

PSYCHOLOGY FOR
Living

SPRING 2002

Special MK
Pullout

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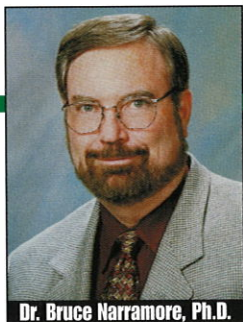
Schizophrenia

PLUS: DARE TO BE HONEST and A CHILD LIKE ME

New Life From Suffering

by Bruce Narramore

This past fall, while teaching in the new doctoral program in Christian Counseling in Manila, I had the privilege of visiting the island of Corregidor. Located just outside the Bay of Manila, this tiny island (only one and a half mile wide by three miles long) was the site of critical strategic battles during World War Two. The Japanese first conquered the American and Filipino troops in fierce fighting. Then the Allied forces recaptured the island after suffering major loss of lives. General Douglas MacArthur was headquartered on Corregidor, and it was there that he uttered his famous line, "I shall return."



Dr. Bruce Narramore, Ph.D.

“

God wants to work through the pain, suffering, or devastation that every family faces to bring new life.”


The wartime bombing on Corregidor was so intense that it is estimated that an average of one bomb fell on every few square yards of the entire island! Thousands and thousands of bombs completely devastated that formerly lush-green tropical landscape. Wartime photos show it looking like a barren wasteland. But today, the island is beautiful and green again. Decades of nourishing rain have restored its natural beauty.

As I reflected on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ this Easter season, my thoughts went back to my

time at Corregidor and then to the seasons each of us faces in life. Out of the most unjust trial and death sentences in history, God created the most wonderful gift for us all — the possibility of eternal life with Him.

In similar ways, God wants to work through the pain, suffering, or devastation that every family faces to bring new life. It is that God-inspired desire that motivates our staff to produce each issue of *Psychology for Living* and to carry out the ministries of the Narramore Christian Foundation around the world. We want to bring hope and new life out of pain and struggle. We want to help those who feel hopeless, and we want to be a part of Christ's ministry to "bind up the bruised and broken-hearted."

This issue of *Living* contains articles ranging from the severe mental disorder of schizophrenia through articles on marriage, honesty, and improving a teenager's self esteem, to an article by our founder, Dr. Clyde Narramore, on the positive results of learning to abide in our relationship with Christ.

I trust you will enjoy and find these articles as helpful as we have while putting this issue of the magazine together. And may we all share freely in the wonderful treasures of the resurrected Christ! 

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Schizophrenia

by Kimberly Gaines Eckert, M.A.

James, a thirty-two-year-old man with disheveled brown hair, sits in his therapist's office with his eyes fixed on a small point between his worn-looking moccasin shoes.

"What happened, James?" the therapist asks. "You're usually on time."

James finally lifts his eyes from the floor to gaze at the ceiling. "It was a bad day."

"A bad day?"

"I was laughing – at work. I had to leave. They would have thought I was crazy." James speaks in a flat, monotone voice. Even while talking to his therapist, he keeps his eyes averted.

After another pause James adds, "They told me not to come. They said I should never have come here in the first place – to you or Dr. Johnson."

"They" are voices that James began hearing in his head in his mid twenties. James believes these voices tell him important things that other people do not know. He thinks he is able to see into the future and have special and important knowledge. Sometimes, the voices terrify him. A few years ago, James found himself cutting his wrists in obedience to them. He said he did not want to hurt himself, but he felt unable to disobey their command.

Imagine the World of James

Imagine for a moment that you are James. You hear voices that no one else hears. At times they are so loud you feel powerless and completely under their control. When someone speaks to you, you are unsure if they spoke out loud ►

or if it was in your head. You have problems concentrating. You feel little control over your body. You find yourself laughing hysterically at work and in other places, but you don't know why. You read meaning into everyday objects and activities that others don't. You have a therapy appointment that your doctor told you is essential if you want to stay out of the hospital, but you find yourself miles away from the clinic. You have been in and out of the hospital about twice a year for the past 10 years. You are confused and terrified, and you don't know what to do. You are suffering from the debilitating and chronic mental disorder known as schizophrenia.

What is Schizophrenia?

Taken literally, schizophrenia means "split mind." This "split" can be understood as a split from reality, as well as a split within the mind. Schizophrenics unconsciously disown (split off) portions of their thoughts and feelings and imagine that they are located in someone else's mind or some place else. The voices James hears, for example, seem to him to be coming from outside himself, but, of course, they actually originate within his mind. Because James "splits off" or disowns these thoughts and attrib-



utes them to an external voice, they no longer feel like parts of himself. He is "split" or separated from big portions of his internal mental world. At the same time, when James imagines that some of his thoughts are coming from the outside world, he separates himself from external reality because he imagines things that don't exist.

Individuals suffering from schizophrenia have disturbances in one or

more (and usually several) of the following areas: The ability to...

- Perceive and interpret reality accurately.
- Keep unconscious and unwanted thoughts and feelings from intruding into their conscious lives.
- Reason logically.
- Know the difference between their experiences and thoughts and the experiences and thoughts of others.
- Relate to others.
- Organize their thoughts, feelings, perceptions, relationships, and intellectual abilities into a solid, cohesive, well-functioning self.

