid could do. Divorces do not originate in the kitchen or dining room or living room. Many times they originate in the bedroom.

Reasons abound why some people believe that sexuality, even in marriage, is sinful. A parent teaches this to the children. They in turn pass it on to theirs. The tradition passes down through the years, condemning, breaking, and damning families.

A minister once explained how the official who conducted their marriage ceremony tried to specify a limitation on sexual intercourse. Not long afterward this same minister became infatuated with a woman in his church. They planned to marry, to shatter two homes. Who was guilty? The official must accept part of the responsibility. He taught what God's Word does not teach. The couple themselves shared the guilt because they did not study the Word of God to learn for themselves its teachings about married love.

Sexual desire is normal, God-given. Nowhere does the Bible say that any phase of married love is wrong. The idea that it is a sin for married couples to engage in sexual relations came from him who hates every sacrament of God. Satan hates the home and uses many means to destroy it, whether it be immorality,

Art of Bible Counseling

alcohol, gambling, or any form of selfishness. He uses also the philosophy that sexuality is sinful, except for procreation. It is ignorance to read any such thing into 1 Corinthians 7:1-10.

Another reason some have come to abhor sex is that they have spouses who have so emphasized the physical part of marriage that it has become obnoxious. Lucy should have been counseled, before she united with the church, to go home and be a better wife than ever before. She should have been told that the Apostle Paul says that should one marriage partner become a Christian, her new faith does not automatically dissolve the marriage bonds. (1 Corinthians 7:12-16.) Since the marriage is valid and continues, so does the right to sexual relations.

Perhaps Lucy was a saint, but a misguided one who should have been taught to respect her husband's hunger for love. Whoever prepared Lucy for baptism should have asked, "Lucy, don't you want your husband to find the wonderful experience that you have discovered?"

In reply, she would undoubtedly have answered, "Oh, yes, that is the greatest longing of my heart—to see Henry find the joy and happiness I now have."

Then the counselor should have continued, "I will share with you a little secret. If you will use it, it will be worth more to your husband than Bible studies, sermons, or a whole library of doctrinal literature. It is this—just go home and be the best sweetheart to Henry that you have ever been.

Be the most loving wife—with all its duties, responsibilities, and pleasures to Henry. Remember that your attention to his interests, even his sex life, will bind him to you and cause him to inquire into what has made you such an adorable and loving wife."

Years earlier I had given this counsel to a woman being baptized. Ten days later her husband came to us, and in delightful agitation, asked for the evangelist. "I want to know about your church," he said. "I want to know what it teaches. My wife was always a good woman, but since she became a member of your church, she has been the finest ever."

While Amy and many others who sought counsel saved their marriages, Lucy's history ended tragically. Her case shows how serious a misunderstanding of sexuality's role in marriage can occasionally become. Though Lucy learned the true basis of happy marriage and determined to act on her knowledge, communication between her and Henry had broken down to the point that she never succeeded in breaking through his hostility and invective. In a short time he became mentally ill and died. Looking at the case clinically, it would be unwarranted to claim that sexual deprivation is ever a sole cause of insanity. But we can assume that with Henry it was a contributing factor. Eliminating this might have saved him.

Every church should have a men's class or club to meet and receive sincere, practical, Biblical sex guidance. The class should make clear to all husbands that the Bible does not endorse the idea of a man's demanding sexual intercourse from his companion just because he is stimulated every now and then, just as he should not eat several times a day between meals. Sex is more than a physical drive. It has emotional and social overtones, especially strong in woman. Women quickly come to resent the advances of husbands who forget this aspect of sex.

In fact, both men and women should be taught that marriage is a sacred contract into which each enters with the thought of making the other happy. Physical love is an art and a science that deserves careful study, especially by every male.

The first principle for the husband to learn is that since he takes the initiative in love play, it is his responsibility to know something about what he is doing. He would not attempt to paint a picture or carve a statue without getting some information on methods. So he should approach the art of love. He

would not attempt a complicated chemical experiment without some attention to the scientific laws involved. So he should approach the science of love.

Generally speaking, men have a much shallower concept of lovemaking than women do. They typically think of gratification first, and on an entirely selfish level. Women value tenderness, affection, aesthetics, and interpersonal harmony. Men would greatly enhance their own satisfaction in love if they would give attention to these elements. A Christian man with any tenderness in his heart will feel completely frustrated in lovemaking if his partner has not shared with him fully. Yet it is estimated that half the wives, in the Western World at least, never know complete climax.

Courtship is not a onetime activity. Ideally it takes place every time a husband makes love to his wife. Never does a refined man think of his wife as a facility ready for his use whenever he feels the urge. Rather, he waits for a day when he judges his wife's mood is favorable. Then he woos through the whole day: caresses at breakfast, sweet words at parting, a phone call in the middle of the day, a favor at homecoming. Flowers for married people? Why not? Has she ceased to respond to flowers since she spoke the marriage vow?

Then, if she suggests going to bed a bit early, rather than being irritated at having his reading interrupted, he puts his book away, and with a self congratulatory smile, prepares for a real love feast.

You get what you pay for, in love as in commerce. With tenderness, patience, self-restraint in short, skill, the husband will make his love partner supremely happy and provide himself with an experience long to be remembered.

*From The New Testament in Modern English. Copyright, J. B. Phillips, 1958. Used by permission of The Macmillan Company.

**From The New English Bible, New Testament. Copyright, The Delegates of the Oxford University Press and The Syndics of the Cambridge University Press, 1961. Reprinted by permission.

E-Book Note: Although some of these modern versions may be interesting to read—we do not consider them authoritative, but rather paraphrases reflecting the religious opinions of the authors of them.

9: The Power of Negative Thinking

ANN WAS so upset that she had spent more than thirty dollars a month on drugs and sedatives. When we reached the farm and poultry ranch owned by Ann and her husband, Joe, we found them trying to get things in shape for the Sabbath. She welcomed us rather coolly. We explained that we had come over for a brief visit to see if we could be a help to them. The situation remained quietly restrained until we mentioned Joe's name. Immediately Ann exploded with a long well-memorized list of his inadequacies.

"I have lost all my love for Joe," Ann exclaimed with an air of finality.

"You have probably lost all your romantic love," I said, and smiled.

"I should say so," she agreed, irritably.

"And you may have lost all your feelings of companionship with him, too. You do not seem to have much in common anymore."

"Nothing whatever," Ann blurted.

Art of Bible Counseling

"Another love still lies way down inside." Observing that I had her attention, I continued, "And this love never dies. It may smolder. It may appear to be lifeless, dead, but it just can't die. It is divine love, the love God speaks about when He said, 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.' Jeremiah 31:3." I briefly suggested to Ann that while her love for Joe might be almost gone, hope still existed for their marriage.

"Is Joe a poor provider?" I asked.

"Oh, no; he is perfect that way."

"Does he run around with other girls?"

"Oh, no."

"Does he drink?"

"No."

"Does he smoke?"

"No."

"Well, he is not so bad after all, then, is he? Most women who come to us for counsel have a mate who has one or all of these faults. And you don't run around, you don't drink, and you don't smoke. So you are really quite a fine couple in many ways."

After assuring Ann that her dormant love would spark again under the proper conditions, we had prayer. As my wife and I left, I warmly shook her hand and said, "Tomorrow I am presenting a special sermon. I hope you can come." Ann was present.

In my sermon I used, among some remarkable passages of Scripture, one found in Psalm 103:1-5. This scripture exhorts men to bless, or praise, the Lord with all their ability. The 103rd Psalm promises that when men do this, something will happen within.

Their outlook, their attitude toward life, will change. They find God to be One who not merely forgives iniquities, but "healeth all thy diseases," both physical and spiritual-emotional. According to the same psalm, He "redeemeth" lives "from destruction," so that one's "youth is renewed like the eagle's."

That Sabbath afternoon I spoke again, emphasizing God's holy promises for those who totally praise the Lord. God dwells among men when they praise Him. God's presence provides Christians with many blessings and protections that the non-Christian does not share. The dangers mankind daily faces are concretely real. So are. God's promises of protection and guidance.

Here is a partial list Moses gave in Deuteronomy 28 of the diseases and troubles which would come upon God's professed people if they refused to praise God as part of their obligation under the covenant they had entered into with God and He had to withdraw His protection from them:

1. "The Lord shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee, until he has consumed thee."
2. "The Lord shall smite thee with consumption."
3. "With a fever."
4. "And with an inflammation."
5. "And with an extreme burning."
6. "And with the sword."

