

PSYCHOLOGY FOR
LIVING

MAY / JUNE 2000



THE TRANSFORMING
MIRACLE OF MARRIAGE

IN THIS ISSUE

A Night to Remember

by Bruce Narramore



Bruce Narramore, Ph.D.

March 31, 2000 marked a very special day in the life of the Narramore Christian Foundation as 250 friends, family, colleagues and Christian leaders gathered to honor Dr. Clyde and Ruth Narramore for their more than fifty years of world-wide ministry.

Drs. James Dobson and Jerry Falwell sent personal video greetings, and many other Christian leaders who could not attend sent notes of appreciation.

This month I would like to share excerpts from my letter to Clyde and Ruth on behalf of NCF's Board of Directors.

"Clyde and Ruth, you are special to each of us.

Few people in the 20th century have been used by God to develop more widespread and helpful ministries than you. You have dedicated your many talents—music, writing, teaching, speaking, hospitality and counseling—to the Lord, and you have served Him faithfully.

"You have consistently shared your faith in Christ and have seen many come to know Him personally. Your vision and leadership have given the church of Christ an international radio program and a graduate school of psychology training hundreds of Christian men and women. You established one of the very first evangelical Christian counseling centers in the United States. You founded a national magazine offering practical scriptural and psychological insights into real-life problems. Your creative, compassionate leadership has offered counseling, training and reentry support to numerous pastors, missionaries, and missionary children. And your books, articles, and booklets have reached millions.

"But you have not only ministered to people around the world, you have touched our lives as well. None of us was ever too young, poor, or 'unimportant.' You took a genuine interest in us and invested hours of your time. And because you saw potential in many of us that we didn't see in ourselves, you challenged us to envision new possibilities and encouraged us to become all that God created us to be.

"*Every person is worth understanding* is not only your motto, but also is a reflection of your lives and ministries. You have wonderfully fulfilled God's command to 'Bear one another's burden and so fulfill the law of Christ.'

"So it is with deep gratitude that we are gathered here to express our personal love and appreciation for you, and also to represent the entire body of Christ in commending you for a job well done and lives well lived. We are privileged to know you, to have ministered with you, and to have been blessed by your lives. We pray that God will give you many more wonderful years of life and ministry together."

With deepest gratitude,

Bruce Narramore, Ph.D., President

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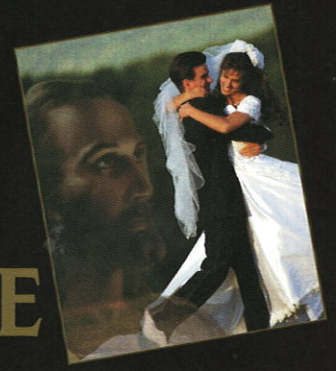
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THE TRANSFORMING MIRACLE OF MARRIAGE



by Gary Thomas



Gary Thomas

One of the challenges my wife and I faced in our marriage centered around ice cube trays. Lisa rarely filled them back up, so when I pulled out a tray it might have just two or three ice cubes left. This frustrated me to no end. So one time when my wife was talking romantically, telling me she would love me forever, I

replied, "I don't need you to love me forever. I need you to love me for seven seconds."

"What are you talking about?" she asked.

"Well, I timed how long it takes to fill the ice cube trays and put them in the freezer, and that's about seven seconds...."

The next morning, however, it dawned on me while I was praying that if it takes my wife just seven seconds to fill the ice cube trays, how long does it take me? Seven seconds, naturally. And the question I believe God placed in my heart was piercing: *Is my love so shallow that I would seriously resent my wife putting me out for seven seconds' worth of work? After all of her love and commitment to me, am I so spiritually immature that I grow angry at seven extra seconds of lost labor?*

The sad answer was, Yes, I am that immature.

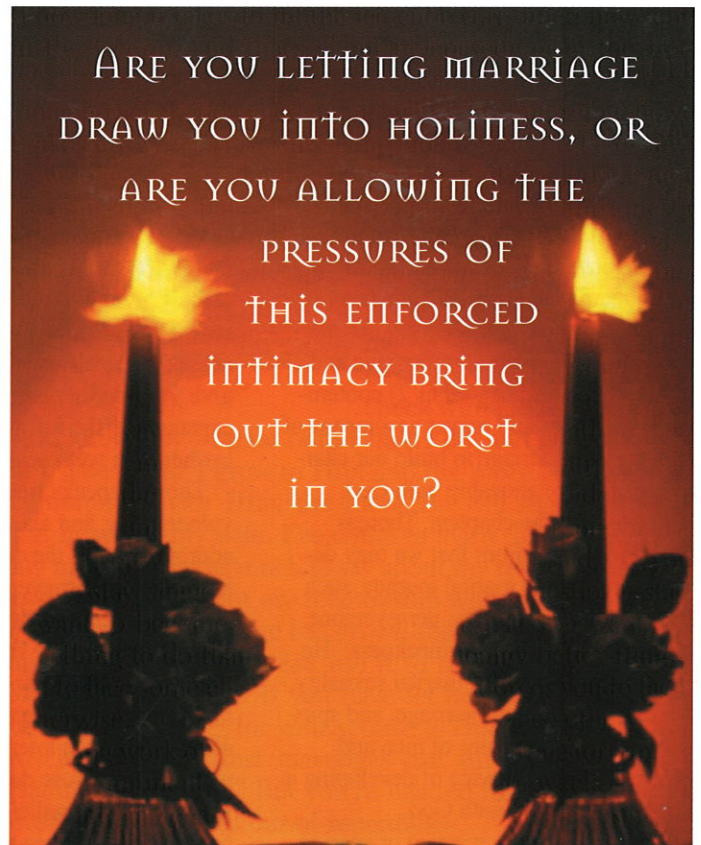
In the aftermath of this awakening, I began reflecting on what the real purpose of marriage might be. I remember talking to my older brother shortly after I was married. When he asked me what marriage was like, I thought for a moment and said, "If you want to be free to *serve* Jesus, there's no question—stay single. Marriage takes a lot of time. But if you want to become more *like* Jesus, I can't imagine any better thing to do than to get married. Being married forces you to face some character issues you'd never have to face otherwise."

The real transforming work of marriage is the 24-hour-a-day, 7-day-a-week commitment. This is the crucible that grinds and shapes us into the character of Christ. Instead of getting up at 3 a.m. to begin prayer in a monastery, the question becomes, *Who will wake up when the baby's diaper needs changing?*

This is a thought that has ample precedent in Christian history. In the seventeenth century a young woman wrote in great distress to a gifted spiritual director named Francis

de Sales. This woman was torn because she very much wanted to get married. However, a friend was encouraging her to remain single, insisting that it would be "more holy" for her to care for her father, and then devote herself as a celibate nun after her father died.

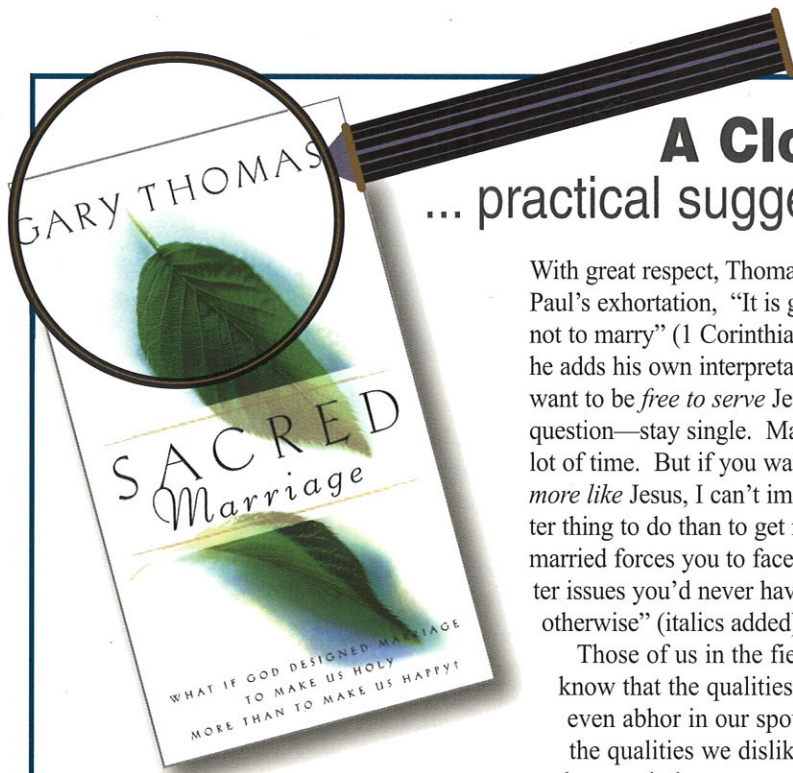
De Sales put the troubled young woman at ease, telling her that, far from being a compromise, in one sense, marriage might be the toughest ministry she could ever undertake: "The state of marriage is one that requires more virtue and constancy than any other," he wrote. "It is a perpetual exercise of mortification.... In spite of the bitter nature of its juice, you may be able to draw and make the honey of a holy life."



Journey to a New Understanding

With this new approach to marriage, instead of blaming Lisa for failing to refill the ice cube trays, I could see this

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A Closer Look at Marriage ... practical suggestions to enrich married life

A Book Review

“What if God designed marriage to make us holy more than to make us happy?”

Gary Thomas asks this crucial question at a time in Western history when individualism, even narcissism, seems to be the norm. In *Sacred Marriage*, Thomas poses the challenges of embracing 1) interdependency as a means of living in community and allowing our marriage partner to mirror our positive and negative qualities, as well as 2) contemplative theology and prayer as a means of allowing our marriage to build our character and our relationship with God.