In short, people suffering from schizophrenia tend to be severely emotionally, intellectually, socially, and spiritually disorganized. The most prominent psychotic symptoms are hallucinations and delusions.

Hallucinations are erroneous sensory perceptions. They can occur in any of the five senses, but auditory hallucinations are the most common. The type of hallucination James experiences — hearing voices — is the most typical auditory hallucination.

Delusions are erroneous beliefs that are a severe distortion of reality. These beliefs are strongly held, yet false. About one-third of individuals with schizophrenia experience paranoid symptoms such as persecutory delusions. They believe they are being followed, tormented, tricked, and so on. Delusions may be seriously bizarre (i.e., aliens have taken over the President's body) or almost believable (i.e., coworkers are plotting against me behind my back and taping my phone conversations).

Prevalence and Course

It is estimated that about one in a hundred people will be diagnosed with schizophrenia in their lifetime. Men typically show the first clear signs of schizophrenia in their early to mid-twenties. The onset for women

is more likely to be in the late twenties. About half of those diagnosed with schizophrenia in their twenties will experience some disability throughout their lives. Another 25 percent will require lifelong care due to the dramatic impact of schizophrenia on their daily lives. After an individual diagnosed with schizophrenia is released from the hospital for the first time, there is a 50 percent chance that he or she will be rehospitalized within two years. While complete remission of schizophrenia is uncommon, most people with schizophrenia become more stable after five to ten years. Some, although clearly the minority, return to a very normal level of functioning.

Causes

Both biology and the environment appear to play a part in the development of schizophrenia.

Studies of families and adopted children provide strong support for a genetic component of schizophrenia. Researchers have discovered that if one genetically identical twin has schizophrenia, the other twin has a 40-50 percent chance of developing schizophrenia. But if the twins are not genetically identical, they have only a ten percent chance of developing the disorder, just like any other nuclear family member.

Studies of the human brain have shown some differences in the brain structure of those with schizophrenia in comparison to the general population. Researchers have also focused on an imbalance or excess of certain chemicals (called neurotransmitters) in the brain of the schizophrenic individual. One neurotransmitter, dopamine, has been especially implicated in schizophrenia.

The causes of schizophrenia, however, are not solely biological or genetic. Studies of twins also demonstrate the environmental impact on its origin. Not all genetically identical twins, for example, develop schizophrenia if their twin sibling suffers from schizophrenia. Since their genetic makeup is completely identi-

cal, if schizophrenia was 100 percent genetic, both twins would develop schizophrenia. Problems in early mother-infant bonding, strong parental intrusiveness, chaos and confusion, or mixed emotional messages all appear to play a role in the development of schizophrenia in some individuals.

Sin and Schizophrenia

Perhaps you have heard people suggest that schizophrenia is simply a consequence of personal sin. For example, "If the individual and his or her family would repent of the sin in their lives, he would be healed of the schizophrenia." Or perhaps you have heard it suggested that schizophrenia is not even a mental disorder; rather, it is demon possession. But this is not true. Responding to schizophrenia in one of these ways only adds to the stigma and misunderstanding that schizophrenia already has in our culture.

Since we live in the brokenness of our sin-cursed world, people develop all sorts of problems, including problems with brain chemistry, family dynamics, and psychological functioning. Schizophrenia is a very powerful example of the fallen nature of mankind.

Treatment

Because it impacts so many areas of functioning, schizophrenia requires intense and multi-faceted treatment.

Antipsychotic medication has been used to treat schizophrenia since the 1950s, and that is still the best treatment available. For the majority of people suffering from schizophrenia, antipsychotics can decrease the presence of delusions, hallucinations and confusion. In fact, antipsychotic treatment can reduce relapse by more than 50 percent.

Unfortunately, antipsychotic medications are not a miracle cure for schizophrenia. They do not necessarily prevent any and all future psychotic episodes. Furthermore, in certain individuals they are ineffective in reducing or eliminating the psychotic symptoms, and in others, they have

significant side effects.

Psychotherapy and other counseling treatments also play a vital role in the treatment of schizophrenia. Since many individuals with schizophrenia are unable to accept that their perception of reality and the world is not the real world, they do not believe they are sick. Consequently, the first task of psychotherapy and psychosocial treatment of schizophrenia is usually establishing and adhering to a treatment plan designed with the medical doctor.

Because the impact of schizophrenia is so pervasive, treatment often needs to help people improve their ability to care for themselves in such basics as general hygiene, sleeping, and eating patterns.

Relapse prevention is another central task of psychosocial treatment. Therapists work with patients and their families on recognizing early signs of relapse. Then they can help individuals and their families design a course of action as soon as symptoms begin to reappear.

In recent years, a few psychotherapists have begun to conduct long-term in-depth psychotherapy with schizophrenics, sometimes with excellent results. This form of therapy is designed to help schizophrenic patients understand how and why they distort reality and to help them learn to deal with their deep emotional and relational pain without retreating from reality or distorting their thinking. This is a long and difficult form of therapy, but in combination with medication, it appears to hold out the best hope for significant growth toward psychological help since it aims to go beyond symptom removal and minimal social adjustment.


In addition to psychotherapy, many individuals with schizophrenia can profit from rehabilitation programs which provide job training or supervised job-placement programs. Support groups, self-help groups, and family education groups are other possible sources of reinforcement for schizophrenic patients and their families. Residential programs

or group treatment homes can provide consistent support for individuals with schizophrenia who are unable to function without this additional structure.