Art of Bible Counseling

7. "And with blasting."
8. "And with mildew."
9. "And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass."
10. "And the earth that is under thee shall be iron."
11. "The Lord shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust."
12. Thou "shalt be removed."
13. "The Lord will smite thee with the botch of Egypt."
14. "And with the emerods."
15. "And with the scab."
16. "And with the itch."
17. "Thou canst not be healed."
18. "The Lord shall smite thee with madness."
19. "And blindness."
20. "And astonishment of heart."
21. "And thou shalt not prosper in thy ways."
22. "And no man shall save thee."
23. "Thou shalt betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her."
24. "Thou shalt build a house, and thou shalt not dwell therein."
25. "Thou shalt plant a vineyard, and shall not gather the grapes thereof."
26. "Thine ox shall be slain before thine eyes."
27. "Thine ass shall be violently taken away from before thy face, and shall not be restored to thee."
28. "Thy sheep shall be given unto thine enemies."
29. "Thy sons and thy daughters shall be given unto another people, and thine eyes shall look, and fail with longing for them all the day long."
30. "The Lord shall smite thee in the knees, and in the legs, with a sore botch that cannot be healed."
31. Thou "shalt serve other gods."
32. "Thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword."
33. "The locust shall consume."
34. "The worms shall eat."
35. "The stranger ... shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him."
36. "He shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail."
37. "And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters."
38. "Moreover he will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt."

Art of Bible Counseling

39. "Also every sickness, and every plague, which is not written in the book of this law, them will the Lord bring upon thee, until thou be destroyed."

40. "The Lord shall give thee a trembling heart."

41. "Failing of eyes."

42. "And sorrow of mind."

43. "And thou shalt fear day and night."

44. "Ye shall be sold unto your enemies."

45. "In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning!"

Many of these disorders and problems stem from emotional causes. Turning away from God, the Israelites found themselves often overwhelmed with personal and national unhappiness. Had they faithfully, joyously, served God; they would have been protected from the calamities. God did not want His people serving Him only to escape plagues and to earn merit with Him. He wanted them to serve Him because they were happy He was their God and were thankful for His blessings.

The function of happiness and thankfulness in their relationship to God is illustrated in Deuteronomy 28:47 when He told the Jews why national disasters would come upon them: "Because thou servest not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things."

The effects of negative emotions are demonstrated daily. But what about positive emotions? Can it possibly be that, among other preventive medicines God leads His children to discover today, is one based on joy? Why does He emphasize, using some eight hundred scriptures, the necessity of this emotional barricade if it is not at least partially against disease physical, spiritual, and mental? What medical science now discovers about the relationship of the emotions to disease, the Bible presented thousands of years ago.

When God commands a people who know "the times and the seasons" to be joyful, rejoicing, and thankful, He must have a reason. When He tells those who witness "men's hearts failing them for fear" to be confident and happy, He surely must know why. (1 Thessalonians 5:1-18; Luke 21:26, 28.)

And speaking of heart failure, S. I. McMillan, M.D., in his book 'None of These Diseases', quotes Dr. David Macht's lecture to an American Medical Association meeting in Atlantic City about coronary thrombosis,[Page 72] a common killer involving clotting of the blood. He revealed that in his laboratory he discovered that the blood-clotting time of fifty happy people was eight to twelve minutes. The clotting time of fifty apprehensive people was four to five minutes. And the blood clotting time of nervous people was one to three minutes. Yet all of these people were physically sound.

As we spoke in Ann's church that Sabbath, we counseled the congregation to look over the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy. The physical, spiritual, and mental sufferings depicted in this chapter, partially resulting from negative thinking, are almost beyond comprehension.

Paul also, in his inspired letter to the Romans, declared why men's minds are darkened: "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful."

Romans 1:21. While this verse refers to more than just unthankfulness for God's blessings, it does reveal the mental frustration resulting from ingratitude.

The next day Pastor Nobel—the local church's young minister—and I went over to Ann's house. When she came to the door, we felt we almost needed an introduction. Her face glowed. Ann welcomed us in,

almost with open arms. She couldn't wait to give a report. Since she had started consciously being happy for the things around her, her nervousness had completely disappeared. With it went her frustrations. Now she wondered how her husband had ever tolerated her. "I don't know how that poor guy could ever have lived with me," she said.

10: Peter, the Alcoholic

PETER JENKS had been an alcoholic for twenty years. His nephew, Andy Dow, had run off with Alice, Peter's first wife, and then jilted her. After Alice married a third time, Peter married again. Then Andy returned to Peter's home, infatuated his second wife, Janis, ran off with her and married her also. After that Peter had begun drinking.

The shock of losing two wives to the same nephew proved so great that he almost went insane. He consumed anything that had an alcoholic content. Peter confided to me that when he became so drunk that he couldn't stagger to some friend's place to buy more liquor, he would drink shoe polish or eat Sterno (canned heat).

No one agent was the deciding factor in salvaging Peter. Yet it is my opinion that three or four ingredients to victory were important. The power of the will choice is one. He accepted the suggestion that he make a list of reasons why he chose to stop using alcohol. Then he audibly stated these reasons to the Lord, providing psychological reinforcement to his decision to quit. Peter resisted alcohol for seven months. But, unfortunately, he did not continue to choose deliverance from alcohol.

By neglecting to read the Word of God, he also lost the power he had previously found in Christ. The Holy Spirit—who had sustained him—had to withdraw. With both his use of choice dormant and his spiritual strength missing, Peter easily slipped back to drink.

The few times we have been able to see Peter, we have worked with him much as a mechanic works on a malfunctioning car when not absolutely certain of the cause of the trouble. He first tries one thing, then another. He checks the ignition, looks over the gas lines, examines the battery. Several things may be wrong with the car, but the only way to discover them is to investigate. This we did with Peter.

Peter had a good supply of self-pity. Andy Dow had given him a rough time. But making self the center of one's life never brings release from problems.

He had also become problem conscious. For although he had married a third time, to a dutiful wife, he still lived over the past. Continually thinking of how Andy Dow stole his first two wives, he feared he might lose this one too.

His attitude toward his wife deteriorated until people suggested that she leave him, a temptation for her to do rather than to live with an alcoholic. Naturally he wonders whether he personally did all that he might have done to save his first two marriages. He wrestles with many critical questions: Did he speak kindly? Was he bossy? Was he unfair in his relationship with his former wives? Did he embarrass them before others? Did they know how much he loved them? Did his habits irritate them? One day Peter asked me in agony of soul, "What will ever become of me?"

All the laws of counseling must be carefully observed in any effort to salvage an alcoholic. The counselor must present to him the wonders of Christ's love, increase his faith in the Lord's forgiveness, and inspire him with hope. He should humbly and without human pressure help him to make a choice. In most cases, however, one or two factors require special attention, factors which appear especially threatening or difficult to the struggling alcoholic.

Art of Bible Counseling

One night Peter heard a sermon which seemed to indicate that he had no right to remarry even if his first wives had proved untrue. He questioned me, "Is it necessary for a divorced man to return to his first wife or be lost? What constitutes the term 'committeth adultery'? What must a man do to make wrongs right—wrongs he committed years before he accepted Christ?"

As I endeavored to give Peter the answers, asking for the presence of the Holy Spirit, I noticed Peter's wife, Judy, looking sympathetically toward him. Her glance expressed a love for him such as I had seldom witnessed in her before, although through the years she had been most faithful and dutiful to him.

I began with the story of David. When he took Bathsheba, Uriah's wife, and had Uriah killed, thus committing two grievous sins, God sent the prophet Nathan with a parable of a rich man taking a poor neighbor's ewe lamb.

In response to the parable, David declared that the thief should restore fourfold and die. The prophet turned to the king, and at the risk of being slain himself, looked David in the face and declared, "Thou art the man."

David cried, "I have sinned."

The prophet replied without a moment's hesitation, "The Lord hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." (2 Samuel 12.)

Then I explained to Peter how God forgave David. David restored fourfold when four of his sons died, beginning with his first child by Bathsheba. God named the next son born to David and Bathsheba "Jebidiah," that is, "beloved of the Lord," and David did not die.

God completely forgave him in response to his deep repentance. The second chapter of Acts corroborates it. The eleventh chapter of Hebrews declares it. David will be resurrected among the saints. Adulterous David, murderous David, conniving David, but a converted David, he will be raised to life again. God did not require him to put away Bathsheba; in fact, she became the mother of Solomon.

I quoted to Peter and Judy, "Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." Romans 5:9. Since it is God's law which the sinner has transgressed, it is up to Him to state on what terms He will forgive. He states that the blood of Jesus Christ's death on the cross-answers the demands of His holy law, for "the wages of sin is death." (Romans 6:23.)

Since Christ's death satisfied God as the penalty for a man's sins, the Holy Spirit no longer convicts him about confessed and forsaken sin.