Throughout the chapters, Thomas notes specific qualities that we may develop through our marital journey, such as love, respect, humility, perseverance, forgiveness, service, and meekness. He speaks of the beauty of marital sexuality, the realistic stages of marriage, and spiritual equality in the roles of men and women, all in the service of developing a deeper relationship with God.

Thomas addresses married or soon-to-be-married couples, focusing on how to make sense of the inevitable frustrations in such an intimate relationship. He explains that this book is not for single individuals who have chosen celibacy.

With great respect, Thomas references Paul’s exhortation, “It is good for a man not to marry” (1 Corinthians 7:1). To this he adds his own interpretation: “If you want to be *free to serve* Jesus, there’s no question—stay single. Marriage takes a lot of time. But if you want to *become more like* Jesus, I can’t imagine any better thing to do than to get married. Being married forces you to face some character issues you’d never have to face otherwise” (italics added).

Those of us in the field of therapy know that the qualities we dislike or even abhor in our spouses are often the qualities we dislike in ourselves, or they remind us on an unconscious level of unmet needs from early in life. Thomas insightfully links this dynamic to the increasing divorce rate: “Much of our marital dissatisfaction stems from self-hatred I wouldn’t be surprised if many marriages end in divorce largely because one or both partners are running from their own revealed weaknesses”

However, Thomas does not stop there. He goes on to encourage us, “Don’t give in to the temptation to resent your partner as your own weaknesses are revealed. Correspondingly, give your partner the freedom and acceptance he/she needs in order to face his/her own weaknesses as well.”

Thomas speaks freely about openness, vulnerability, and allowing our partner to address some of the deep issues that we hide from almost everyone else. He speaks of the strength required in, and the benefit resulting from, allowing our partner to “mirror” or reflect our weaknesses. In the context of trust, loyalty, and love, we can tolerate the pain, trusting that our spouse does not intend the reflection to be malicious but that he/she trusts us to be strong enough to embrace the information and allow it to mold our character.

Thomas continues to speak frankly to Christians desiring a healthier marriage in his chapter titled, “Sexual Saints.” He

offers a refreshing view of how to use our sexuality to please our spouse and build marital intimacy. He encourages married couples to appreciate and embrace the sensations within him/herself and the spouse that offer another route by which we can enjoy and serve each other. “Without this physiological drive many couples would slowly drift apart. We are by nature selfish beings who hide from each other. Maintaining a steady pursuit toward and empathy for another human being goes against our sinful, egocentric bent. By creating a physical desire, God is inviting us to participate in the spiritual reality of learning to share, have fellowship with, and enter the life and soul of another human being in a profound way.”

Lastly, Thomas addresses the couple who perpetually give in to each other, never setting limits or establishing healthy boundaries, and then growing to resent one another. While this may appear noble at first glance, if taken to an extreme it can have disastrous results.

In light of Thomas’ thoughtful articulation of how to use our marriages to become more like Jesus, I highly recommend this selection for married and soon-to-be-married couples who want to grow in their relationship with each other as well as with their Lord.

Let us allow our spouse to mirror our strengths and weaknesses, embrace those weaknesses, and compassionately offer similar reflections to our spouse. Let us pace ourselves in allowing the Holy Spirit to develop our character and mold us to be more like Jesus.

Sacred Marriage published by Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2000.

— Leah Wilson McDill

Leah Wilson McDill is a doctoral candidate in Marriage and Family Therapy at Fuller Theological Seminary and a Licensed Professional Counselor in Texas.

Continued from page 3

“intrusion on my time” as a divine spotlight on my own selfishness, a God-given gift designed to mold me into the image of His beloved Son.

Marriage calls us to an entirely new and selfless life, and any situation that calls me to confront my selfishness has enormous spiritual value. Now, when I say that perhaps God designed marriage to make us holy even more than to make us happy, I’m *not* suggesting that God has anything *against* happiness, or that happiness and holiness are mutually exclusive. But looking at marriage through the lens of holiness began to put marriage in a new perspective for me.

In fact, it has led me to believe that couples don’t really fall “out of love.” I think it’s more precise to say they fall out of *repentance*. What usually happens is that we let little vices—like impatience, disrespect, selfishness, pride, and anger—pollute a once-precious relationship. Instead of letting marriage draw us into holiness, we let it draw us into bitterness and accusation.

Here’s the kicker: a lot of people want out of a relationship not only because they no longer “love” their spouse. The truth is, they despise what they themselves have become and want a new start with someone who hasn’t seen them at their worst. But changing partners isn’t the answer—changing ourselves is.

So while I’m all for rebuilding romance and intimacy, I think it’s just as important to do a “virtue” check. Are you letting marriage draw you into holiness, or are you allowing the pressures of this enforced intimacy bring out the worst in you?

Let’s look at just two of the many ways in which marriage can help us grow in holiness.

Make Me a Servant

As a student at Regent College (Vancouver, B.C.), I was invited to the home of renowned biblical scholar, Dr. Gordon Fee. Lisa was pregnant with our first child, and was showing it. As soon as Lisa walked in the door, Dr. Fee jumped up. “Here,” he said, “you need the softest chair.”

His words were laden with sincerity and genuine concern. My wife was surprised at the attention, but she took the chair and sat down. I sat beside her. Dr. Fee, I noticed to my embarrassment, was still standing.

“Now,” he said, “can I get a pillow for your back?”

“No, I’m fine,” Lisa said.

“How about a glass of water? Do you need something to drink?”

“That would be great,” my wife answered.

Dr. Fee marched into the kitchen. He came back with a full glass. “Is the heat all right?” he asked. “Are you too

cold, too hot? Do you need to raise your feet?”

Lisa was almost blushing at this time, and I was greatly humbled. In the course of four minutes, my professor had served my wife in such a way that I never had in four years. Just seeing his empathy, his dedication to making another person comfortable, and his willingness to put himself entirely at my wife’s disposal was an eye-opener. I saw the heart of a servant and realized I had a long way to grow into maturity as a husband.

Jesus said, “Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you” (John 13:14, 15). Marriage provides opportunities every day for both spouses to practice this admonition.

Giving Up The Grudge


Marriage based on romanticism embraces an idealized lie (infatuation) and then divorces the reality once it presents itself. Marriage based on life in Christ invites us to divorce the lie—an idealized view of our spouse—and embrace reality—two sinful people sharing strengths, weaknesses, joys, and struggles in lifelong commitment. As the Whiteheads describe it, “The challenge is not to keep on loving the person we thought we were marrying, but to love the person we did marry!”


Fresh Wind

I now refer to my wife as my “God thermometer.” If I wake up and discover that I am not moved by the miracle of her life and love for me and if I am not cherishing her and honoring her, I look up and do a heart check with God. The fact is,

God knows my wife far better than I do, and He cherishes her. The closer I grow to Him and the more time I spend communing with Him, the more He will share with me His heart for my wife. I’ve come to learn that the state of my marriage has as much to say about my relationship with God as it does about my relationship with my wife.

If your own marriage has grown stale, look in the mirror and ask God how He can use it to transform the person looking back at you. If you have let bitterness seize your heart, stop praying for your spouse to change and ask God to change *you*. Most marriages can survive temporarily “falling out of love.” But you’re headed for disaster if you ever let yourself fall out of repentance.

Gary Thomas is a writer who lives in Bellingham, Washington. His most recent book, from which this article was adapted, is *Sacred Marriage: Celebrating Marriage as a Spiritual Discipline*. 

 *Marriage calls us to an entirely new and selfless life; and any situation that calls me to confront my selfishness has enormous spiritual value.*

Nine Symptoms of a Control Freak

by Les Parrott, III

Stephen Fagan always needed to be in charge. When he bought a house that needed extensive renovations, he oversaw every detail of the work himself. He ordered his second wife, Barbara, to say “I love you” into the phone whenever he called. He demanded that she stand in the front window each day and wave until he drove out of sight. It was all part of his carefully constructed world — a world of compulsive control that began falling apart in the spring of 1998. That’s when Fagan was arrested at his Palm Beach mansion for the 1979 kidnapping of his own baby daughters from a previous marriage after a bitter divorce. While Fagan says he rescued his girls from a neglectful mother, his first and second wives claim Stephen was a highly controlling person who went way, way too far.



Les Parrott, Ph.D.

You don’t need to be a psychologist to see that this guy’s controlling tendencies are way out of line. All the signs are there and then some. He is rigid, pushy, and demanding. My students call this type of person a Control Freak! Unfortunately, many of us, while perhaps not meriting the formal “Control Freak” label, have several controlling characteristics that can still cause a lot of problems in our relationships because control stands in the place of love, trust, and grace. As Henri Nouwen put it, “It seems easier to control people than to love people.” See if you find a little of yourself in some of these signs of overcontrol:

Obnoxious

Tim (not his real name) was a new professor, fresh out of graduate school. Wanting to make a good impression on his dean and his colleagues, Tim made every effort to follow his job description to the “T.” He always arrived at his classes

well ahead of schedule, worked hard to mentor students outside of class, kept fastidious notes of every faculty meeting, published articles in leading journals, volunteered his services in the community, and submitted quarterly reports of his accomplishments to his dean. He was a model scholar and superb professor.

But Tim had a problem. He expected every one around him, even senior ranking faculty members, to do the same things he did. Tim also never hid an opinion. Regardless of rank or standing, Tim pointed out his colleague’s foibles and made suggestions on how they could improve. He once told me in no uncertain terms that I was disrespecting my students if I didn’t wear a tie to class. And he would sometimes quote verbatim, rules and regulations from the faculty handbook to show how others weren’t pulling their weight.