A Special Word to Family Members

If you have a family member with schizophrenia, you have probably experienced overwhelming feelings of frustration and helplessness. Watching someone you love suffer from a debilitating illness can be extremely painful. You may wonder if you did something wrong to cause this disorder. You may be financially supporting your child or providing his or her housing. You may be constantly wondering whether you're doing too much or too little, whether you are overly involved or under involved in your adult child's life.

You are not alone! Millions of Americans are struggling just like you to cope with the pain of a family member's chronic and pervasive illness. The questions, fears, doubts, and concerns you have can be understood by another family member of a person with schizophrenia. In fact, relapse rates are reduced for patients whose families are getting support from other families with the same problems. You can help your family member by getting support and help for yourself. The National Alliance for the Mentally Ill has wonderful family education and support groups.

In addition to finding support and encouragement from other families dealing with the long-term effects of schizophrenia, it is essential to look to the ultimate Comforter and Healer for strength and peace. God does not provide quick and easy answers for schizophrenia. But He does reassure us that He is loving and sovereign. He also promises perfect healing in eternity and grace for each new day on earth. When you are providing daily care for your schizophrenic child or sibling, it is essential to have both an eternal perspective of ultimate healing and an immediate promise of God's strength for the day. 

“I DO”?

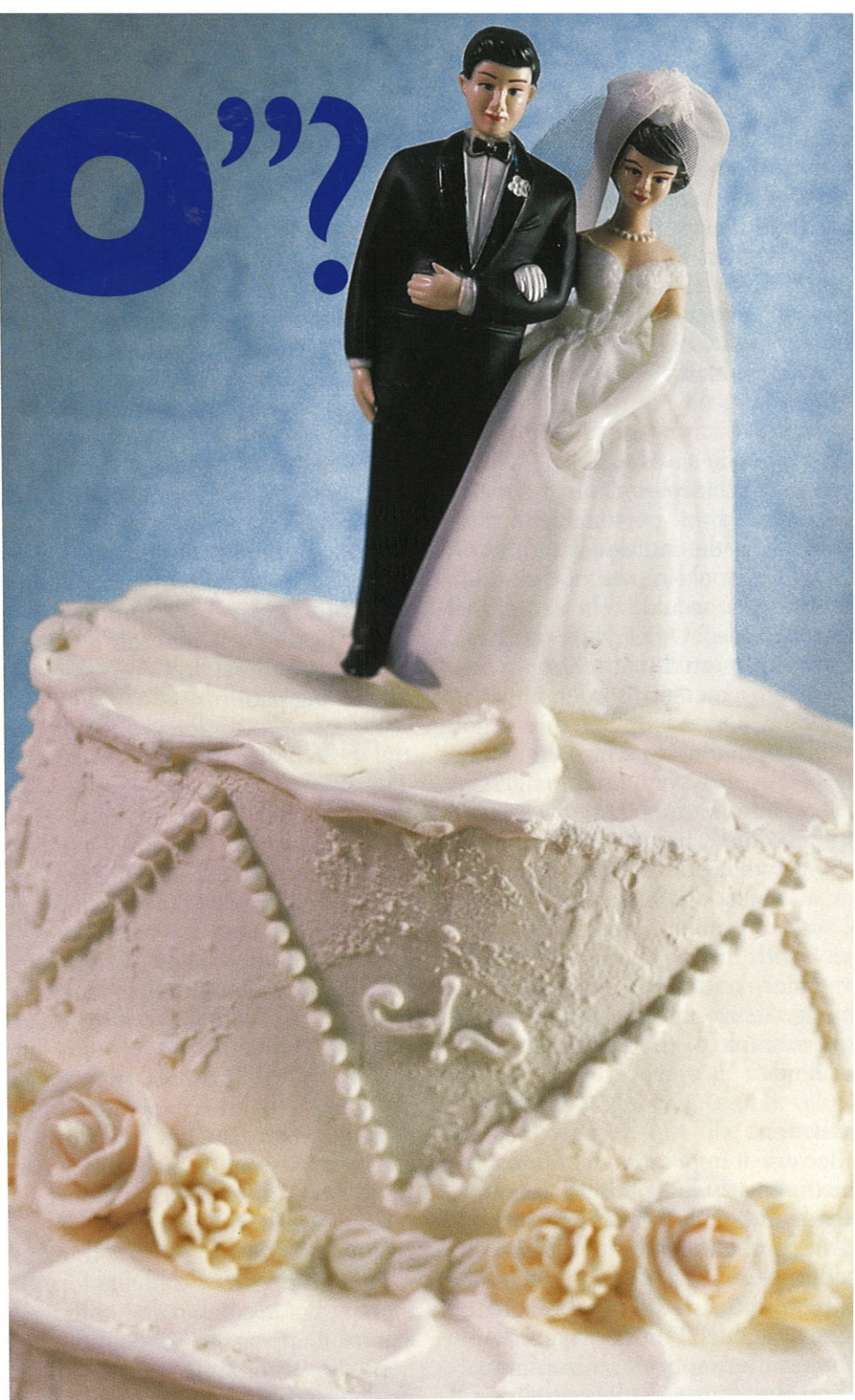
by Ruth Chang

Early this year I was invited to design and lead a marriage enrichment weekend for couples where one or both spouses have disabilities. The experience that weekend stirred up many thoughts and made me look at my own marriage, as well as those of couples that I have known. Being with couples who have to cope with severe disabilities ranging from difficulties with movement due to Parkinson's disease to quadriplegia, made me look again at the true meaning of commitment and the significance of the vows most of us say on our wedding day. The vows go something like this:

I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wedded husband/wife, to have and to hold from this day forward; for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until death us do part.