Turning to Peter, I asked, "Since God abolished our confessed sins, and since the Holy Spirit no longer disturbs our consciences regarding them, who is it that bothers us about them?" I answered the question myself: "It is the devil, 'the accuser of our brethren.'" (Revelation 12: 10.)

As I talked with Peter, I referred to a neighbor, Jim, also an alcoholic. As a fighter pilot in World War II, he had been responsible for the death of so many that his heart filled with alarm and guilt. He didn't see how the Lord could ever forgive him. But one night as I preached a sermon on the unpardonable sin, Jim discovered that he had not committed it in World War II. There was still hope. He could be saved.

"Peter," I continued, "I used to preach sermons on the unpardonable sin, hoping to cause sinners to tremble. Now I preach sermons with the motivation of giving them hope. I want all to know that God forgives."

Those troubled with guilt might try audibly expressing their joy for God's forgiveness. Doing so can be an effective form of therapy. Verbalizing an emotion will help to either reduce or intensify it, depending on

how the person approaches the emotion. Joy is intensified when frequently expressed. The distraught might try speaking his thankfulness to God in the following manner:

"Thank You Lord, that though my sins have been as `scarlet,' You have made them `white as snow.' "(Isaiah 1:18.)

"Thank You, Lord, that You have removed my transgressions from me `as far as the east is from the west.'" (Psalm 103:12.)

"Thank You, Lord, that You have forgiven me my sins, because You have promised, `If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' "(1 John 1: 9.)

"Thank You, Lord, that because of the blood of Jesus, You have justified me." (Romans 5:9.)

"Thank You, Lord, that because of the blood, shed on the cross, we are reconciled and I am forgiven." (1 Peter 1:18, 19.)

"Thank You, Lord, that You are merciful." (Psalms 35: 10; 130:7.)

"Thank You, Lord. You have said, `Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.' "(Psalm 32:1.)

Turning to Peter, I said, "It is helpful for people to think of God as Jesus revealed Him—a Father who is far more merciful than we can possibly be. He is interested in our spiritual growth, in our obeying His every command for our own good. He is not interested in how much we have caused Him to suffer, but in how He may alleviate our suffering. This is our God.

"Shall we pray?" I concluded. When I finished, Peter began to pray—a good prayer, a believing prayer, prayer which accepted God's forgiveness for his sins and freedom from guilt.

One morning Peter came to do a little work for us.

"Peter must be happy this morning," my wife remarked. "Hear him singing?"

Later a neighbor visited us. During the conversation he asked about Peter. Then he remarked, "He must be happy. I heard him singing today."

The confidence that God loves us, has forgiven us, has removed all our guilt, indeed brings joy and happiness into every life that will accept it.

11: High Pressure

ONE COLD winter day, my family and a few visiting relatives had almost finished lunch when the doorbell rang. From our front-room window we could see a stranger, a woman perhaps forty years old, standing at the door.

When I opened it, the woman asked, "Are you the Seventh-day Adventist pastor?"

"Yes, I am," I replied. "Won't you come in?"

After seating herself in a chair, she stated her mission. "I have two brothers," she began, "who are not good Christians. One of them is married. His wife is not a good Christian, either. I have come to ask you to help them become Christians."

"Where do you live?" I inquired.

Art of Bible Counseling

"We live in the Midwest and are on our way back home from Florida, where we have spent a winter's vacation. My brothers and sister-in-law have consented to my taking time to talk with you. My name is Melinda Press."

A desire to bring change in other people's lives may seem a noble urge, but in Melinda's case, as in most instances, the real motivation could be expressed this way: "My position is better than theirs, and I must get them to view life my way."

This approach violates the right of choice. The only successful approach is to lead people to want a Christian life. No matter how sure Melinda was about her humbleness, her insistent desire to change her relatives to her way of thinking placed her above them. When I expressed my willingness to help, she appeared relieved, as if she had searched some time for a partner in her missionary endeavor.

"There are certain principles," I began, "which we must learn before we can help others to become Christians, Melinda. After we pray, I will read a text of Scripture that will make one of the principles clear to us."

After prayer, I read Joshua 24:15. "It says, 'Choose you.' It does not say, 'I choose for you.' If it were possible for us to make other people's decisions, every one of us who love Jesus would certainly do so. But God has not constructed the human mind so that one person can choose for another. Every one of us is a free moral agent. Each one must be left free to make spiritual choices in life for himself, whether for bad or good."

Melinda appeared deeply attentive.

"When the Lord anciently taught His people how to counsel their loved ones, their relatives, even their children, He indicated that they should conform to how the mind operates. They were to stimulate interest and encourage inquiry. This allows the individual to 'choose,' as our text indicates. We must be extremely careful, Melinda," I continued, "to do nothing which will appear to apply any pressure either directly or by inference on your relatives."

Then I read, "'True education is not the forcing of instruction on an unready and unreceptive mind.'" Education, p. 41.

"The Israelites," I explained, "taught God's instructions by writing them above gates and doorways. Then 'when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God hath commanded you? then thou shalt say unto thy son ...' Deuteronomy 6:20, 21. According to this scripture, the parents aroused and stimulated inquiry, but never forced instruction before the child asked.

"Again we have the example of the stone monument Israel built after crossing the Jordan River. The Lord had opened up the river so that they could pass through. This great miracle needed to be impressed upon the minds of their children and friends. When people saw the stone monument, they asked, 'What are these stones for?' 'Then ye shall let your children know,' the Scripture says. (Joshua 4:21, 22.)

"These are but two examples, Melinda, of the method God taught His people to use to create interest. 'By methods and rites and symbols unnumbered, God gave to Israel lessons illustrating His principles and preserving the memory of His wonderful works. Then, as inquiry was made, the instruction given impressed mind and heart.' Education, p. 41.

"This method of training," I added, "does not presuppose or suggest that we sit idly by hoping that someday someone will come along and ask a question. We must be alert, active, and seek in numberless ways to arouse interest without forcing anything on a person until he is receptive."

Art of Bible Counseling

Melinda and I must have spent an hour or more studying together. She had inquired, so I could teach. For in counseling with her, I allowed the same freedom of choice I had endeavored to teach her to use.

From the study Melinda would know forever that according to God, she had no greater duty, no greater responsibility for her two adult brothers and her sister-in-law than she would have for any other non-Christian, providing she had obeyed the command to seek to arouse queries in their minds without forcing anything on them against their wills. She had every right on earth to resort to various methods and techniques to create interest and inquiry.

But in these efforts, they would understand that Melinda would not impose on her relatives' sovereign will.

The study ended, and Melinda arose to leave, expressing deep appreciation for my help. With an air of confidence and sincerity, she asked if she might return the next morning to discuss a special problem with me. Gladly acceding to her request, I set an appointment. The next day Melinda, after expressing her gratitude for the previous day's study, again requested, "And now will you help me make my brothers and my sister-in-law become Christians?"

I could scarcely believe I had heard Melinda correctly. But I did not point out that we had covered that topic yesterday. Rather, I diplomatically repeated the previous day's session. This time I really made clear to Melinda that God does not hold us accountable for the souls of our loved ones to such a point that we must high-pressure them. We do not need to nag them, or in any way break the Scriptural guarantee of choice.

As we completed our second study, Melinda thanked me repeatedly. Then, perhaps a little reluctantly, she asked if it would be possible to return the next morning to discuss a special problem with me. Again I made an appointment with her. This time I felt that I had really gotten through to her. Now she would understand that no one of us has the right to deprive another of his personal liberty and individual conscience. "God does not force the will of His creatures. He cannot accept an homage that is not willingly and intelligently given. A mere forced submission would prevent all real development of mind or character: it would make man a mere automaton." *Steps to Christ*, pp. 43, 44.

"Your loving to rule and to bring others to your ideas has nearly ruined yourself and him," Ellen G. White once had to censure. (*Testimonies*, Vol. 2, p. 572.) She wrote to a friend, "You do not know yourself. You have a self-righteousness which fastens you in deception in regard to your spiritual attainments." *Ibid.* p. 174.

The morning of the third appointment, Melinda arrived promptly. She lost no time in expressing the purpose of her visit. Once again she wanted me to help her make her brothers Jack and John and her sister-in-law Jane become Christians. In both previous studies with Melinda had quoted several times from the book *Education*, which contains the statement, "True education is not the forcing of instruction on an unready and unreceptive mind."-P. 41. But somehow Melinda had not grasped the concept.