Tim never made it to tenured status. His colleagues dismissed his application out of hand, in spite of his long list of professional accomplishments, because of a “lack of collegiality.” The dismissal report could have just as easily, but not nearly as politely, said that Tim was an obnoxious Control Freak that didn’t get along with others. Nobody would have disagreed.

Once Control Freaks set their sights on a particular point or goal, there is no arguing them out of it. Compromise is unspeakable. They are right, and everyone else is wrong. Period. End of discussion.

Invasive

I once counseled a man who grew up with a controlling

father. Everything he did as a boy was under his father's watchful eye. The father took careful inventory of his son's room. Like a private detective he would rifle through the boy's knapsack and desk drawers on a regular basis, not looking for anything in particular — just being nosy. Control Freaks have little respect for privacy and often snoop in areas that aren't their business.

Some Control Freaks exhibit their invasive quality, not so much by snooping in other's belongings as they do by poking around in people's private lives. "How much did you pay for that watch?" they will ask boldly. Or, "Tell me what's happening with you and your husband. I notice you don't sit together in church any more." Probing. Searching. Inspecting. Hunting. Some Control Freaks will do whatever it takes to get personal or private information that is none of their business.

Speaking of church, I've seen some "saintly" Control Freaks cloak their invasiveness in religious garb. "Why has the Lord put you on my heart?" they may ask as a way of getting their gossip fix. Or, "I want to pray for you but I need to know what's really going on in your life."

Obsessive

A friend recently told me of an experience he had at a luncheon with a reputable economist who was giving a speech about the possibility of a recession. On a large flip chart, the speaker made a black spot with a heavy marker and asked a man on the front row what he saw. The man replied promptly, "A black spot." The speaker asked every person the same question. One by one each replied, "A black spot." With deliberate emphasis the speaker then walked pensively across the small platform, paused, and said: "Yes, there is a little black spot, but none of you mentioned the large sheet of white paper it is on." The speaker then stepped to the podium, gathered his notes, said "Thank you," and sat down.

The room was shockingly quiet for a few moments. Then one person in the back began to applaud. Then another. Soon every person seated around each of the tables was clapping for the speaker. What had he taught them about the recession? That you've got to have perspective. You can't focus on one small thing or one brief moment. You've got to see the big picture.

This simple, yet profound message is wasted on nearly every Control Freak. You see, most Control Freaks are not interested in the big picture. They are zeroing in on some minor detail that often prevents them from seeing anything else. They may have a suspicion that something is going wrong in a relationship, for example, so they obsess over every nuance of conversation and unintended gesture that the other person makes. Anything can become their "black spot" as they obsess, lose perspective, and neglect the big picture.

Perfectionistic

Listen carefully, and you will hear Control Freaks say under their breath, "I can't believe I did that. What a jerk!" They berate themselves for not having everything go exactly the way they wanted it to. "I can't believe I forgot my cell phone." "Why didn't I plan for rain?"

Control Freaks demand perfection of themselves and everyone else. Few things are "good enough." If you live with a Control Freak, you know this too well. Their perfectionistic ways set standards at home you never agreed to live by. It may not matter to you that the pillows on the couch need to be angled in the corner just so, but it does to them and you better figure that out. Right? Or maybe you could care less when the gas gauge in your car goes below its half-way point, but you've learned that your Control Freak spouse doesn't want it close.

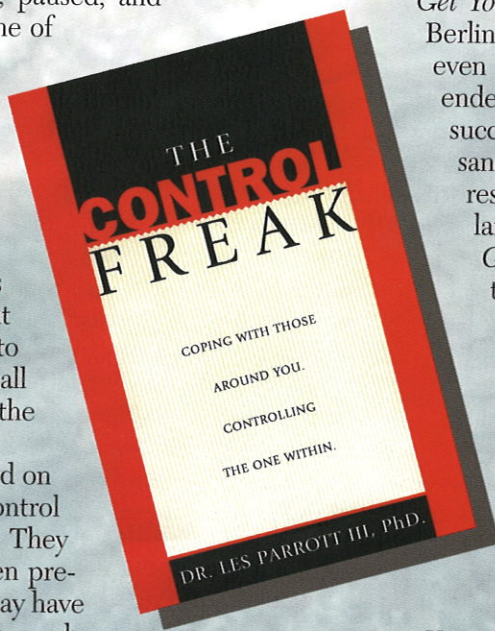
I love what the French Christian writer, Francois Fenelon, had to say about perfection: "It is only imperfection that complains about what is imperfect. The more perfect we are, the more gentle and quiet we become toward the defects of others." As a recovering Control Freak myself, I confess that I take these words to heart.

Critical

I've often been puzzled by people who make their living from being critical. How do they get away with some of the things they say? Movie critics, for example, can lambaste a film that ends up being a box office smash and the critic's reputation isn't even tarnished. In fact, I've made a habit of collecting "bad" reviews. One of my favorites is of the original 1946 Broadway production of *Annie Get Your Gun*. One critic wrote, "Irving Berlin's score is musically not exciting or even tuneful." *Annie Get Your Gun* ended up being Berlin's greatest stage success, running more than a thousand performances on Broadway and resulting in some of the most popular songs ever. When the movie *Gone With The Wind* came into theaters, one summed it up by saying, "No Civil War picture ever made a nickel." And in 1964 when Ronald Reagan was up for a starring role in a movie to play the President of the United States, a critic said, "Reagan doesn't have the presidential look."

Most of us, however, aren't paid to criticize!

Yet, why do some of us dispense critical comments so willy-nilly when it's not our job? As one who can be prone to critical comments myself, I'll tell you why. Control Freaks often think critical comments will somehow make something or someone better. Of



course, it never does, but this doesn't keep us from trying to control through criticism. "Those black shoes don't do much for your outfit," a Control Freak girlfriend might say. "You'd look better wearing brown flats with that skirt." Of course, her friend puts on the brown shoes. Or in the case of a marriage: "I'm embarrassed to pull up in front of our house with so many weeds in our lawn," a controlling wife might say to her husband. Guess who gets right to work in the yard—or keeps "forgetting" to do the job? So, if you're puzzled by this Control Freak trait, wonder no more. You see, criticism, for the Control Freak, is a terrific tool for getting people to do what he wants them to do.

Irritable

Irritable, cranky, and contentious. These were the kinds of words that pop into people's minds to describe Roberta. She is a realtor. Successful. Very successful. For three years straight Roberta was the top-selling agent in the city. How did she do it? By working longer and harder than most everyone else. She didn't want anyone else in her office making a mistake that would reflect badly on her, so she handled everything herself. But at a price: being known as the most irascible and irritable person within miles.

Everyone who worked with Roberta, except her clients, knew he had better walk around on eggshells if he didn't want to set her off. The tiniest of things could ruin her day. One time she sulked all afternoon because the district manager of her agency came through town and did not invite her to a lunch meeting. On another occasion, she chewed out an underling because a "Sold" sign wasn't posted on a property the day she requested it to be. And when a train crossing caused her to be late for a meeting with a potential buyer, she actually honked at the passing train as if it would go faster and then whined about it all afternoon back in the office!

People who need too much control seem to be unable to go with the flow. When they encounter opposition, no matter how logical, they become cross, crabby, and cranky. Little things tick them off: a messy top on a bottle of ketchup, a car parked on the "wrong" side of the driveway, a flashlight not being where it is "supposed" to be, and on and on. For Control Freaks, anything and everything can be cause for a hissy fit. As Solomon wrote, "It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a contentious woman (or man)" (Proverbs 25:24, RSV).

Demanding

"Jenny, give me that!" Dan yelled at his wife. "No, I won't! It's mine. It's mine!" she retorted. "Give it to me right now!" Dan grabbed at her paycheck but Jenny had her hold on it and before they knew it, the check was ripped in two. Jenny was tired of handing over all financial matters to her controlling husband, but Dan responded in characteristic Control Freak style by demanding.

To get their way, controlling people often resort to making demands. Like a kidnapper who is trying to secure a ransom, they order people around at their whim and fancy. In addition to trying to control the checkbook, Dan, for exam-

ple, often barks at Jenny to make his oatmeal in the morning. He insists that she never, ever touch the stereo equipment in their family room. He may even require Jenny to wear a certain outfit when they go to dinner with friends.

The Control Freak doesn't understand what the French writer from the Fourteenth Century, Michel de Montaigne, said so eloquently: "He who establishes his argument by noise and command shows that his reason is weak." Or as the Apostle Peter instructed church elders, "Do not lord it over those entrusted to you...(I Peter 5:3, NIV). The same principle applies in all relationships.

Rigid

In the hugely successful television hit, *Seinfeld*, one of the most popular episodes was based on a real-life situation and titled, "The Soup Nazi." It centered around a feisty man running a small eatery where New Yorkers stood outside in long lines to enjoy take-out orders of this guy's delicious soup creations. The catch? Customers had to put up with this Control Freak's rigid rules. Only one customer in the store at a time. Place your order immediately. Do not point. Don't ask questions. Pay and leave. If you wanted to feast on these tasty soups, you did as the man said. And if you didn't? "No soup for you," the Soup Nazi would snap. "Come back in three months."

The episode struck a chord with viewers because we all know people who live by rigid rules and expect us to do the same. And we may even know the feeling of wanting what a Control Freak has to offer, and putting up with ridiculous demands in order to get it.

Control Freaks have one way of doing things — their way. They can be as inflexible as a drill sergeant in trying to force their methods on others. They want life to run a certain way and aren't willing to budge their regimen. Their exacting details for preparing a salad (or soup), for driving a car, for raking leaves, and anything else are not to be questioned. They "know" what's best for everyone and only "allow" others to take the reins if they follow their rules.