Are these vows outdated? The answer is a resounding “No!” When couples decide to get married most intend to keep and live these vows. However, many fail. Where do things go wrong? I caught a glimpse of the reasons as I observed the couples on that weekend retreat.

There were two different groups of couples. One was composed of those who did not have any disabilities the day they got married, but through the years one spouse became disabled. Another group were couples who got married



post-injury. In other words, they chose each other fully aware of the disabilities and knowing that complications would be involved. Most of the couples we met were happy and fulfilled, but some were really struggling. What made the difference? According to previous research, post-injury couples who married after one party was dis-

abled should be more stable and have more fulfilling marriages while pre-injury couples would have more struggles and less stability. In our group, however, this was not necessarily so. I found struggling couples had less social support. Beyond that, the way people adjusted was related to the degree of commitment to the Lon-



and each other, as well as their dedication to creating a marriage that had a strong sense of “we-ness.”

In the past two years I have read several books that emphasized commitment and what it means in marriage. The retreat made what I read come to life. It reminded me once again that if I want a great marriage, I need to be proactive in making it happen. Experiencing a good marriage depends to a very large degree on my commitment to make it the best that it can be.

What is commitment? What characterizes couples that have deep commitment to each other?

Let me tell you the story of two couples. (To protect their privacy, the names and details of their stories have been changed.) The first couple is Steve and Linda. Linda is wheelchair-bound and does not have use of either of her legs. Steve fell in love with Linda and married her, knowing full well that she had this disability. They have been married for 15 years and have two children. Linda sadly shared that after the birth of their second child, Steve stopped showing any interest in her romantically. She could sense that she was a burden to him. They were both Christians, and he was committed to provide for her financially and take care of her daily needs. However, this relationship lacked joy and spark. He withdrew from her and refused to deepen their relationship. He made it clear to her that he was staying with her out of obligation and pity, not out of love. Linda, on the other hand,

struggled and felt overwhelmed by the sense of guilt she felt that she was a hindrance to her husband’s joy and fulfillment. She felt totally helpless to change the situation.

The second couple we shall call Ben and Debbie. They met in college and married after graduation. Life seemed to be going well for them until Debbie became a quadriplegic due to a serious accident. At first it was difficult for Ben to accept Debbie after the accident. He was tempted several times to run away. In the meantime, due to the accident and with the care and concern of some church people, both of them met the Lord. After Ben committed his life to Christ, he decided that he would make every effort to continue to love his wife and care for and be there for her. Debbie, on the other hand, decided that she too, with her limited functioning, would try her best to deepen her relationship with her husband. After three years of her disability, they were hit with another crisis. Debbie experienced some complications related to her injury and became severely depressed. The bubbly woman who used to make him laugh and give him surprises, even after her injury, was now totally thrown into such a state of deep darkness that she did not know how to cope. Ben felt extremely helpless.

How could they survive this second crisis? They had deep commitment. Upon Ben’s encouragement and urging, they decided that they needed counseling. He told her he would stick by her side and see her

through. After six months of counseling, combined with love and support from Ben, Debbie recovered from her depression and became her lively self again. Ben and Debbie came out stronger on the other side.

What was the difference between these two couples? According to Dr. Scott Stanley, commitment comes in two forms — constraint and dedication. The difference between the two couples is that the first couple had constraint commitment but little or no dedication commitment. They may never divorce, but their relationship is lifeless. The second couple had both constraint and dedication commitment. In a more descriptive language, Dr. Stanley calls constraint without dedication as the feeling of being stuck, while constraint with dedication is a positive feeling of sticking and/or stickiness.

Constraint commitment takes into consideration moral and legal issues, counting the cost, and finding the alternative less appealing. For example, the financial cost of divorce and separation, children, and social and religious reasons play important roles in the decision to stay together. Dedication commitment has the added element of “I am going to make this relationship the best that it can be.” Steve and Linda, particularly Steve, felt stuck. Ben and Debbie felt positively glued together. Dedicated couples who enjoy a fulfilled marriage relationship increase their constraint commitment as their ►

relationship deepens. This gives added security to the relationship rather than imprisonment. However, couples who are only held together by constraint commitment feel trapped or imprisoned in their relationship.

Characteristics of Couples with High Dedication Commitment

Four factors characterize couples who have high dedication commitment:

We-ness. Couples believe that what is good for the marriage is more important than individual desires and needs. When one person is suffering, both face the suffering together and support each other. Selfishness is put under check for the sake of the marriage. What pleases the partner and strengthens the marriage becomes the motivation for what one does.