Once again I decided to cover the same topic I had discussed the two previous mornings. Certain that she was going through a process of unlearning; I realized the difficulty of her struggle. At the close of the study she thanked me just as profusely as before. Then she stated that she and her brothers must be going home to the Midwest and asked if she could have just one more appointment the next morning. At that time she would bring the brothers and the sister-in-law in to meet me.

The next morning the three relatives came with Melinda. Impressed with them, I saw nobility of character in their faces.

Art of Bible Counseling

No sooner were all seated comfortably than Melinda began the discussion. Asking questions, she expected my answers to instruct Jack, John, and Jane, presenting me with the problem of whether or not to answer them as she wished me to. Businessmen, the brothers had a heavy schedule, but they were kind and considerate of their sister, holding up their trip home for several days with no other purpose than to please her. Melinda, however, was still trying to trap me into forcing instruction upon them.

Melinda's questions came fast-one tumbling after another. I tried, when replying, to avoid giving answers that might embarrass her relatives. But Melinda felt this her chance to accomplish her purpose. She kept firing questions; I kept evading as kindly as possible. It was quite a game we played before our audience of three. Fortunately, never once did Melinda succeed in persuading me to answer her questions in the manner she wanted.

After Melinda and I had matched wits for some time, I noticed solidifying determination on her face. Soon her last question hurtled directly at me. She wanted to know what I would do in a particular situation. In conclusion, she repeated, "What would you do? Now I want a straightforward answer."

"Well," and I smiled as I began my answer, "I am not exactly sure what I would do in the case you have pictured, but I can tell you what I think I would do." And then attempting to smile a little more broadly, I added, "I think I would mind my own business."

Jack, John, and Jane immediately stood to their feet, Melinda following. They quietly, soberly filed through the front door and down the walk to their car. Jack opened the car doors, then walked briskly back to where I still stood.

After thanking me for having given Melinda so much time, he reached into his pocket, pulled out his wallet, and tried to hand me a twenty-dollar bill.

"Thanks, Jack," I said, "but I never charge for my counsel. I am on salary from my church," I stated, thinking this would dissuade him.

A peculiar expression crossed his face as he insisted that I take the money. When I declined again, Jack explained that he would really be offended if I did not accept the gift. He knew, he said, that I did not charge for my time, but he just wanted me to take the money as a special token of his personal appreciation.

As I reached to receive the bill, Jack looked at me seriously. With another expression of thanks, he said, "We have had to live with that thing for twenty years. With that, he hurried to the car.

About twenty minutes later I received a telephone call from Melinda, scolding me for not applying pressure on her relatives.

The story should end here. But during the following summer I was the guest of some friends a thousand miles distant. They asked me to present a study at a midweek home prayer meeting. Deciding to discuss the principle of choice. I planned to give a personal illustration or two. Just as we began song service, Melinda walked in.

After the study ended and the prayer service concluded, Melinda quickly vanished out the door, disappointed. She had evidently made a five-hundred-mile trip once again seeking help to force her relatives to be Christians. No man can coerce another into becoming a Christian against his will. Only the Holy Spirit can lead a man to conversion.

Melinda had not learned the simple principle of free choice. Nobody will ever be dragged into heaven.

12: The Antagonists

THE COUNSELING PRINCIPLES presented in the preceding chapters primarily applied to Christians with personal or personality problems. This chapter illustrates how to apply them to personal evangelism among unbelievers.

Dealing with those who set themselves up as antagonists tries the Christian's patience to its limit; yet he must abide by even the most difficult of these principles, especially those of love, humility, and choice. Ellen G. White offers some specific pointers: "In the advocacy of truth the bitterest opponents should be treated with respect and deference." *Gospel Workers*, p. 373.

"The most childlike disciple is the most efficient in labor for God. The heavenly intelligence's can cooperate with him who is seeking, not to exalt self, but to save souls." *The Desire of Ages*, p. 436.

"No man or woman is fitted for the work of teaching who is fretful, impatient, arbitrary, or dictatorial." *Counsels to Teachers*, p. 233.

"Arbitrary words and actions stir up the worst passions of the human heart." *Testimonies*, Vol. 6, p. 534.

"Remember that you are to represent Christ in His meekness and gentleness and love." *Gospel Workers*, p. 372.

A church member once asked me to go with him to visit some acquaintances somewhat familiar with Seventh-day Adventism, but antagonistic toward it. My wife and I and the church member went by appointment one Sunday morning. As instructed, we went directly to the backyard, where we found Roth; his wife, Rita; and Rilla, an employee, all in early middle age, seated around a picnic table sorting over a collection of rocks.

After the usual introductions, I asked about the rock specimens—where they came from and the skill and knowledge required to collect them. Roth, friendly, volubly explained his hobby, which was also his business. He took us into the garage, where he kept his cutting and polishing equipment, and showed us some finished rocks. These beautiful exhibits called for sincere praise and admiration, and they opened the way for us to exclaim about the goodness of God in furnishing the human race with such treasures. The responses of our new friends indicated that they were religious people.

In this friendly exchange, we established common ground in objects of interest and in gratitude to God. Perhaps more important, we subtly followed the principle of humility by seeking instruction from these people on a subject in which they were experts and we were not, putting them above us.

When we returned to the picnic table, the church friend said that I was the minister giving a series of talks at the local Seventh-day Adventist church, and that perhaps they would like to ask some questions.

Roth immediately changed from friendliness to belligerence, worsened by an extremely bitter tongue. His face and voice displayed arrogance and hostility.

"Why do you Adventists think you are better than anybody else?" he demanded. "Why do you insist on just being different? What makes you think you know more than all the scientists? You don't even know whether Saturday is the seventh day," Roth roared, then paused for breath.

To reflect Roth's belligerence at this point would have been fatal. "God's plan is first to get at the heart." *Testimonies*, Vol. 6, p. 400. As any good salesman would do, one must make friends of Roth and his companions. To give information or to throw Bible texts at a closed heart is a waste of time. The choices of what to do in this situation are limited. The strong emotional barriers he had erected against me had to be broken down. First I smiled, not superiorly, but from a genuine friendship.

Art of Bible Counseling

"That is a good question," I said, accepting the dogmatic statement as though it were an inquiry.

"You don't even know that the days of creation were literal days. Probably they were long periods of time," Rita added.

"That is a good question, too," I replied. "Many people are asking that question." (It takes a little self-crucifixion to give a friendly response to unfriendly attacks, but it disarms antagonists.) "And I think we have a good answer," I commented. Here I supplemented love—shown in a friendly smile and a gentle voice—with a bit of hope and faith.

"See what you think of this explanation," I began, providing them opportunity to exercise the right of choice.

"In the Bible," I went on, "a numeral is used before the word day in the first chapter of Genesis. It is true that the Bible states a day is sometimes like a thousand years to the Lord. At other times the term 'day' may only denote a period of time, as in 'our day.' Yet there is a way by which a person can know, when reading the Bible, whether the word day refers to a twenty-four-hour period. It is simply this: Whenever the word day in our English Bible is preceded by a numeral, it is always a literal twenty-four-hour day with no exceptions.

"For instance, the Bible declares that when the Flood came in the time of Noah, it began on the seventeenth day of the second month of Noah's six hundredth year. (Genesis 7:11.) The record is that the Flood remained on the earth for 150 days. (Genesis 7:24.) Then the Bible tells us that the ark grounded on dry land on the seventeenth day of the seventh month. (Genesis 8:4.) This is five months at thirty days to a month, making a total of 150 days. Thus we know that when the Bible uses the numeral before the word day, as translated in our English Bible, it is without exception a twenty-four-hour day. A simple key, but important.

"So when the Genesis account of creation uses the expressions 'first day,' 'second day,' and so on, the period of time is definitely a twenty-four-hour day. To make this fact doubly clear, the scripture says that 'the evening and the morning' formed the day."

Roth's face showed a grudging acceptance of what I had said, but he was clearly not ready to concede anything. "The falling of manna in the wilderness (Exodus 16) in which a series of miracles emphasized the Sabbath, then the later presentation of the law from Mount Sinai, including the Sabbath commandment, helped to confirm which day the Sabbath was," I said. Next I mentioned how Jesus lay in the tomb on the seventh day, while the disciples rested "according to the commandment." Last of all I pointed out that our calendar, which dates from the time of Christ, is a weekly calendar, showing Saturday as the seventh day, coming just before Sunday, the first day of the week.

Then I briefly discussed recent research in creationism by Seventh-day Adventist scientists and the many discontinuities in the natural evidence relied upon by evolutionists. Pointing out the faith that had to be exercised on both sides, the need of an open mind, and a desire to be directed by the Holy Spirit, I made it clear that while some Adventist creationists, the same as some evolutionists, are dogmatic, up-to-date thinkers on both sides willingly concede that the final answers from natural evidence have not yet been found. In the meantime, Adventists accept the Bible account.