Closed-Minded

One more quality makes the top nine list for Control Freaks. Most of these people are not interested in discussion. It's as if they have all the truth and anyone who disagrees with them is suspect. They fail to recognize that only God has all the truth. They feel no need to examine both sides of any issue. Their mind is made up before they even hear that there is another side to an issue. So they circle the wagons to protect their opinions and deny even an effort at clarification, balance, and understanding, to say nothing of building community with people who do not see things exactly as they do. As Proverbs 21:2 puts it, "All a man's ways seem right to him, but the LORD weighs the heart."

From: *The Control Freak*, by Les Parrott III, Ph.D. © 2000. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. All rights reserved. Book available in June. Visit the author's web site at www.realrelationships.com



Is Laughter Always the Best Medicine?



by **Twana L. Biram**

My family always laughed. I frequently heard one of my parents exclaim, “Who says Christians can’t have fun!” Laughter then erupted in response to the observation. I heard that statement at potluck dinners at church, at choir practice, and even at a funeral. Our church deep in the Appalachians had its own version of the Irish Wake. Someone would say, “Remember when...” and the funny stories flowed. My family subscribed to Ecclesiastes 3: “To everything there is a season ... a time to cry; a time to laugh; a time to grieve” We saw no problem with laughing at a time when most folk cried. We who lived in the beautiful hills believed laughter brought healing. Life held so much harshness and so little joy that laughter often healed without medication.

Now I recognize how little anyone

in my family had to laugh about. My father slept in cornfields from the age of ten; he traded a day’s work in the berry patch for a new pair of trousers to wear to school. He survived a bout of typhoid fever in a locked room, “Sure did get thirsty,” he’d say, “But drinking water was what got me sick to begin with!” Then he’d laugh.

Inappropriate laughter hung in the air throughout my life. I know precisely when I realized making people laugh meant I could forget the horrors of life back in that Hollow for a while. I was three years old—verbally precocious and utterly terrified. My grandfather had begun to molest me. I hurt and felt scared all the time, but I thought of a way to escape.

When Ice Cream Joe came, my older sister took me across the gravel road for a Popsicle. It was grape. I heard a car coming; throughout my life, Mom said, “If you go out in the

road, you’ll get hit by a car and be killed.” All I wanted in that split second was my grape Popsicle and heaven with Jesus where He would make certain no one ever hurt me again. The 1955 Chevy was going forty mph when it hit my tiny body. I regained consciousness with a fractured skull and a body covered in gravel abrasions realizing I had not gone to heaven. This was a hospital. Mother says she walked into my room to find my bed surrounded by laughing doctors and nurses. One nurse asked, “What happened to you, little girl?” Mother heard my piping little voice say, “I got hit by a car and got killed. That’s what my Mommy said would happen. So—am I dead?”

How they laughed. I could see Mom’s anger. I had made her seem negligent, but she could not castigate me in front of an audience. I learned in that moment of pain and disappointment that making people

laugh meant safety. After that, experts programmed me about what to say, how to feel, how to behave. They taught me not to bemoan the harshness of my life; I learned to turn pain into a joke. When I laughed, people liked me, so when the doctor asked, I'd jokingly tell him how I'd hurt my leg; he ignored the signs of abuse. I showed the teacher a pratfall to explain why I couldn't sit still because I'd tripped and hurt my bottom. She, too, ignored the obvious abuse signals.

I learned that children have hard lives and never tell the secrets. In fact if I *ever* told anyone, a victimizer would hurt someone I loved. "Keep laughing," they commanded, and soon the bad things would go away. Eventually, I became the family clown. I thought maybe laughter could supplant tears.

During my pre-teen years, the abuse outside my home stopped, then the pain of parental abuse began in full force. I quickly learned if I could catch them off guard and make them laugh, I could avoid a blow. The centrality of laughter stayed a crucial part of my life as it obscured the frightening memories of my youth and childhood. I became the proverbial "But she has *such* a good sense of humor" poster girl. Humor provided my greatest armor throughout the rest of my life.

Then in my mid-thirties, I suffered my first breakdown. Overworked as a graduate student, teacher, wife, and mother of two sons with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), my internal structure based on denial caved in. I admitted myself to a Psych Stress Unit.

I kept the sessions on the psych

unit in an uproar with my wit and sarcasm, but the memories of a beaten, abused child bubbled up in scalding geysers waiting to gush forth. The harder I laughed, the harder the path to healing became. The worse the memories, the more I laughed. Once, an Emergency Room Psychologist said, "Well, your sense of humor has made this whole process easier for *me*!" He missed the underlying hysterically weeping woman, perceiving only my humor.

Over the course of two years, I was hospitalized four times. In each instance, other patients either loved my humor or resented it. The staff often found themselves in the same dilemma. Although my therapists appreciated the intelligence that made them laugh, they also began to see the danger of this coping skill. They knew



could not get to the core of my issues if I continued to hide the ugliness under many thick layers of self-protecting laughter, just as Proverbs

14:13 notes: "Laughter can conceal a heavy heart; when the laughter ends, the grief remains." In order to keep the professionals out of my mind and memories, my humor sharpened, becoming what I call "verbal napalm": sarcasm. Sarcasm flayed the delicate persona of the other clients.

I was lost, abandoned, terrified. I began recognizing that if I laughed through remembering heinous agony, I was not facing the truth; I used laughter the way in unhealthy, corrosive ways. Ecclesiastes 7:3 says: "...Sorrow is better than laughter, for sadness has a refining influence on us." I needed that refining—without it, I could not heal. Without that smoothing, I would always victimize with my humor, never learning the profound difference between healing laughter and the hurtful laughter that always had a target, thus steering people away from my vulnerability.

Finally, I could not hide behind inappropriate joking as an avoidance technique. The laughter, like a dam, held back acute memories. The levees in the dam gave under the rush of ugliness that spewed out of my heart.

My breakthrough came at the end of a session when I told my therapist, "This session has hurt so deeply, I refuse to go back to the unit smiling. I'm not smiling inside. I can't pretend anymore. I cannot laugh at my hurting another minute." I had always counted on my sense of humor to make people like me, so I never showed my pain outside my therapist's office.

I had done too good a job of hiding behind laughter. Other clients who knew deep agony but had no way to hide the pain, thought me healthy and

“ I told my therapist, ‘This session has hurt so deeply, I refuse to go back to the unit smiling. I’m not smiling inside. I can’t pretend anymore. I cannot laugh at my hurting another minute.’ ”

together; “Why is *she* here?” they asked. I had never allowed anyone else to see that my agony matched his or hers. After that crucial time with my therapist, a truth crystallized: *I am who I am; it is not my task to make the world smile. My task is to face my life honestly.*

That breakthrough produced important changes in my behaviors and my coping mechanisms. When I attended group sessions, I no longer searched for quips to lighten the heavy atmosphere, and I learned to weep. For the first time in my life, tears flowed as I coped with the virtual flood of memories the psychic levees released—memories of abandonment, of emotional scalding, and worst of all, memories of sexual abuse. Even as I learned to weep, my tears fell in silence. In my childhood home, they punished me for crying. That ice-blocked physical chest pain as I repressed any noise when I cried proved my ingrained inappropriate emotional reaction. I stayed trapped, making healing very difficult. I had learned perfectly to “laugh to keep from crying.” Weeping still terrifies me. As I struggle to be real with my emotions, I no longer look for a pillow to muffle my tears. I envy those who weep honestly and openly. What a gift they enjoy!


I haven’t lost my sense of humor; the ability to laugh remains an essential element of who I am, but I no longer allow my laughter to cover grief or pain or truth. I can laugh now in good ways. For instance, I have been terrified of any signs or symbols used by cults for good reasons. Last week at a doctor’s appointment, my car door bumped the car next to it. When I

checked to see if I had damaged anything, I was eye socket-to-eye socket with a skeleton in a full-dress tuxedo. For five minutes or so, I just trembled, and then my son said, “Gee,

that guy’s been waiting for an appointment for a *looong* time!” The shaking stopped and we laughed.

My new perspective of life relates to Christ’s behaviors. His emotions were perfect and appropriate to any situation. I study my new viewpoint and know that He laughed with the other attendants at the Wedding at Cana. He loved life. His laughter was always appropriate. He wept when He heard of Lazarus’s death, but rejoiced in His friend’s resurrection. He gently healed the ostracized insane; he raged at the moneychangers in the Temple. I’ve learned to ask myself, “Is my laughter appropriate to this occasion?”

My sense of humor continues to help ease difficult situations. But the best gift means my husband, two sons and I have wonderful times laughing at the boys’ perfect mimicking of famous people, and Scottish accents. We chuckle as we exaggerate small events and make them seem funnier. I no longer rely on the kind of laughter my family of origin used, for that laughter camouflaged pain. It was dishonest laughter! Therefore, for **me**, laughter is *not* always the best medicine, but neither is it always bad. I observe and analyze situations now, then paraphrase Hamlet, “To laugh or not to laugh, that is the question.”

Twana Biram spent twenty years as the wife of an Air Force officer ministering as a “missionary in the military.” She currently is a college adjunct faculty member teaching English composition and literature. Her interests are in stained glass art, jewelry making, reading and writing. She lives with her husband in Raleigh, North Carolina and also sings with the Raleigh Oratorio Society. 

IF YOU WANT THE THINGS YOU OWN TO BE USED IN GOD’S SERVICE, YOU NEED TO SAY SO

If you don’t want someone else deciding how your possessions will be used in the future, then YOU need to say so IN YOUR WILL.