Growth. Couples with dedication commitment put priority on improving their relationship and continuing to grow. In a recent marriage retreat I met a couple who struggled in their relationship due to infidelity on the husband's part. She had a difficult time trusting her husband again. After attending the retreat and spending some time talking to my husband and me, the husband realized that it would take a lot of time to regain his wife's trust. However, he was committed to doing that. We encouraged the wife to take the risk to trust him again. Both of them promised to work on restoring their marriage. A few months later, the wife called to say that her husband had made real effort to show her that their mar-

riage is very important to him. He is in an accountability relationship with a pastor and is making good on his promise to put his wife and child as his most important earthly relationships. On the wife's side, she is able to slowly let go of her anger and bitterness and trust him once again. That is dedication commitment.



Long-term view. Couples with strong dedication commitment think long term. They realize that the road to improving and strengthening their relationship will have some bumps and difficulties. This long-term view helps them to not get discouraged by normal dips in their relationship. Stanley and his colleagues use the stock market as an illustration of this long-term view. There will be rises and falls in the market, but if one is investing for the long term, he knows that

eventually, the future will be better than today.

Dreaming dreams together. Dedicated couples openly share each other's dreams and move toward creating a mutual dream from their individual dreams. I know of a couple who, from sharing each other's wishes and dreams for the future, have come up with a common goal of serving together in relief agencies after their children are grown. They have something to look forward to together.

In conclusion, marriage needs both constraint and dedication commitment to survive and flourish. Constraint alone will not make a happy and fulfilling relationship. It requires dedication commitment to make a marriage the kind that one really wants to experience. If husband and wife decide to make the best of their relationship and work hard to strengthen it, they can experience what it means to truly be married. Then they can honestly say they mean every word of their wedding vows.

How about you? When you said, "I do," did you really mean it? If you did, then show it through your dedication.

Resources: Stanley Scott, *The Heart of Commitment*. Nashville: Nelson Publishers, 1998. Stanley Scott; Trathern, Daniel; McCai Savanna; Bryan, Milt. *A Lasting Promise*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998.

Ruth Chang, Psy.D. lives in Timonium, Maryland, and works for Ambassadors to Christ, a missions organization that reaches out to Chinese students, scholars, and young professionals. She is married and has two teenage children.



The Lost Art of Abiding

by Dr. Clyde M. Narramore

Some words seem almost out of place in today's society. The word *abide* is one of them. There's a gentle, restful, even soothing quality to that word.

Abide – to continue in a permanent state. In a society of crowded freeways, World Trade Center terrorism, Enron crashes, “red-eye expresses,” and job transfers, does anyone take the time to abide? An American who lives and dies in the same place where he was born is considered a curiosity. In fact, the concept of abiding is foreign to our twenty-first-century way of life.

But for Christians, to “abide” connotes something very important. Even though our world is in a constant state of flux, we can abide. In the middle of a restless, turbulent, “throw-away” culture, we can live with a sense of permanence and peace.

There are no “Ten Steps to Abiding in the Lord.” That would be like asking, “How do I abide in America?” There is nothing that we as good American citizens must do in order to stay in this country. Simply remain in the U.S.A. and you'll continue to abide in America.

So it is with the Lord. To abide involves being where

God wants us to be, and staying there. Then we will remain unmoved in the center of His will, no matter what the cost.

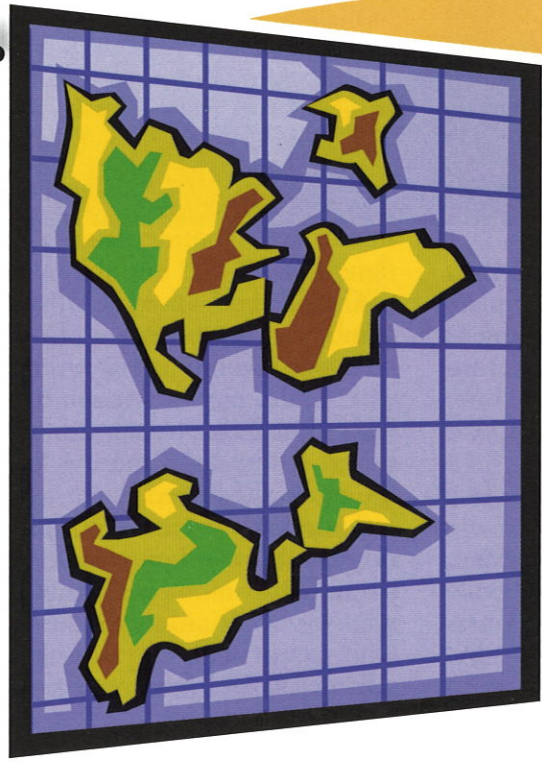
Even in the middle of turmoil, Christians have a special place of protection and safety. It isn't a fortress or a remote island. It's a relationship: “He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty” (Psalm 91:1 NASB). There is security in the shelter of the Most High – whether we're in another country, or in our own backyard. And we have peace in our hearts because God's Holy Spirit dwells within us!

As Christians who love God and truly want to please Him, we are desirous of bearing fruit. And the way to increase the fruitfulness or effectiveness of our lives is to abide in a close relationship with Christ. Jesus tells us: “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me (John 15:4, 5 NASB).

Do we become impatient to see the results of our abiding? Let's remember that no tree produces ripened fruit overnight. Yet, just being where God means us to be – branches abiding in the vine – gives us the realization that fulfillment and joy are by-products of our abiding.

Abiding, continued on page 20 ►

MKS reentry



2002

Who Can Attend?