Without directly contradicting Roth, I showed him that Adventists don't claim to know more than "the scientists."

During this recital, Roth's face, looking downward, showed concentration and some degree of assent. When I stopped talking, he looked up at me. Catching himself in a measure of agreement, he consciously resumed his antagonism and said gruffly, "Now don't get the idea you're converting me."

Art of Bible Counseling

"Of course not." I said, trying to radiate friendliness and gentleness. "If you change your mind, it will be through the influence of God's Holy Spirit, not because of what I say." Here again I discounted my own importance and left the choice to him.

Suddenly I clapped his shoulder. Roth broke into a quick grin, relieving the tension. When men counsel men—never women—a brief personal contact such as a slap on the arm or a hand on the shoulder is often a useful act in showing friendship and in relieving tension. The faces of the two women showed their delight in seeing Roth soften a little.

Rita entered the discussion. "Why are you people so deceptive?" she asked, resentment in her voice. "Seventh-day Adventists come into our rock shop, and when our backs are turned, they tuck little pamphlets among the rocks. Our customers find them and think we're Adventists. This gives the wrong impression of us, and it just isn't fair." As soon as the outburst ended, Rita's face revealed a shadow of remorse over her statement.

"Feel free to ask any questions that come to your mind," I said, trying to relieve her anxiety. "I'll answer as best I can, and leave the decision to you.

"As for overenthusiastic Adventists, I can only say that they're entirely wrong in denying you the choice of what's put in your shop. However, I doubt that they were conscious of treating you unfairly. Intent upon sharing what they hold to be wonderful Biblical insights, they overlooked the courtesy due to you and your customers. They should not have done it."

Rilla joined the conversation by telling of her experience: "One day I bought some items from a hardware store in my town. When I got home and unwrapped it, I found a religious paper in with the hardware. I went back and scolded the store owner, but he told me it was a Seventh-day Adventist that had put the pamphlet in the merchandise."

Again I admitted the unfairness of this practice. "I wish you would tell your people to stop this deception," Rilla said.

"I certainly will," I replied, smiling.

No doubt the energetic but misguided people who unwisely placed their tracts in the shops reported "missionary activities," not realizing that their efforts were worse than wasted. If people would ask themselves if they would like it done to them, such blundering would cease.

Rilla returned to the fray.

"You people are hypocrites!" she exclaimed. "One of your church members living near me has a teenage daughter the same age as mine. Her mother won't let her go with my girl to the movies; yet they have their TV on from morning to night showing movies just like those in the theater, except that they are out of date. I know, because my daughter has been to their house and seen them. Now, I call that woman a hypocrite."

"No," I said in a sympathetic and gentle voice, trying to avoid a contradictory tone. "No, I doubt if there was any real hypocrisy there. I think it happened this way: The Adventist woman bought a TV set because she thought it would bring her important information and a little harmless entertainment. But sometimes, after the informative programs and the so-called harmless entertainment ended, she felt a need for more relaxation and stayed tuned for the next program without employing careful selectivity. Soon she watched programs she would not at first have wasted her time on, including some of the old movies. She was just human, or perhaps careless, not deliberately hypocritical, though she certainly was inconsistent. Do you think this is a fair and kind interpretation of her actions?"

"Yes, I think it is fair," Rilla said. "I guess I was just a little nettled by the implication that her daughter was too good for mine. But, since you mention it, what is so wrong with movies—on TV or in the theater—or other TV shows which you seem to think are bad when compared with, as you put it, 'so-called harmless' programs?"

"All I can tell you is how I feel about it," I replied. "I have a television set at home, and I have dedicated it to the Lord. Public affairs, music, news—these are what I use it for. Other programs seem to be mostly a waste of time. There are so many more interesting ways to spend the evening than watching meaningless programs on television that I just don't get excited. As for what's wrong, I read from time to time about the effects—especially upon children—of the crime and violence which dominate TV these days. Studies of children reveal that though the stories end by showing crime does not pay, many viewers come away with the belief that it might well be made to pay, and if it could, they would give it a try. If you read some of the experimental findings analyzed by psychologists and other serious observers, you find a great deal to question in the movies and television. I'm not trying to set up standards for others, but I've told you how I think."

Again I had consciously avoided a controversial tone or a severe facial expression. A moment of quiet lasted while they thought about what had been said. Then Rita broke the silence. "I admire you," she said. "You have set standards for yourself, and you live up to them, without trying to boss people around. I wish I could have a set of ideals instead of groping around in a fog as I do."

I made a few remarks about how to claim the promises of God in managing our lives and thus avoid frustration. Obviously we had come to the end of a short and happy first contact. We arose and turned toward the driveway. They walked with us toward our parked car. Roth had been silent for some time, but I had watched his face. During my conversation with the women, he had shown interest and, I was sure, a friendlier attitude. But suddenly his face showed a brief return to deliberate antagonism.

"I don't want you to think you're converting me," he growled, echoing his former protest.

"If you were to change in so short a time, I'd think there was something wrong with you," I chuckled.

We got in our car, and as they waved good-bye and called, "Come again," we felt they meant it.

13: Beth and Joe

BETH RICH had liked Joe Anderson a lot, even in their early teens. But Joe not being a member of the church gave the older members, who had seen many instances of young people marrying out of the church, deep concern. They knew that for a Seventh-day Adventist girl to marry a non-Adventist is altogether different from a Methodist marrying a Baptist, or a Congregationalist marrying a Presbyterian. Members of all these churches keep the same day—Sunday. Their beliefs do not include the Biblical distinction between clean and unclean meats.

They are not necessarily cautious about the use of lipstick, rouge, rings, short sleeves and skirts, low-necked dresses, and similar details of fashion. Their standards regarding motion picture shows, dancing, and many other amusements are not the same as those of Seventh-day Adventist young people should be.

Most important, Adventists are unique in their emphasis upon the soon coming of Jesus, and their lives should show their eagerness to be ready for it.

Here is a real and important difference often overlooked by casual observers. When one party of a marriage becomes an Adventist, the other party becomes immediately aware of the outward changes in

Art of Bible Counseling

dress and amusements. It may take months to reveal the deep love, devotion, and unselfishness that should characterize the Adventist partner. Too often the convert's husband or wife stops his evaluation with the external changes. Too often a husband exclaims, "My wife isn't much fun anymore since she became an Adventist." Eventually, he may come to value the deeper virtues of his Adventist wife if her conversion is genuine—her keener discernment of his needs, her greater sympathy for his times of stress, her steadfast love in the face of reverses. But if she does not exhibit these enduring excellencies, he cannot be blamed for a degree of disappointment and a stolid resistance to her religion.

Indeed, it will help matters greatly if the rededicated wife will cover her cosmetic "don'ts" by maintaining the health and physical conditioning which will make her far lovelier than the artificial and deceptive substitutes can; if she will cover her recreational "don'ts" by devising and initiating activities far more entertaining and satisfying than going to the movies and playing cards. When a proposed marriage partner is not a Christian, not a church member, the hazard is much greater. Consequently, it was not strange that Beth's older friends worried about her friendship with Joe. But perhaps Pastor Holman, the minister of Beth's church, revealed the greatest concern.

He had high hopes for Beth. Her sweet, innocent manner and her angelic charm impressed him. She seemed almost like his daughter. His sincere, deep concern was based on wide experience.

Did he not know of Mary Fredricks, who married out of the church? And had not she exclaimed to Pastor Holman repeatedly, "Tell these girls not to marry out of the faith. If they do, heartache will never leave their homes. I know, for even though my husband, Fred, is a good man in many ways, he's completely at odds with my religion. He says we have nothing in common anymore since my rebaptism. He says I don't love him because I can't conscientiously go to the movies with him anymore. I am old-fashioned, he says, because I no longer use rouge and lipstick."

Pastor Holman remembered vividly, also, how Joyce Spires had come to him many times. Joyce married Jim Barnes, a Methodist. They seemed to be deeply in love. But when Joyce became the mother of Debby, she began to think of the future, felt herself responsible for her daughter's having a chance to keep the Sabbath and to love the Lord's second coming. Where could she go to help Debby except to the church she had backslidden from a few years earlier? Joyce began attending church again. Then she asked for rebaptism.

But the next time Jim suggested they go to the outdoor movie, Joyce declined, shocking Jim, seeming to fix a great gulf between the two almost immediately. He, a good Methodist, could not understand Joyce, now a firm Seventh-day Adventist. Jim felt she had deserted him, turned her back upon him, fallen out of love with him. Then when Joyce tried to explain, he decided she had become an extremist. What kind of religion, he wondered, could make a lovable wife become such a fanatic?