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Occupation

Birthday

Celebrating

50

Y e a r s

March 31, 2000, marked a special event in the life of the Narramore Christian Foundation as 250 friends, family, staff and Christian leaders gathered to honor Dr. Clyde and Ruth Narramore for their more than 50 years of faithful ministry for the cause of Christ. Here are a few photos of that special evening.



EVERY PERSON
IS WORTH
UNDERSTANDING



1 — Clyde and Ruth gather with other Narramore family members after the banquet.

2 — Ruth's brother and sister-in-law, Dr. Gordon and Othella Elliott of North Carolina (left); with Rev. Larry Whiteford of Indiana, one of the evening's musical artists, and Mrs. Polly Reese, wife of NCF board member Robert Reese.

3 — Bruce and Kathy Narramore presenting Clyde and Ruth with a beautiful globe commemorating the world-wide impact of NCF's ministry.

4 — Bruce Narramore sharing a conversation with Dr. Roy McKeown (right), President of World Opportunities, and former Senior Vice President of Youth for Christ International, along with co-worker Fred Sanborne.

5 — Dr. Gordon Kirk (left), Clyde and Ruth's pastor at Lake Avenue Church in Pasadena, with Mr. Art Black, Director of Ministry Services, Ambassador Advertising, the husband of NCF board member Garnette Black.

6 — Dr. Clyde Cook, President of Biola University (right) and his wife, Anna Belle, with Dr. and Mrs. Doug Pennoyer, Dean of Biola's School of Intercultural Studies, and Mr. Loren Grissett, retired Christian businessman and former mayor of Santa Ana, CA.

7 — Debbie Hewitt, daughter of Bruce and Kathy Narramore, sharing the evening with Bruce's sister, Connie, and her husband, Daniel Heckathorne.

8 — Clyde and Ruth with their son Kevin (right), daughter, Melodie, and son-in-law Paul Yocum.

9 — NCF board member Dr. Elizabeth Hall, and her husband, Dr. Todd Hall.

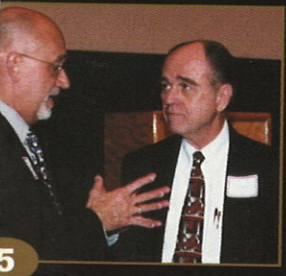
10 — Dr. Clyde chatting with Carole Logsdon and Bonnie Morris.

11 — Mr. Ben Burnweit, coordinator of NCF's radio department, with Bob and Pauline Bartosch, longtime friends of Clyde and Ruth and the founders of Overcomers Outreach, a Christian recovery ministry to alcoholics and drug addicts.

12 — Ruth Narramore enjoying humorous comments by Dr. Gary Collins.



“ B E A R I N G O N E A N O T H E R ’ S B U R D E N S ”



ND FULFILLING THE LAW OF CHRIST.”

An open letter to

by Sharon Marshall

Dear Father,

Do you enjoy spending quality time with your children? Do you try to take them to special places from time to time? Do you enjoy family outings? Do you really enjoy being a father — even with the ups and downs it brings?

Do you pray for your children? Do you endeavor to be the kind of father God wants you to be?

If you answered “yes” to most of these questions, I need your help! Like you, I used to have a happy, two-parent family. Now I am a single parent. I’ve spent years trying to be both mother and father. Finally, I realized I just can’t do it, and God doesn’t intend for me to

be both. I find that I’m not even the kind of mother I want to be when I have to be the breadwinner too. As a father, I’m a real bomb!

How can you help me? It really won’t take

much of your time. If you would “adopt” my son just long enough to make a special phone call once or twice a week—just long enough to spend a few extra minutes with him when we meet



men on father's day

socially—just long enough to invite him to accompany your family to a ball game, or on a picnic, or to the beach once in awhile — just long enough to give him a “father image” and make him feel he is special to a man. If you would do that, it would mean so much!

Who am I? I am the divorcee or the widow in your church. I usually have one to three children. I'm probably faithful and active in some aspect of church. I may even look as though I have it all together and don't have a care in the world. But I don't know how to ask you for help, and I don't know how to find

out who is willing to help. I want so much to avoid imposing, I some-

times withdraw from people rather than reach out.

I probably have close friends and/or relatives in the church that you think are “taking care” of us — and they are . . . but yet they aren't. I probably hold a steady job and manage to make ends meet. You may not even know I have a need.

Who is my child? He may be the one who pesters you because he is looking for male attention; the one who seems a little hyperactive; or the quiet, withdrawn child you hardly know exists. He may be the one you see sitting on the laps of several of the church men. He may seem to be studious, or he may seem to be social. Or he may cling to his mother, be hostile toward men, and exhibit antisocial behavior. You may feel he doesn't want you around. He may be talented, outgoing, and participate in all children's activities.

You see, he is a normal child who shows only slight signs that a problem exists — children are masters at covering their feelings.

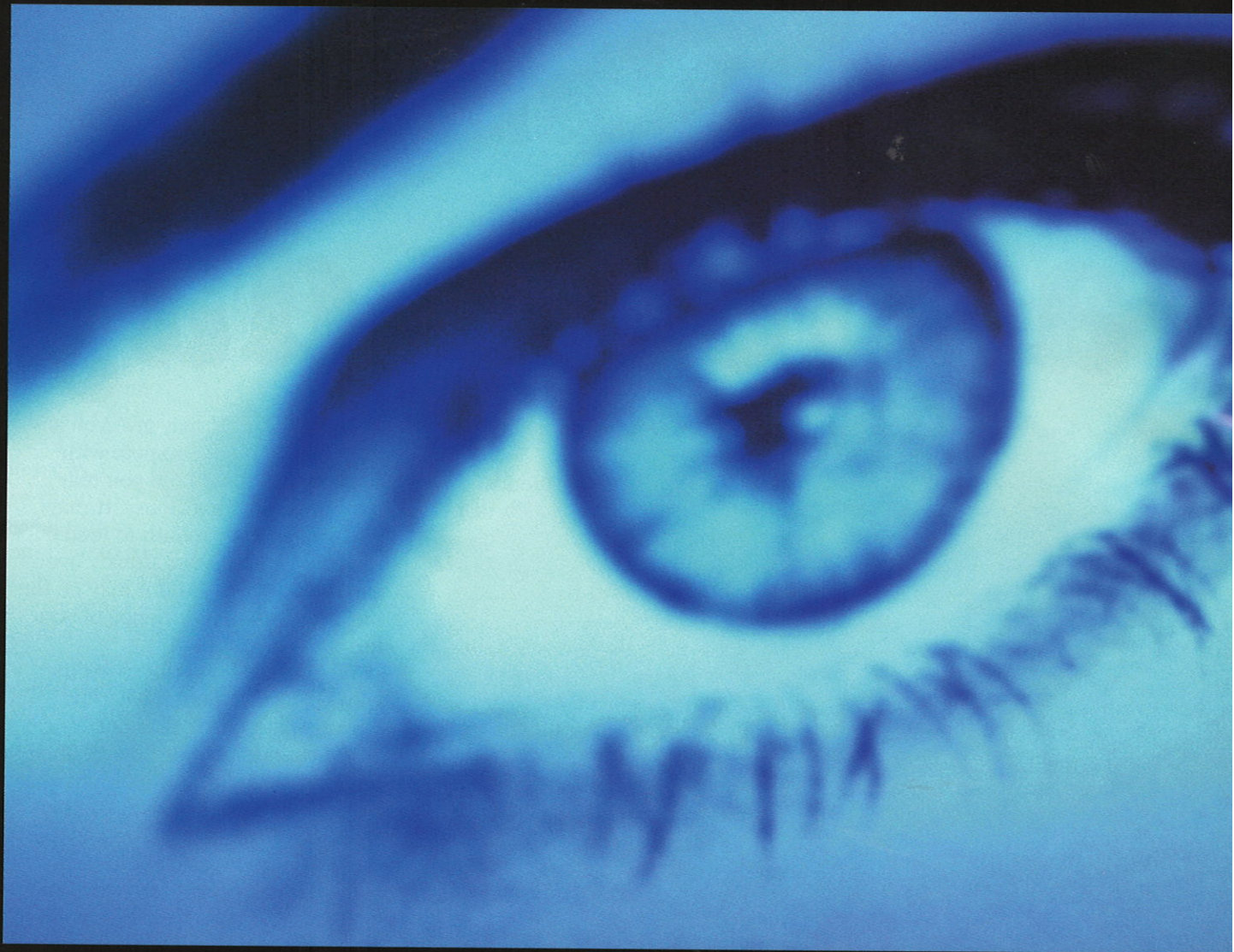
Why should you get involved? What will it give you? It may give you instant gratification as you invest in the life of a child hungry for a man's attention. It may give you premature gray hairs as you attempt to reach a child who seems remote or hostile. It may give you frustrations as you try to squeeze that weekly phone call into your busy schedule. It may give you that son to play ball with that you have

always wanted. It may give you another daughter to compete with your own children, and you may have to deal with jealousy. It may give you another mouth to feed once in awhile, taxing your already over-extended budget. And it may be the most rewarding experience of your life.

Why should you want to get involved? Involvement is what the Christian lifestyle is all about. You might consider it your tithe of time and pray that God will multiply what you give by 10 as He loves a fatherless child through you. You might consider it an investment in insurance that will pay off for your own children some day, should something happen to you. You might consider it your hedge against inflation, for what you invest unselfishly in the life of another will surely bring you rich returns in the stock market of eternity.

Won't you pray about this? Ask God if you should “adopt” a fatherless child — and if so, which one. Ask God if you should start a “Big Brother” program at your church. There are a lot of women like me who need help, and there are many children who need a Christian man they can emulate. You'll never be sorry you invested in a life!