This seminar is for MKs who have just completed high school and are returning to the United States and Canada to prepare for college. The reentry program will help equip and prepare you for this next strategic phase of your life.



Join other missionary kids (MKs) for an enriching, informative, fun-filled, 12-day reentry program



A Dynamic and Practical Seminar for the Sons and Daughters of Missionaries



Counseling

Christian counselors with a heart for missions and a love for young adults will encourage and guide you in addressing any

Who+?

wish to explore.

Challenge

Daily chapel, evening dorm meetings, and informal chats with staff and fellow MKs will challenge you to trust God more fully and give new insights into living the Christian life in North America.

What MKs Have Said!

✓ "It is the most awesome experience you'll ever have! You learn how to relate to others, understand yourself, and look forward to the future." —MK from Ecuador

✓ "This is something you will never regret. You will come away with a sense of encouragement and hope regarding living in the U.S." —MK from Mongolia

Cost & Scholarships

The only fee is a \$150 non-refundable registration fee. The remainder of the seminar expenses for each participant is covered in the form of a \$900 scholarship provided by the Narramore Christian Foundation.

Dates

July 8-19, 2002 and July 22-August 2, 2002

Registration

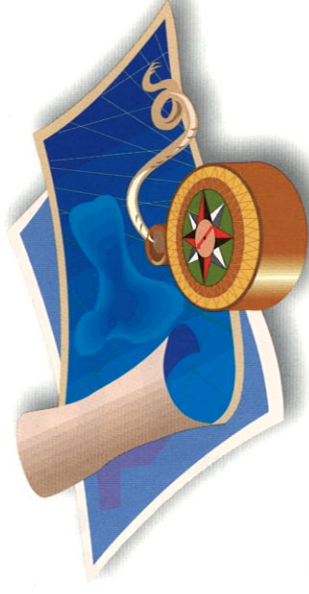
Register early. Space is limited to 35 MKs per seminar.

For registration or additional information contact:

Barnabas International
P.O. Box 11211
Rockford, IL 61126
Telephone: 815-395-1335
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Email: mkreentry@barnabas.org
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Co-sponsored by the
Narramore Christian
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and Barnabas International

The MK Keentry seminar is a creative, cross-cultural, social, emotional, and spiritual program designed specifically for MKs by the staff of Barnabas International, MU KAPPA, and the Narramore Christian Foundation.

Where?

Each seminar is held in sunny Southern California. You will live in the modern air-conditioned Thompson Hall on the campus of Biola University. Here you will have access to the campus dining room, bookstore, swimming pool, soccer field, tennis courts and sand volleyball.

When?

Twelve-day reentry seminars are held during the summer.

Orientation

Discuss any question you wish about adapting to life in the U.S. and Canada. Typical topics of discussion include:

- ✓ American culture—the good, the bad.
- ✓ Transitions from overseas to the U.S. and Canada.
- ✓ Developing a Biblical worldview.
- ✓ Friendships and dating.
- ✓ American culture and finances.
- ✓ College life and choosing a church.

Assessment

Take a look at your interests, strengths and areas growth:

- ✓ Vocational tests will help clarify your choice of college major and potential career path.
- ✓ Personality tests will help you look at your distinctive style and see how that impacts your adjustment and relationships with others.

Recreation

While mornings and some afternoons are spent in the classroom, there is also time to enjoy sports, recreational group activities, table games, relaxing around the pool or just hanging out with other MKs. You will also be able to enjoy several off-campus outings.