Pastor Holman remembered many similar experiences as he visited Beth in an effort to dissuade her from marrying Joe. He knew almost for certain that Beth would never want to give up the Bible doctrines she loved so much.

He thought of the familiar passages: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" 2 Corinthians 6:14, 15. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Amos 3:3. He pictured the dissension and strife that would ensue in a marriage between Beth and an unbeliever. In desperation, he decided to preach a sermon the following Sabbath on the evils of marrying out of the faith, augmenting it by another personal visit to Beth.

Art of Bible Counseling

The sermon and the visit might be used by the Lord to dissuade Beth from uniting her life with a non-Christian, he hoped.

But Pastor Holman made one mistake. Going beyond what the Bible tells, he painted an incorrect picture. He told Beth that if she married Joe, every sin he ever committed would be charged to her account. She believed the untrue statement; and after she married Joe, the thought of her responsibility for his sins drove her to desperation.

Beth entreated Joe, begged him, accused him, and nagged him, about his religious life. A sincere husband, really wanting to do right, Joe finally decided to join the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Despite Joe's conversion, Beth kept thinking of Pastor Holman's remark about her supposed responsibility for his sins, leading her to watch every move he made. If he performed even the slightest task after sunset Friday night, she nagged him. She fussed. She kept hammering at him. It was not that she did not love him. She did, intensely. But the thought of burning for every sin, every error, every mistake Joe made, filled her heart with constant fear.

One Friday night Joe returned from several days' absence, and not having planned far enough ahead, found it necessary to do an unexpected chore. Beth fussed again. And Joe reacted unfavorably. The chasm grew wider and deeper. Finally Beth decided she would leave Joe, in spite of the fact that by now they had a little family.

After she left Joe, her lonely heart softened. They communicated with one another and decided to try to make their marriage succeed. Eventually they had a second separation, but came back together again.

Some time later, they decided to seek an interview with my wife and me. But Beth lived under a terrible load of self-inflicted guilt. When a sharp division arose between them, all the old tensions rushed back, and she felt, "What's the use?" The afternoon of the interview, before I arrived, Beth returned home and tried to hang herself in her bedroom. When the news came to us, my friend Mr. Jackson and I went over to Beth and Joe's home to see if we could bring hope.

Entering their home, we silently prayed for the presence of the Holy Spirit. Joe met us at the door. Not desiring to create a tense atmosphere, we did not mention her name. Chatting casually with Joe, we continued to pray silently for God's guidance.

Before long Beth came out of the bedroom. "Well, here comes the culprit," she exclaimed sheepishly as she sat down.

We did not appear shocked or excited. Instead we wanted everything to be as quiet and normal as possible.

Beth quickly brought up the question that disturbed her. "Is it right," she asked with a puzzled expression, "to do emergency chores on the Sabbath?" She named the particular chore Joe had done. Years earlier, I would probably have gone right into the topic of being ready before the Sabbath as the commandment states. But I asked them to take a pencil and paper and write down some thoughts:

"1. God does not condemn us. 'For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world.' John 3:17.

"2. God will guide us. 'The meek will he guide in judgment.' Psalm 25:9.

"3. Ask ministers for guidance. 'They should seek the law at his mouth.' Malachi 2:7.

"4. The minister may not add to God's Word. 'Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought.' Deuteronomy 4:2.

Art of Bible Counseling

"5. The minister may provide illustrations how obedience to God's law will bring success. 'Ye shall be witnesses unto me.' Acts 1:8. 'Ye are my witnesses.' Isaiah 43:10.

"6. Obedience brings happiness to us now. 'That your days may be ... as the days of heaven upon the earth.' Deuteronomy 11:21."

By this time we were ready for Beth's question. Instead of answering it directly, I had the couple put down the following principles:

"A. Choice. 'Choose you.' Joshua 24:15."

Here I paused to explain how each person is to make his choices for himself. No one is completely responsible for another's decision. At this point I did not know that Beth had been told by Pastor Holman that she would herself be held accountable for every sin, misdeed, and mistake that Joe ever made. God led me as I covered the law of choice.

"B. Do not impose your ideas upon others. 'And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.' 2 Timothy 2:24, 25."

No one, I told them, could use this concept as an excuse not to witness, not to present Christ and His teachings to others. But it did say that the Christian must not hammer away at the non-Christian, must not try to force or threaten him into accepting Christian teachings. As a teacher cannot successfully punish or frighten children into learning their school lessons, so the Christian cannot teach an unbeliever by nagging or scolding him. Paul wrote the counsel to Timothy, a minister. If it applied to an ordained representative of Christ, it applied with greater force to the average church member.

"C. Answer if asked. 'Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you.' 1 Peter 3:15."

Using this text, I tried to develop the thought that neither Beth nor any other Christian is accountable before God for the actions of another if that other one has never willingly asked about his beliefs. If he asks, and the believer refuses to explain his faith, he is responsible. Then I suggested:

"D. Allow each person to progress spiritually at his own individual rate. 'Like newborn babes, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation.' 1 Peter 2:2, R.S.V."

Here we developed the thought that if one person traveled spiritually at twenty miles an hour, and we went at seventy miles an hour, it is better to let the first one progress at his own speed than for us to urge him to take our pace. In all probability such an attempt would cause an accident. It had just happened in Beth's home, but we did not allude to this. Then I offered the last note, a fitting summary.

"E. Charity is the greatest thing in the world. (1 Corinthians 13:13.)"

Charity is more important, according to chapter 13, than faith, speaking in tongues, donating all our goods to feed the poor, and the ability to understand spiritual mysteries. Therefore one can afford to exercise charity toward all, even if they don't measure up to the standards he holds.

The whole outline had a wonderful effect on Beth. She related to us what Pastor Holman had said, which kept her from observing the law of choice with Joe. This is one reason why their home had been so upset and filled with confusion. Joe's every error had driven her into torment and deprived her of happiness. Then Mr. Jackson and I witnessed a sweet reunion as Beth asked Joe's forgiveness. Close in each other's arms, their tears promised a new life of harmony and love. Our mission almost accomplished, I ended with the thought, "Don't bring up the past."

"Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before." Philippians 3:13. Under no conditions should Joe ever mention anything that happened that afternoon

before we came, I explained. "If you should be tempted to think of it, say to yourself, 'That was so long ago that I can't recall it.' Just blot it out. Forget it. Put it out of your mind."

That evening Beth and Joe came over to Mr. Jackson's home, where we were guests. As they walked in, Beth was as happy and vivacious as she had been before her marriage.

14: The Story of Alice

OUR INTRODUCTION to Alice came when she brought my wife and me an armful of jackets and sweaters to keep us warm at night.

Our need came from our rather hasty decision to seek some relaxation in Rocky Mountain National Park before going to our next assignment in Oregon. Without proper camping equipment, we found ourselves sleeping in our car, parked in a tent site next to the tent of Alice and her husband, Bill. It seemed odd to be receiving help, but we managed it gracefully. After we obtained some camping equipment of our own, Alice came over to inspect. She was a genuinely friendly person. Out of the usual small talk came the question, "What is your occupation?"

"I am a minister," I replied.

"What denomination?"

"Seventh-day Adventist."

Alice's expression told me more than her words when she replied, "Oh, yes, I know them; they've been to my door."

My wife and I prayed that we might be given a chance to correct an unfortunate impression left by some well-meaning Adventist. What a pity that our zealous church members often act as though Christians of other faiths are benighted or even insincere, attempt to impose "the truth" upon them, and assume a "holier than thou" attitude.

"I have a personal problem," she said a few days later. "My husband, Bill, is not a Christian, and I am eager to win him to Christ." Then, as an afterthought that reminded us of our former conversation, she added, "I'm not trying to get him to join any particular church; I just want him to give his heart to Jesus."

"You are right, Alice," I said, "in not emphasizing, church membership. That will take care of itself. We must win our dear ones to Christ first." Then I related several instances of conversion from past experience, showing her how she should always be joyful in her representation of Christianity, how she should arouse hope and faith in Bill, and how she should always leave the choice to him.

The successful results caused her visits to become frequent, with repeated requests for counsel, thrilling us that our prayers were being answered so swiftly.

One day she asked, "Where are you going next Sunday?"

"Anywhere that you want us to go," I replied with a smile.

Alice explained that her husband had been brought up a Lutheran, which would make it natural for him to attend the Lutheran church in Estes Park the next Sunday.

But would we, she asked, make the suggestion to Bill so that she would not seem overeager? Of course we would. Alice jubilantly returned to her tent.

Art of Bible Counseling

A little later we made an excuse to visit them, and I found a place in the conversation to make my request in an offhand manner.