Sharon Marshall lives in Laguna Niguel, California. She is the owner and director of SCORE: a program that helps high-risk students prepare for college or careers. She is also the Coordinator of Divorce and Grief Recovery at her local church. Visit Sharon at <http://www.score-ed.com>.



*Our loving Father knew
that while we live on earth, we need tears
to soften our hearts.*

He Gave Us Tears

needed them for many reasons.

My friend found that she needed her tears to help relieve the burden of loss. Abraham wept when he buried Sarah, Jacob cried when he thought his son Joseph was dead, David poured out his sorrow with tears over his slain son Absalom, and Mary Magdalene wept at Jesus' tomb.

Sometimes it is not loss, but God's blessing that brings tears. When Jesus enters a heart, old walls are often washed away by tears. As tears poured down the cheeks of a big, burly man who had just found God, he said, "Twenty-five years ago when I was twelve years old, my father almost beat me to death. I vowed then that no one would ever make me cry again, and I have never shed a tear since that day. Now I can hardly stop crying."

Four-year-old Kyle had a touch of that same experience. He was having lunch with Grandma. As she held his small hand, she thanked God for the food and for her little grandson. As she finished praying, he wiped his hand across his eyes and said, "Grandma, when you pray it makes my eyes water." The Holy Spirit often brings tears to the eyes of those with tender hearts.

The Bible tells us to "... weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15). Jesus wept in compassion when He saw Mary and Martha's grief at the loss of their brother, Lazarus. Tears of others may move us to compassion and action as we sense the hurt that caused them.

Then, there are regretful tears we shed when we face our failures. Peter, who had denied Jesus three times, wept bitterly as he faced his weakness and failure. Jesus said, "There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8:12) on the day of judgment when some face the fact that they have been guilty of the greatest

failure of all—failure to accept God's love and offer of forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

But all tears are not tears of sadness. There are wonderful tears of happiness. Joseph was overcome with joyous tears when he saw his long-lost brother, Benjamin. The Bible says, "Joseph made haste ... and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there" (Genesis 43:30). And later, when he was reunited with his father whom he had not seen in years, "... he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while" (Genesis 46:29). Joseph must have shed many tears of loss, pain, and frustration as he was sold as a slave and separated from his family, but he found that "... weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning" (Psalm 30:5).

God is aware of every tear we shed. David said, "... the Lord heard the voice of my weeping," and the Bible assures us that our tears are precious to God. It says, "... put my tears into Your bottle; are they not in Your book?" (Psalm 56:8).

My friend's heart was shriveling up in tearless sorrow when she called out, "God, give me back my tears!" Our loving Father knew that while we live on this earth, we need tears to soften our hearts. But we can look forward to that glorious day when no one will need tears—the day when "God will dwell with them ... and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Revelation 7:17).

Venus Bardanouve is a retired speech pathologist and audiologist who now writes full time from her home in Harlem, Montana. She has authored over 600 articles and Bible studies which are widely distributed. She and her husband, Francis, a retired legislator, each hold honorary doctorates from the University of Montana.

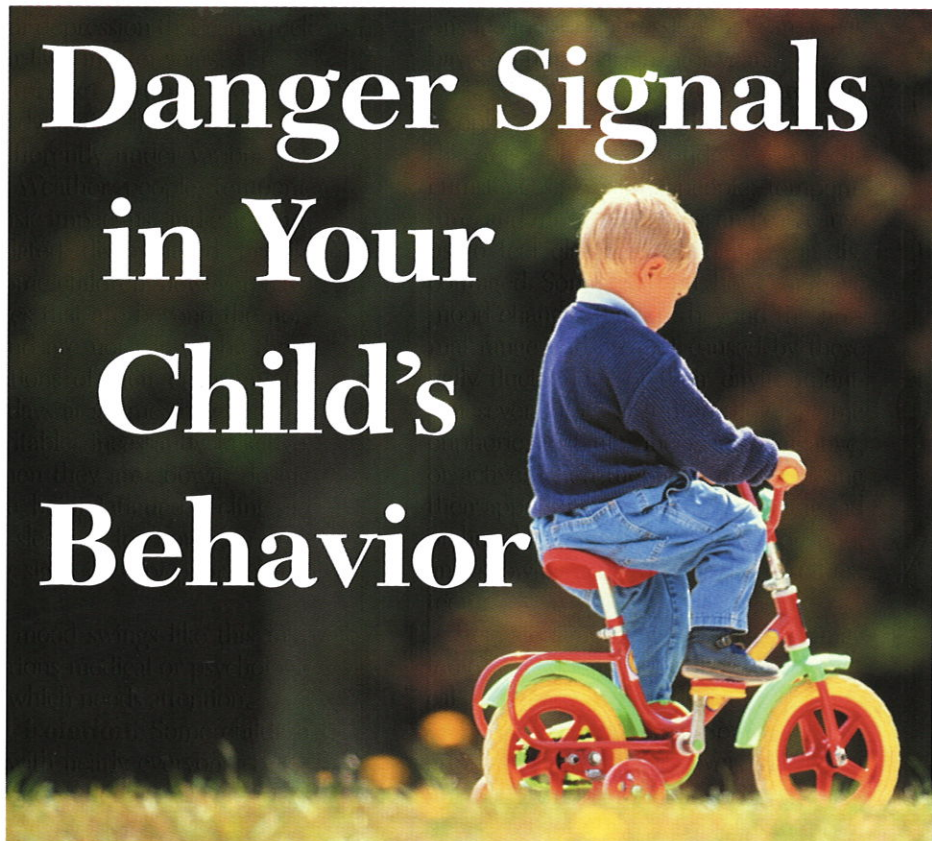
by Venus E. Bardanouve

Lord, I don't want to cry in front of my children and grandchildren. Help me to be brave and show them how a Christian faces death."

This was my friend's prayer when she lost her husband. And she sat dry-eyed through his funeral.

Weeks went by and she was still tearless, but her weight of sorrow grew heavier every day. Finally she called out in desperation, "Lord, give me back my tears." He did, and as the tears flowed, her pent-up burden lightened and her broken heart began to heal. She realized that tears are one of God's gracious gifts to us. The all-knowing and compassionate God, who fully understands us, knew we

Danger Signals in Your Child's Behavior



by Clyde M. Narramore

A few weeks ago I stood in front of a large church watching scores of children heading toward their Sunday School classes. The thought came to me — *I wonder what they will be like 10, 15, 20 years from now. Some of them will be happy, well-adjusted, and living productive lives. Others will be school dropouts, in trouble with the law, or in highly conflicted family and work relationships.*

While we can't predict which child will have a specific problem later in life, we can spot danger signals long before a child's problems develop into adult maladjustments. Once we identify at-risk children, we can take action to prevent these problems from becoming more severe and eliminate potential suffering for many people.

Here are 13 specific behaviors which, if persistent, should raise the concerns of parents and teachers:

1. Gaining satisfaction from destroying property. Most children occasionally break a toy or throw their play things around. But a few children appear to enjoy destroying property or inflicting

damage. They may even punch a cat or dog, or kick the animal. Children showing this kind of repeated negative behavior are telling us they are angry and frustrated. Destructive behavior is their cry for help.

2. Continually demanding attention. Human beings need love and attention; and we all do things to make sure we get it. But some children go beyond the normal search for recognition and acceptance. They repeatedly act in ways that are calculated to gain attention. They cut up in class, act "smart" on the playground, or wear bizarre clothing to purposely evoke reactions from those who see them.

Children who act this way in an annoying fashion are probably saying they don't feel good about themselves. They don't feel sufficiently loved as they are.

3. Unusually serious and unhappy. When we think of childhood, we think of children playing, running around, chattering and giggling. Some children, however, are always serious. They never smile and seem unhappy much of the time. Children who regularly appear to be this solemn and are generally unhappy may be developing seri-

ous feelings of depression that can wreck havoc in their lives in later years.

4. Recurring mood swings. People are dynamic, living organisms that react differently under various circumstances. Weather, people, temperature, and music impact us, and can cause us to feel elated, disappointed, or discouraged. Some children, however, have mood changes that are beyond the normal range and are not caused by these daily fluctuations of their environment. For several days at a time they become euphoric, irritable, incessantly talkative, or active. Then they are "down," losing their appetite, being fatigued, feeling sad or hopeless, sleeping for hours on end, and showing signs of very poor self-esteem.

Repeated mood swings like this may indicate a serious medical or psychological problem which needs attention.

5. Social isolation. Some children are popular with nearly everyone. But a few children never seem to fit in. They don't relate well to their peers and they may even be ridiculed by other children or overtly rejected. These children can begin to feel that the world is against them. They need help so they will feel better about themselves and learn to develop some meaningful friendships with children their age.

6. Frequent lying. Very young children have difficulty distinguishing between the real and the imaginary. They believe in Santa and the tooth fairy, and they create "make believe" stories of their own. Lying is different. It is being knowingly untruthful. Children who lie habitually are saying, "I'm unable to cope with life as it is, so I'm trying to distort the way things are."

7. Taking other people's things. Why would a child steal? There are many reasons. When a child is very young, he does not distinguish between what belongs to him and what belongs to others. Older children who continue to steal may be angry and feeling justified in taking whatever they can. Or they may feel that life is unfair and that it's OK for them to "get even" by stealing.

I once studied a boy who would steal money, then buy candy and various things. Instead of eating or using the objects himself, he would give them to oth-

er children, thereby making temporary “friends.” Although his stealing was a problem, it was not his major difficulty. He needed to feel that he was loved and wanted as he was—not for what he could give to others.