A Child

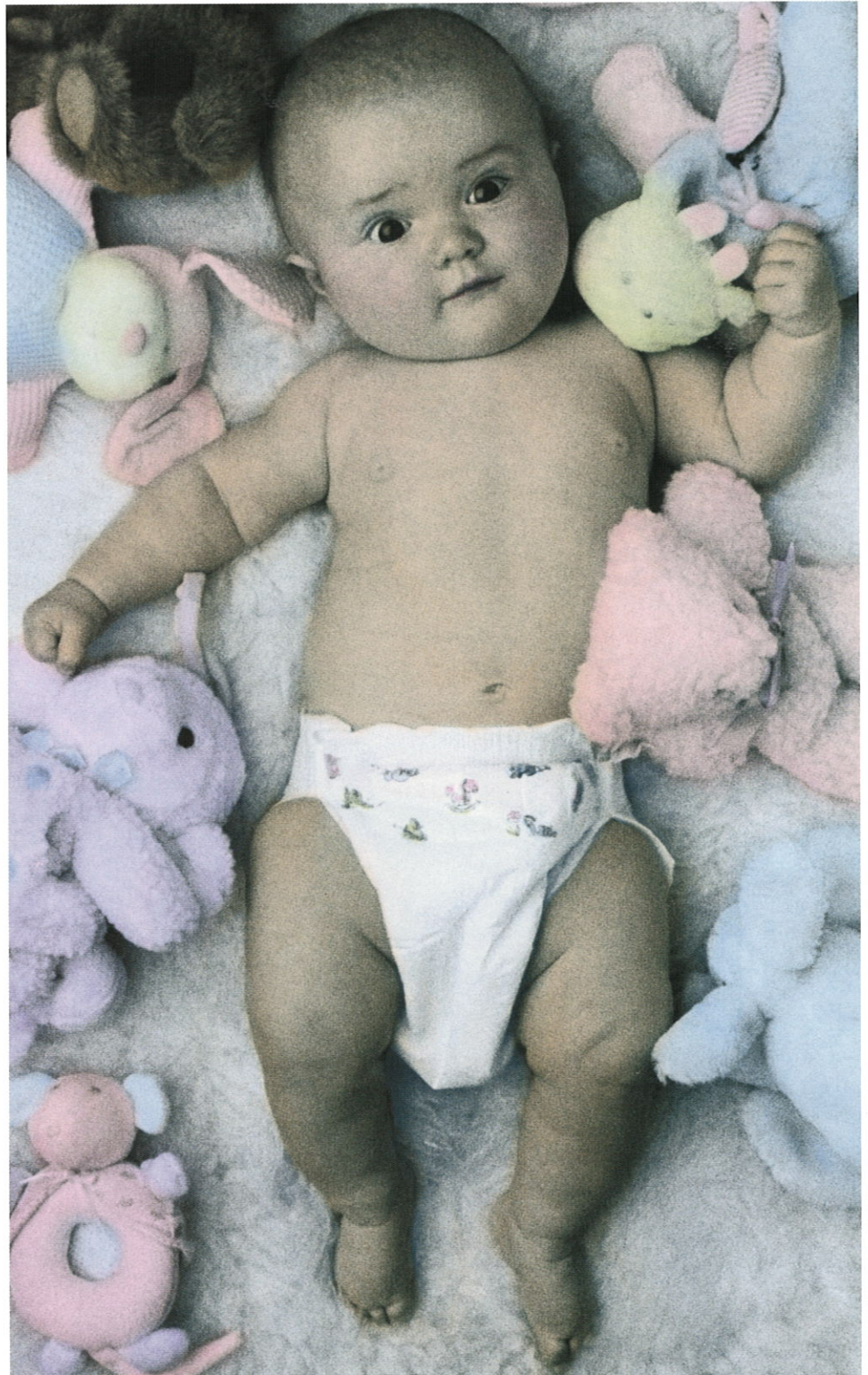
Just Like Me

By Sue McMillin

"He reached down from on high and took hold of me; he drew me out of deep waters. He brought me out into a spacious place; he rescued me because he delighted in me" (Psalm 18:16, 19 NIV).

The tiny baby girl was a victim of a mother who chose a husband over a child. Her mother gave her up moments after the birth, and the baby was placed in a foster home where the foster mother took full advantage of the system, as well as the money intended for food and nurturing. At eight months old, authorities rescued the baby and 10 other children. When rescued, she weighed 10 pounds, didn't know how to eat, and was emotionally and physically starving.

That was many years ago and I was that baby girl. If I had not been rescued by authorities, the odds are that I would not be sharing this story with



you today. If I hadn't been adopted by Frazier and Smiley McMillin, I might not have understood the power of parents' love which could nurture a neglected, unloved little girl back to health.

I am blessed because I was placed in the arms of a beautiful woman who was once abandoned herself – a woman who had been praying for a long time to love a child just like me.

Smiley McMillin was raised in the Louisville Jefferson County Children's Home. Margaret Louise – as she had been named at birth – lost her father when she was one year old. Margaret's mother later married William Smiley, and life seemed good again. But at the age of eleven, her mother entered the hospital for a simple operation and never left the hospital alive.

Margaret, now nicknamed Smiley, reeled from the unexpected death of her mother, but the worst shock was yet to come. Unable to cope with his loss, William Smiley sent Margaret away to Louisville Jefferson County Children's Home.

Smiley could hardly believe that she had lost both mother and father and ended up in an orphanage. They called it a home, but who would be her mother? And where could she find someone to care for and love her as Cora Smiley had done?

The answer to her questions came in the form of a woman who worked at the home, Elizabeth Broker. Miss Broker took young Smiley under her wing, and nurtured the young girl until Smiley left for college several years later.

Elizabeth left such an imprint on her that Smiley returned to the home after college to work part-time. As she worked with the children, she dreamed of one day having her own family and children to love. Elizabeth encouraged her that one day she would have that opportunity.

Not long after, Smiley met a handsome man, Frazier McMillin, and they married. Smiley was determined to have a family right away, but was devastated when she found out she could not bear children. Years passed, and she and Frazier traveled around the nation as part of his military service.

Smiley continued to pray for a child. None came.

One day, by chance, Smiley ran into Elizabeth Broker. They caught up on old times, and after they spoke for a long time, Smiley shared with Elizabeth her heartbreak at not having a child to love. The older woman asked Smiley a blunt question, "When are you and Frazier going to adopt?"

Adoption had occupied Smiley's thoughts a great deal and she was excited to share her hopes with Elizabeth. Gently joking with Smiley, Elizabeth asked, "So tell me, do you want a pretty child or a very intelligent child?"

Without hesitation, Smiley answered in a soft voice, "Elizabeth, I want a child that's just like me." Elizabeth understood.

Smiley, who knew what it meant to be abandoned, was not asking God for a normal baby. She was opening her arms and heart, praying for a child who was left behind just as she had been years before.

Eight months later I was placed in the arms of Frazier and Smiley McMillin. I was so scrawny and sick that I had to be carried on a pillow to avoid bruises. I was both physically and emotionally starved. I did not know how to receive caresses or touch. Health care workers had predicted possible retardation, but no one really knew what lay ahead. They simply could not predict the long-term effects of my grim beginning.