"By the way," I began, "when away from home and not near our own denomination, we often go to a convenient church on Sunday. Can you suggest a place for us to go tomorrow?"

"Oh, yes," suggested Bill, every bit the gentleman. "There is a Lutheran church in Estes Park. Why don't we all go there?"

"That sounds fine," I agreed.

At the Lutheran church we heard a spiritual, practical sermon. Bill, a missionary at heart as well as a gentleman, prompted me when necessary in following the Lutheran liturgy. The people and the minister were friendly. Our friendship firmly established itself, especially with Alice.

A few days later she came to us with another problem. "I am worried about my daughter, Ruth," she explained. "The schools are full of religious unbelief, and Ruth is slipping away from her Christian training. What can you suggest that will help her?"

Here was what many would call an opening. Friendship had lowered many of the barriers she had once raised against Adventists. Now was an opportunity to spiritually reach her. But what had she asked for?

Looking back over my years of ministry, I thought of many mistakes I had made. In the light of what I had more recently discovered, the greatest mistake was to react as I was tempted to do after Alice's question. The danger would be to reason that soon the couple would be on their way home to Eagle Rock, California, and I might never have another opportunity with them. Every moment left must be used to indoctrinate them as thoroughly as possible. Even though it might not all be palatable just now, the day would come when they would remember and be thankful. So I must tell them all-about the Ten Commandments, the state of the dead, the seal of God, the mark of the beast, the sanctuary, the judgment, the new earth. Had I not been commanded to make disciples of all men?

The fallacy in such reasoning lies in the assumption that any seed will germinate in unprepared soil, that any learning can take place in unprepared minds. Ellen G. White made pointed remarks concerning the learning process:

"True education is not the forcing of instruction on an unready and unreceptive mind. The mental powers must be awakened, the interest aroused. . . . God gave Israel lessons illustrating His principles. . . . As inquiry was made, the instruction given impressed mind and heart." Education, p. 41.

Alice had asked for a suggestion about how to help her daughter. Why should I furnish any more than that? Should I offer a three-course dinner in answer to a request for a sandwich? The learning process can become as glutted as the eating process would be if we overate some favorite food. For spiritual, as for physical, health only as much should be presented as has been requested.

Jesus taught this way. Notice the eighth chapter of Matthew. A leper asks to be made clean. (Verse 2.) A centurion requests the healing of a servant. (Verses 6, 8.) Villagers came to be healed, and Jesus healed them. (Verse 16.) When implored by His disciples, He stilled the tempest. (Verse 25.) When the demoniac wanted release, He cast out the devils; and when the devils begged to be cast into the swine, He obliged. (Verses 29-32.) When the people asked Him to depart, He left (8:34; 9: 1.) No sermons, no admonitions, no doctrines, just answers to requests. Should I do more than perform Alice's request? Was my time shorter than the Saviour's?

Art of Bible Counseling

"I know what you mean, Alice," I began. "I have a book that would help Ruth, I'm sure. Its first chapters deal with the problems confronting her." I stressed the first chapters because I did not want her, if she read the later doctrinal chapters, to think that I was pressuring her into Seventh-day Adventist beliefs.

The conversation continued for a time without further mention of the book, though I admit my impulse to give it to her immediately. But my determination to obey the principle of choice prevailed. After she returned to her tent without the book, I began to wonder if I had carried the idea of choice a little too far. As I mused, she came hurrying back.

"You mentioned a book that would help Ruth. May I borrow it?" she asked excitedly. I had not made a mistake. Letting her come back and ask had enhanced the effectiveness of my offer of a book.

"That's right, I did," I said. "Let me see if I can find it." After some hunting in the car, I found a copy of *God Speaks to Modern Man*. "The first chapters will be especially helpful to Ruth," I repeated, and added, "Don't bother to return the book. It's yours."

Incidentally, offering books to read is frequently effective because it automatically fulfills the concepts of humility and choice. In giving or lending a book, one says in effect, "I'm not imposing myself or my opinions on you; in fact, I get my ideas from the same source I offer to you." And the reader can always take or leave what he reads in a book without pressure from any person.

The next day she returned with a troubled look on her face. "The book is good," she said, "but something in the back of the book frightens me."

So she had started reading in the back of the book, I thought. "What is it?" I asked. "It's the seven last plagues."

Now what should I say?

My wife came to the rescue. "Oh, no Christian ever needs to worry about the plagues," she said, "not those who have Christ in their lives."

Alice's face brightened, then clouded again as she interrupted to say, "But then I read about the Sabbath. I guess you are going to make an Adventist out of me." Her eyes showed wonder and amazement rather than resentment.

Quickly I reiterated what I had said at the beginning of our acquaintance: "Oh, no. We wouldn't do that."

Again she interrupted with, "I know that, but it's the book, the book." Then she ran happily back to her tent.

In the few days remaining before Alice and Bill were scheduled to leave for Eagle Rock, we did not again discuss the doctrines of the Sabbath and last events, but several little hints she made indicated her dissatisfaction with the teachings of her church. At their departure we spoke our farewells as good friends and waved good-bye with promises to keep in touch. Then a few days later my wife and I broke camp and headed for Oregon.

Soon a letter came from Alice expressing her opinion that "God sent us to Rocky Mountain National Park so that we could meet you." Other letters followed with similar statements. These are the rewards of Christian service. We valued the friendship of these people—Alice with her sunny, outgoing disposition, and Bill, reserved and tense, but a fine man. A few months later we received a telegram from Alice: "Tomorrow at eleven o'clock I am being baptized into the Eagle Rock Seventh-day Adventist Church." This demanded long-distance telephone congratulation.

We could not avoid recalling our temptation to high-pressure her when we realized that we had only a few days left with the couple. Our observance of the principles of learning had paid off. The good

impression we had made worked with the book and the Holy Spirit to bring spiritual conviction. And we felt sure that Alice, who had during our time together demonstrated her understanding of these concepts, would prepare the way for Bill's decision to become a Christian and a Seventh-day Adventist. Again, we believed, patiently waiting for the Holy Spirit to work at its own pace would bring results.

15: The Non-preaching Preacher

DANA, a college girl, appeared to be one of the most irreligious, flippant, careless girls on the entire campus. No officer of the church with whom I conversed seemed to feel that Dana had any real interest in purposeful living, or any moral rectitude, for that matter. Why she had come to the college in the first place seemed an unanswerable question.

When Dana knocked at the door of the church study, I had been pastor of the college church for only a month. Almost immediately she began to unburden her heart.

She had found it most difficult to confide in anyone who could help her because she felt no one would understand. Some of Dana's friends had gone to counselors but had not always returned with the help they sought. Such experiences quickly pass from one student to another and leave an impression not easy to erase.

Negative counseling, such as registering shock at the confessed behavior of the erring, censuring or condemning the fallen, and lecturing on proper conduct does not lead to reform, though it seems to give satisfaction to some counselors. People like Dana find it hard to open their souls to them. If each would-be counselor would learn that preaching at the offender is not real counseling, many might cease.

Dana wanted answers to some puzzling personal questions. She needed solutions to real problems. The sanctimonious attitude of some precluded Dana's revealing her secret tears, her lonely, utter frustration. With tear-dimmed eyes, not daring to look up to God, Dana confided, "I have repeatedly flung myself on the bed to sob for an hour or two, wondering if there was any hope for me. No one knew it. I was all alone. Then I would arise, wash my eyes, go outdoors, and trip across the college campus as if I didn't have a serious thought." So it went for weeks—uncontrolled sobbing in secret, flippancy in public.

Ellen G. White states, "There are many who err, and who feel their shame and their folly. They look upon their mistakes and errors until they are driven almost to desperation." *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 387.

The longing for someone to come along who understands is intense at times. Even Job, the man God labeled as perfect, was so hurt by his professed friends that he exclaimed, "Miserable comforters are ye all." Job 16:2.

To understand that a flippant-appearing person may be struggling with great secret sorrow should completely change the attitude of many Christian counselors. For instance, years ago I worked with the pastor of a large Western church. A fine person as an individual, he nevertheless was in complete ignorance of the hidden despair hiding in many breasts. Because of this lack of understanding, he had come to a philosophy that one of the prime purposes of counseling is to bring conviction to the one in trouble. Thus he limited his ministry by his failure in personal contacts. What this splendid, but inadequate, pastor did not know was that in most cases the Holy Spirit has done this long before the counselor ever appears on the scene. The role of the Holy Spirit is in part to convince the world of sin.

Art of Bible Counseling

(John 16:8.) But the Holy Spirit knows how to do this in a balanced manner. He also provides a person with hope and spiritual strength to overcome his problem. For God to convince an individual of wrong without holding out hope would be cruel indeed. It just does not represent a God of love.