8. Compulsive behavior. One time while in Hawaii I appeared on a phone-in program at a local radio station in Honolulu. One of the callers said, “Dr. Narramore, my mother has a rather strange compulsion. No matter where she is, she’ll stop walking, take a couple of steps backward, and then continue walking forward again. She does this all the time. What’s wrong? What makes her do that?”

I answered her plainly: “Because it makes her feel good for the moment.”

Compulsions are basically magical rituals people perform because of the unconscious belief that the ritual will keep something bad from happening or will atone for some negative thought or deed. Compulsive washing, for example, is a classic reflection of an unconscious belief that one is especially sinful or has committed some terrible deed that must be repeatedly “cleansed.”

If your child performs little rituals or does things seemingly beyond his control, he is telling you that all is not well. He is probably feeling unsure, guilty, pressured, or insecure, and he needs help getting to the root of his hidden emotional dilemma.

9. Extreme fearfulness. In a sense, life has many fearful places. There are hot stoves, electric wires, dangerous ani-

mals, slippery surfaces, harmful people, and a host of other fearful things and situations. Consequently, a reasonable amount of fear in a child’s life is expected. But some children go through life continually afraid. They are panicked by even mildly frightening stories or television programs. And they are extremely afraid to go to a new class, sleep over at a friend’s house, or to be left temporarily alone by their parents.

If a child you know demonstrates a fearful attitude about many things, he is signaling that he needs someone to come alongside him and help him feel more comfortable.

10. Inordinate preoccupation with sex. Sex is a normal part of life, and it is natural for children to think about sex part of the time and to do a little sexual exploring with their friends. But some children are inordinately preoccupied with sexual matters. They repeatedly ask questions about specific sexual details, show an obsession with the bodies of the opposite sex, snicker and joke about sex, or try to get access to sexually explicit magazines or Internet web sites.

11. Poor school performance. In addition to natural differences of intelligence, children have differences in motivation, home environment, and other factors. For example, some specially gifted children perform poorly in school because they are insufficiently challenged. Other children have physiological problems. A common problem among children who are not doing well in school is attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

(ADHD). If a child continually has trouble paying attention, sitting still or concentrating, and if all of a teacher’s or parent’s efforts seem to fail, the child may be suffering from ADHD or a related learning disability.

Other children perform poorly at school because they are emotionally unhappy and preoccupied.

12. Antagonism to spiritual matters. Most children readily accept the fact that there must be a God who created the world and that people have a responsibility to Him. But some children, whether it is due to their environment or some hidden personal reason, are extremely rebellious toward anything spiritual.

When a child is negative toward spiritual matters, you can well suspect that something is lacking at home, church, or in his emotional life. While a lack of interest in spiritual matters isn’t in itself indicative of emotional problems, that lack of interest may well be setting up a prospective adult for serious problems later on in life when he will need solid spiritual grounding in this often perplexing, unstable world.

13. Fighting and accusing. Since children are immature, we should expect some quarreling and fighting. But it is not normal for a child to spend most of his time fighting, accusing others, and acting in negative ways. This type of child has a high level of hostility. His life must be frustrating and he probably believes his hopes and dreams may never materialize

Helping the At-Risk Child

Any one or a combination of these emotional or behavioral signals may indicate that a child is headed for problems. If your child has some of these signals, don’t minimize them. Children don’t “just grow out of” these problems. They usually have to be *helped* out of them!

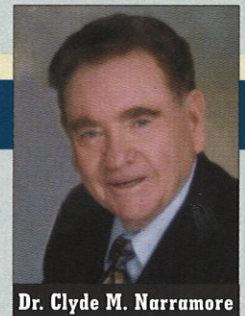
You can *begin by talking over the behavior with your spouse*. Ask yourselves, “What is causing Johnny to act the way he does?” *Then try to be especially attentive to your child and how he or she might be feeling*. Very often parents can, within a couple of weeks, come up with the causes of negative patterns of behavior.

Once you identify the problem, *make the adjustments your family needs to remedy the problem*. It may be more individual or small group time with your child. It may mean overcoming your own tendency toward criticism or worka-

holism or your difficulty in expressing positive emotions toward your child. Or it may mean working out some sibling problems. Read up on the problems your child is showing and take action to help him or her overcome them.

In some instances, you won’t be able to identify the causes or provide solutions without professional help. When that is the case, *don’t hesitate to seek out a qualified professional*. I recommend seeing a Christian professional since he or she can help you address the spiritual as well as the emotional and physical aspects of the problem.

The Narramore Christian Foundation maintains a referral list of Christian psychologists and counselors throughout the United States. Our mailing address is P. O. Box 661900, Arcadia, California 91066-1900. Feel free to phone us about a referral in your area—626/821-8400, or reach us by fax—626/821-8409.



Dr. Clyde M. Narramore

Off to College!

by Clyde M. Narramore

Seventeen years old, bright eyed and bushy tailed! My heart seemed to skip a beat as I walked on the college campus. I had \$300 in my pocket that I had earned from raising and selling calves. I didn't know how far it would go toward college expenses, **but I knew I was on the right road, and I was determined to go as far as I could.**

The second day on campus at Arizona State University I looked up the Dean of Students—my “friend”—Dr. Dean Murdock. He had spoken at my eighth grade commencement and told me, “Young man, that was a good valedictorian address you gave, and I want to do something special for you. When you graduate from high school, remind me of this evening and I will see to it that you get at least a partial scholarship.”

I had not forgotten his promise. When I explained who I was, Dr. Murdock said, “Oh yes, I remember you. I promised you a work scholarship.” So he arranged for that.

I was fortunate to get a campus job working in the library. I came to know lots of students and most of the faculty. I learned much about books, and during quiet intervals, did some reading for my own classes. I felt that going to college was the beginning of a wonderful life. I had left the ranch and I was ready for whatever God had for me.

Unlike many of my classmates, I had a firm faith in God. I had memorized a great deal of Scripture, and felt He was always with me and would guide me. So how could I lose?

One day I was walking across campus when an upper classman stopped me and said, “Say Narramore, can I give you a test?”

Looking surprised I asked, “What kind of test?”

He told me he was taking a course about vocational counseling, and that he needed 25 “guinea pigs” to practice on in order to pass the class.

“What will the results of the test show?” I asked.

“It'll indicate the kind of profession you should go into.”

“Is the test reliable?” I asked.

“Oh yes, it's good, and I'll give you the results,” he said.

Several days later I found time to take the test. Then about a week later I saw him again. “I have the results,”

he said. So we went into a room and began to talk.

“There's something unusual about you,” he said.

In a flash I wondered what that might be. I knew I was good at milking cows. I'd had years of experience and had big hands. But surely that wouldn't show up on the vocational test!

“You made a high score in psychology,” he said.

“Psychology,” I asked. “What's that?”

“That's the study of people and why they act as they do,” he answered. “Or, if you wanted to, you could study rats—there's also rat psychology.”

“No, I'll take people,” I said, “I don't like rats!”

He began to talk rather seriously and suggested I consider a career in psychology. Frankly, I'd never heard much about it, and I'd never met a psychologist. He told me he'd also given the test to two psychology professors and they had both made lower scores than I did.

I tucked what he said in the back of my mind and thought about it once in a while. I rather liked the idea of counseling.


I soon learned in college that you couldn't take every course that was offered, although I tried! I picked up majors in education and music along with a minor in business and several courses in psychology.

One summer I did some house sitting for a faculty family near campus. Their orange trees furnished good fruit. So that, along with 10-cent hamburgers, got me through, and I felt privileged to be able to take several more courses during the summer session.

During my third year in college I was asked to teach a few classes at a nearby elementary school. A regular faculty member had become ill, so they “scraped the barrel” and asked me to take his place. I liked this part-time work and I was able to take my regular courses at the college.

But after a month or so an interesting thing developed. The principal said to me, “Narramore, we need a faculty member to serve as the Dean of Boys. So we'll give you those counseling responsibilities.

That fitted, of course, with my interest in counseling. So God was leading. **I was learning at a young age the practical meaning of Proverbs 3:5,6:** “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.”

And I was enjoying my work as a student and as an “educator!” It was a heap better than milking cows! 



Ruth E. Narramore

To Save A Marriage

by Ruth E. Narramore

The phone rang!

"Hello," I responded.

"Hi, Ruth. This is Don."

"Yes, Don. How are you doing?"

"Not so good. Linda left me!"

"What!" I gasped in surprise. Don and Linda had been married only a couple of years. I had played the organ and Clyde had been the soloist for their wedding. Now their marriage was in big trouble.

"Ruth," said Don, "Linda likes you and respects you. I want you to call her and tell her to come home!"

Just like that! I thought.

"Don," I said, "What's happened? What's the problem?"

He then began to tell me a list of petty differences and ended up by saying, "I told her she needs to shape up but she got mad and walked out. Will you call her? Tell her to come home!"

Wow! I thought. *I feel like I'm caught in the middle. After all, they are BOTH my friends.*

"I'll call her," I told him. "But don't expect a miracle. You've been having problems for quite some time. What you and Linda need is to see a professional Christian counselor or psychologist. I can recommend someone if—"

"Aw, she wouldn't go!" Don broke in. "No way would she go to see a counselor. Look, I don't know where Linda's living right now, but let me give you her work number."

We had been talking for about an hour. When I hung up the phone, I prayed for Don and for Linda. I also prayed for myself that I would have wisdom. Then I called Linda.

"Hello, Linda," I said. "This is

Ruth. Don called me this morning and said that you and he were having problems."

I could feel the ice. She was about to freeze me out, and I can't say that I blamed her. There was stone-cold silence.