Instead of human counselors trying to take the place of the Holy Spirit and doing it awkwardly, let them learn the following principles Ellen G. White emphasizes: "The soul wrenched with human agony turns away from the misjudgment and condemnation of men who can not read the heart, yet have taken it upon them to judge their fellow men. He turns to One who is without a shadow of misapprehension, One who knows all the impulses of the heart, who is acquainted with all the circumstances of temptation." *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 354.

Dana suffered extreme remorse. Here is its effect on such a person: "Most pitiable is the condition of him who is suffering under remorse; he is as one stunned, staggering, sinking into the dust. He can see nothing clearly. The mind is beclouded, he knows not what steps to take. Many a poor soul is misunderstood, unappreciated, full of distress and agony—a lost, straying sheep. He cannot find God, yet he has an intense longing for pardon and peace."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 168.

Now imagine a counselor coming into this person's life and trying to bring to this agonizing soul added conviction, but actually only bringing added pain to an already despairing heart. "Oh, let no word be spoken to cause deeper pain! To the soul weary of a life of sin, but knowing not where to find relief, present the compassionate Saviour."—*Ibid.*

The other extreme is to be equally rejected—that of offering false sympathy, to tell a person that he is not a sinner, that he has done nothing wrong before God. God's Word is severe against the counselor who employs this approach. He says, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil." Isaiah 5:20.

Dana, the remorseful, staggering, overwhelmed soul, outwardly appearing gay and careless, represents many. She needed to be told that God still loved her. She needed to be persuaded that "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." (Isaiah 1: 18.) Dana did find forgiveness, did find her way back to God. But how many have been completely discouraged by a lack of understanding.

"Good morning, Elder Coon. Do you remember me? I'm Ted Crosby. I enjoyed your sermon about orbiting around Christ." He had waited to be the last one out of the church so that he could talk with me. As I expected, he had something to show me.

"Here's a little item I put together some years ago," he said. "I thought you might be interested." He handed me a little printed leaflet. A single glance told me what it was about.

"You've been distributing these, I suppose?" I queried.

"Yes," he replied. "I've given out about five thousand of them. Had them printed at my own expense." His face told me of the great satisfaction he gained from distributing the tracts. He paused, evidently expecting me to give further attention to the leaflet which contained a blistering attack on current dress fashions, with the usual emphasis on women. The pamphlet reeked of an authoritarian, sanctimonious attitude.

"What do you think of them?" Ted asked, after I had glanced through the brief message.

"I don't want to go into orbit around ladies' dress," I said with obvious reference to the morning's sermon. Then I added, "I used to use methods like this, too, Ted; but I know of no one whom I ever helped to reform because of condemnation. Do you know of anyone who has changed her course through these pamphlets?"

Art of Bible Counseling

"None," Ted replied with an air of finality. Then as if having comprehended the utter futility of such methods, he looked me in the face and asked, "What shall I do with them—throw them in the garbage can?"

"The Lord will tell you what to do," I said.

Ted walked away a few moments later, probably for the nearest refuse can.

Jesus, speaking to Nicodemus, said, "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." John 3:17.

Ellen G. White exclaims, "The Lord wants His people to follow other methods than that of condemning wrong, even though the condemnation is just." *Gospel Workers*, p. 373.

She explains in other places that we must condemn the evil practices of the world in the same way that Jesus condemned them—by the "purity of His presence."

The pastor whose philosophy stressed creating conviction visited a home with me. The hostess had been studying Seventh-day Adventist doctrines and was about to request baptism. But first she related to us one of the most thrilling experiences in finding the Seventh-day Adventist Church to which I have ever listened. God had in a most miraculous manner revealed to her His chosen people, and she decided to waste no time in following His guidance.

After relating her experience, she inquired about a Bible teaching not entirely clear to her. Knowing the pastor's desire to preach at people, I quickly answered her. Within about ten minutes she indicated that she now understood and expressed appreciation for our help.

Up to this point the pastor had helped only by listening. Now, after the point became clear, he decided he would himself "preach" a little sermon on the same topic. Amazed, I secretly prayed that God would help him to finish quickly. Obviously upset by the demonstration, the woman graciously indicated to him again that she really did understand now. The Lord answered my prayer, and the pastor stopped preaching.

Many ministers and counselors forget the difference between teaching and preaching. The teacher assumes that the student wants to learn and tries only to furnish the desired information. His attitude is, "You and I are on the same level. The only difference is that I happen to have some information which you have not yet found. I'm glad I can pass it on to you. Afterward you will know as much about this as I do." The attitude of the preacher, or at least of some, is, "This is an important point, and you are at fault in not having mastered it. Luckily, I can give you the benefit of my wisdom. Be sure that you are not caught lacking hereafter."

The pastor's concepts of communication left something to be desired. Christ did not condemn or try to bring conviction through censure. Yet continually we find these characteristics in those professing to be like Christ. Then they wonder why more sinners do not become saints under their counseling.

The hospital call was urgent—an emergency—and I responded as quickly as possible. When I arrived, I learned that the emergency phase had passed. The bleeding under control, the suicide attempt had been frustrated. Nevertheless, I lost no time in going to the bedside of the patient, pausing only long enough to gather a few facts. Mrs. Moore was the wife of a respected minister, and was known for her vigorous missionary activity and her magnificent support of her husband in his pastoral work. She had two lovely daughters. Yet she had slashed her throat with a razor blade and had been found only just in time.

Art of Bible Counseling

Conscious, though pale and weak, the woman was, as I soon discovered, confused. She was receiving a blood transfusion, obviously no time for a counseling session. With the restoration of normal blood pressure, her mind would clear and we could talk. So I made myself known to her, spoke words of encouragement, offered a brief prayer, and left, assuring her that I would return.

No case I have ever dealt with seemed to call more strongly for an attitude of reproach. Although she was refined and educated, the woman's life had been a sham for years. Almost every counseling session—we continued for several weeks—revealed some new cause for the enormous load of guilt she carried. Such cases obviously require the greatest restraint on the part of the counselor, lest he, by word or look, reveal a censorious attitude and block the channel of communication.

Though Mrs. Moore probably never revealed to me the fullness of her experience in hypocritical living, she told enough to explain the hopeless condition of her mind. Because of her confusion even after physical recovery had progressed well along, I decided to resort to the simple story of Jesus. It would help her to participate more actively in the counseling session.

"What do you know about Jesus?" I asked.

She could recall nothing.

"What do you think Jesus was like?" I coached.

Still no response.

"Is there anyone you know that Jesus must have been like?"

Her face lighted up as she said, "The only one I can think of that Jesus must be like is my husband."

What a revelation about her husband's character! And what a temptation to say, "You have lived for years with this godly man and yet have never known Jesus!"

Mrs. Moore's little daughters came to visit her. She commented after they had gone that they were as near to being angels as human beings could be. Comparing their innocence with her own guilt, she told how she had taught others in her church, how she had led them in good works. Yet her own experience had never included a relationship with Christ. The realization of her guilt had deepened until she had become desperate. She had no one to whom she could go. Because of her position, no one would understand.

Obviously, nobody needed to tell Mrs. Moore about her guilt, to preach to her about what she ought to be doing. As the weeks went by, I presented as vividly as I could the love and compassion of Jesus, His understanding of sinners, His intercession for mankind, and His promises. Never once did I mention her suicide attempt or her hypocrisy.

Gradually Mrs. Moore gained confidence. One morning as I entered her hospital room, she exclaimed, "I'm going home tomorrow!" Her depression, her sense of hopelessness had vanished. But had anybody criticized her, it would have flung her deeper into despair.

Years later, in a distant place, I related the experience, not using her name, of course, and not dreaming that anyone present could have known the minister's wife. At the close of the talk, a medical doctor approached me and asked if the patient could have been Mrs. Moore. Amazed, I was afraid I had broken a confidence.

"How do you know her?" I asked.

"I am her family physician," the doctor explained.

Art of Bible Counseling

"Well, how is she now?" I eagerly inquired, wondering if the spiritual therapy had had a permanent effect.

"She is well adjusted, happy, and delighted," the doctor replied.

The experiences of Beth; of Dana, the college girl; and of Mrs. Moore, the minister's wife, are not isolated cases. These experiences of heavy guilt and resultant fear are the common lot of thousands. Some have backslidden and feel they are lost forever. Others have never known what it –is to be a Christian.

It is well for us to understand that the battle waged in their minds is a very real one.

"Satan ... desires to take every glimmer of hope and every ray of light from the soul." Steps to Christ, p. 53. We must not join forces with him by causing them to go more hopelessly into orbit around their guilt.