Then I spoke. "Linda," I said, "I've heard Don's side of the story. Now I'd like to hear yours. Can we get together for lunch some day soon?"

The ice began to melt. "Sure," she said, "how about tomorrow?"

“ *Interestingly, what she had to say was so different from what Don had told me that at times I wondered if they were talking about the same things. Disagreements are often like that.*

When I met with Linda the next day she was glad to tell me "her side of the story."

Interestingly, what she had to say was so different from what Don had told me that at times I wondered if they were talking about the same things. Disagreements are often like that.

"Linda," I said, "your marriage is in a tangled mess. You and Don need professional help. You need to work through your problems with a qualified Christian psychologist."

"Oh," Linda groaned, "he would never go. No way would Don consent to get help."

These conversations with Don and Linda were the beginning of many lengthy telephone calls. One day I

confronted both of them: "What goes with you two? Each of you tells me that the other will refuse to have professional counseling?"

I guess what I said gave them a little jolt because not long after, Linda phoned with the good news — they had agreed to see the psychologist I had recommended.

"Shall I go home now?" she asked.

My answer surprised myself. I never thought I would ever say what I did, but after working with both of them

on the phone for so many hours, I had a broader perspective than I had before. So when Linda asked, "Shall I go home now?" I said, "No. You haven't resolved a thing! You go home now and you'll be fighting again tomorrow morning. You need to work through your problems with the counselor first. Then you'll be ready to go home."

Several weeks later I saw Don and Linda together. They were beaming. "I'm going home tomorrow," Linda said.

"Good! I'm so glad." I gave them both a hug.

That was 20 years ago. Don and Linda are still together — and happy!

Do you have friends who are having marital problems? Don't be afraid to encourage them to seek professional help from a godly counselor or psychologist. You may be the catalyst that will save their marriage and help them fulfill those sacred vows made before God: "Till death do us part."

The names of this couple have been changed to protect their identities.



Standing up to an emotional abuser

by Bruce Narramore

“What advice would you give a Christian woman whose non-Christian husband is emotionally abusive and refuses to seek counseling? They have two sons who dislike their father because of his anger and have begun to express their desire to her that he not be home. He operates apart from the family (goes on vacations alone) and often leaves without saying he is going. But when the father wants to do something with the family, he expects them to drop what they are doing to comply. He bribes the boys with promises to do things, but does not come through. He recently came into the church and screamed at the eldest—using swear words—in front of the youth group, humiliating his son. He does cruel things to frustrate his wife and children. Before becoming a Christian, she would confront him. Now she is trying to be loving and non-confrontational, but she is bordering on major depression.”

First, as a Christian she obviously wants to do the biblical thing. In I Corinthians 7:13-14, the Bible says, “If a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him.” The first principle is that God wants this marriage to work.

Second, trying to be loving and non-confrontational sounds like this is where her part of the problem lies. Equating being non-confrontative with being loving isn't biblically or psychologically sound. The Bible says that we should “confront the unruly” (I Thessalonians 5:14). It also tells us to “speak the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15). And it never tells us to let a wife and children become victims of abuse. The loving thing to do here is for the wife to speak up and not let this kind of abuse continue. To remain silent does not help her, the children, or her husband. He needs to know that he cannot get away with disrespectful treatment of his family without consequences.

It is good to want to do the loving thing, but remaining silent and letting abuse continue is not loving. She needs help to learn to lovingly but firmly confront her husband and set limits on his destructive behavior. When she does, he will either respond positively and be willing to face and get help for his problem, or become so angry he will leave or become even more abusive—which would make it clear that this marriage will not work.

Your friend's failure to stand up to her husband is prob-

ably one reason for her depression. At some level she knows the only way out of this is to become more healthily assertive, and she is probably afraid that if she does, her husband will either become more abusive, or leave her. Many women who allow husbands to abuse them are frankly more afraid of being abandoned and alone than they are of being abused. So they choose to remain silent rather than standing up against the abuse.

Another aspect of her depression is probably a lot of repressed anger at her husband. Wives that passively allow their husbands to act abusively toward them generally have a lot of repressed rage. But since they are afraid to express it for fear of making things worse or being attacked or abandoned, they stuff it down into their psychic basement where it comes back to haunt them in the form of sadness, self-hatred, and depression. The only solution is to face the anger and to address the abuse.

To help her learn to face her anger and to lovingly but firmly stand up to her husband, your friend will probably need a good Christian therapist who specializes in marriage and family therapy. If one is not available, perhaps you or other Christian friends can help her see how she can untangle her view that she can't be loving and confrontive at the same time. Then you can help her see how she can set boundaries in her marriage.

There is also a helpful new book by Christian psychologists, Drs. Henry Cloud and John Townsend, entitled *Boundaries in Marriage*. I highly recommend this book to you and to your friend



Bruce Narramore, Ph.D.

Your Questions Answered

If you have a question for Dr. Narramore, please address it to:

Ask the Counselor

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Compiled by
Eva Hallam Solberg

The Mozart Effect

According to the latest buzz, Mozart's music is a panacea, a kind of brain food that actually adds points to the listeners' IQ and improves their health. But does it?

Some 20 studies have been analyzed by a professor from Harvard who says that listening to Mozart has little or no effect on abstract reasoning and only a small effect on "spatial temporal" tasks. Music education which requires good teaching, access to instruments, interested parents, money, and so forth may make children smarter. But that is different from just giving their mothers a CD, he says.

"Listen to music, play music, compose music because you enjoy it or you want to learn something about music, not because you think it will make you smarter."

And don't believe everything that is reported in the press!

by UC Berkeley Wellness Letter

Relieving Trauma Blocks PTSD

Confronting a traumatic experience immediately after it occurs may decrease the risk of developing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

First identified as "shell shock" in World War I, and brought to prominent attention in veterans of the Vietnam War, PTSD has since been recognized in the larger population. The term is used to describe a broad pattern of emotional and behavioral symptoms that arise as a result of direct exposure to or participation in intensely frightening, often violent events or circumstances. Psychic trauma occurs when people are involved in horrible external events over which they have no control and which render them temporarily helpless.

PTSD is diagnosed only after symptoms (such as disturbing dreams and flashbacks of the traumatic event) have persisted for more than a month. But the full-blown disorder is often preceded by the inability to recall aspects of the episode.

Among 55 people who showed preliminary signs of PTSD within two weeks of experiencing a traumatic event, researchers compared the effects of supportive counseling to cognitive behavior therapy (which entailed asking patients to repeatedly envision their experience). While 67 percent of those who received supportive counseling developed PTSD, only 19 percent of those who were asked to relive the incident developed the disorder.

by Health News and Johns Hopkins Family Health Book

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

People who suffer from obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) get caught up in uncontrollable rituals and rumination. Many times the rituals begin as a way of imposing order on intense internal feelings of chaos. These repetitive thoughts and actions constitute a disorder when

they become a source of anxiety and distress and when they interfere dramatically with normal functioning. Although individuals with OCD may recognize that their thoughts, impulses, and urges make no sense, and resist them, they nevertheless feel they have no control over them.

The most common obsessions involve repeated thoughts about contamination and germs (e.g. worries that shaking hands will cause disease); constant doubts (e.g. anxiety that the gas stove wasn't turned off); order (e.g. distress when papers are not stacked just so); aggression (e.g. fear that one will inflict pain on a child); or sex (e.g. a recurrent pornographic image).

OCD seldom disappears on its own. In the majority of cases, professional treatment is necessary to alleviate the symptoms, address the anxiety or depression underlying the behavior, and minimize the disruption it causes in a person's social, intimate, and occupational life.

The prognosis is fairly good. However, because OCD can be a chronic condition, treatment may be necessary for years.

by Health News and Johns Hopkins Family Health Book



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**"I've been keeping my hostility bottled up for years.
Do you know anyone who'd like to buy
19,000 bottles of hostility?"**

Helping Hurting People

We thank God you are there with helping hands for hurting people.

C.H., Pennsylvania

Worth Understanding

I've been blessed by supporting your ministry for 40 years or more. Your plaque, "Every Person Is Worth Understanding" has been on my freezer for many years.

N.P., Kansas

Into the Laundromat

We usually take *Psychology For Living* into our laundromat where many people come, young and old. We know one of the articles may meet the special need of an individual.

M/M.D. W. P., Ithaca, New York

Appreciation

We really appreciate your web site and also ACTS website with Daily Encounter and Weekend Encounter. May God bless you.

E.D., Chambersburg, Pennsylvania

Foundation for Marriage

I have read many articles in your magazine that have gone a long way to plan a foundation for the marriage my wife and I are enjoying today. *Psychology For Living* has improved my relationship with God as well as with society, and many have benefited from it. You are of much spiritual importance in our lives and I want to thank you and remind you that God is aware of what you are doing for His children. One day the rewards shall be known.

M.E.D., Cameroon, Africa

Just Had to Write

I had to write and congratulate you on your new magazine, and its magnificent beauty. The articles were so pertinent. "I Thought God Would Heal Me" was my experience precisely! I will use "The Gift of Feelings," and "Life Without Legs" in my ministry at

a retirement center.

But the best part of this issue were Dr. Clyde's "Exploding On My Consonants" and Ruth's column. Her articles often bring forth praises to God from my lips. The lessons from Dr. Clyde's article will be a definite reminder to me as I preach every week, to project with feeling. And the congregation will have you to thank for it!

F.W., California

Transport for Christ

The most recent mailing (the one about truckers) was one of the best you've ever produced! We want to let you know that we feel it was tremendous! Please convey our sincere appreciation for a job ever so well done. This letter made a HUGE hit with my wife and me.

K.M., Pennsylvania

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