Frazier and Smiley were undaunted by the challenges and welcomed me with new parents' bliss. They began to concoct milkshakes out of eggs, chocolate, butter, milk, cream, cheese, potatoes – every nourishing thing they could think of.

It wasn't easy. Months of starvation had deprived me not only of food, but also of the desire and ability to eat. It took 17 tries the first time they tried to teach me to swallow. But my new parents were committed.

Feeding was a full-time job. From the blender to the bottle to the baby,

my mother delivered food with lullabies and caresses until I began to respond. She was as protective as a lioness protecting her cub. Every time I made an inch of progress, my mother celebrated and thanked God.

Today, our lives have come full-circle. My dad has passed away and I am



I am blessed because I was placed in the arms of a beautiful woman who was once abandoned herself - a woman who had been praying for a long time to love a child just like me."

living with my beautiful, elderly mother. I can never repay the love of Frazier and his wife, Smiley McMillin, an orphan who reclaimed the life of a discarded infant. I cannot help but be thankful that God "reached down from heaven and took me and drew me out of deep waters."

Today, I lead seminars across the country. My job is to bring organization out of chaos. That is what God did for me as a tiny, abused baby. He brought order out of chaos. As I share my organization skills, I pray for opportunities to share how God can bring order into our lives as well. When I speak to corporations, churches, and women's groups, I cannot help but share my humble beginnings.

I will always be thankful for a Heavenly Father who placed me in the arms of a woman who was asking for a "little girl just like me."

Sue McMillan is president of With Time to Spare, a business productivity solutions company. A national speaker, Sue has been featured in many publications. She is the author of four books including *Taken By Surprise* and *The Organized Woman*. She can be reached by email: organize@WithTimeToSpare.com or www.WithTimetoSpare.com.



Dare To Be Honest

By Dick Innes

There was a time in my life when I thought that to be liked, I had to be strong like the Rock of Gibraltar. Let the storms rage, the lightning strike, the winds blast, and the seas beat violently against it, and there it stands, solid and secure.

To me, fear was weak and anger bad, so you never showed these emotions. Certainly a man never showed his hurt feelings or cried. Through years of practice, I learned to hide my emotions, put on a brave front, and pretend to be something outwardly that I wasn't feeling inwardly.

The trouble with being a rock, however, is that rocks aren't human and

they don't feel. They can't relate intimately, and neither could I. Like the first man, Adam, who feared rejection, I, too, was afraid, so "I hid myself."

One of the serious side effects of denying and hiding our emotions is that we deposit them in our unconscious memory bank where they build up unhealthy dividends. The payoff is that we either withdraw or become defensive, touchy, hostile, non-feeling distant, or depressed.

Or we act out these buried emotions through destructive behavior or physical problems. Medical science reminds us that unresolved emotions contribute to many physical illnesses. Estimates vary from 60 to 90 percent.

The point is, whenever we fail to

admit our faults and frustrations and talk or write out our negative feelings in creative ways, we inevitably act them out in destructive ways.

Dr. Cecil Osborne, author and counselor writes, "By a clever bit of unconscious dishonesty, one may have said to himself, 'A Christian never hates. I am a Christian, therefore I never feel hatred.' And the aggression which is part of the normal equipment of a normal human being is then buried in the unconscious, only to come out in some unacceptable form, often as a physical symptom."¹

Denial of emotions also poisons relationships. It erects "brick walls" around the heart and suffocates love.

Best-selling author, Dr. John Powell,



believes that “most of us feel that others will not tolerate emotional honesty in communication. We would rather defend our dishonesty on the grounds that it might hurt others, and, having rationalized our phoniness into nobility, we settle for superficial relationships. Consequently, we ourselves do not grow, nor do we help anyone else to grow. Meanwhile, we have to live with repressed emotions – a dangerous and self-destructive path to follow. Any relationship which is to have the nature of true personal encounter must be based on honest, open, gut-level communication. The alternative is to remain in my prison, to endure inch-by-inch death as a person.”²

Denial of emotions often causes the

exaggeration of opposite characteristics. Saccharine-sweet people often seethe inwardly with hostility. People who withdraw take their anger out on others in underhanded ways. But withdrawal is a mean way to “fight.”

The dogmatic are riddled with self-doubts. The overconfident are insecure. The prudish may be compensating for hidden sexual struggles. Others silence painful feelings in over-busyness or go-go-go activity, substance dependency, destructive behavior, overeating, constant talking, unbalanced religious fervor, a controlling attitude, and so on.

Others project their faults onto others, seeing in and attributing to them the very faults that lie hidden within themselves. They simply cannot accept or don't like in others what they refuse to accept in themselves. Or they might displace their bad feelings by taking them out on somebody else. For example, Fred may be angry at his boss but, fearing he may lose his job if he says anything, takes his feelings out on his wife, children, or dog!

The challenge is, how do we learn to be honest with ourselves? It isn't easy. For many, it's like learning a new language. However, there are some positive steps we can take.

First, realize that a normal human being has a whole spectrum of emotions ranging from love, joy, peace, wonder, through to fear, hurt and anger. These are all God-given emotions. Without them, life would be terribly dull. To be emotionally whole means to be in touch with our emotions.

Second, we need to see our need and have a desire to be honest. This can be encouraged by reading and applying the Word of God.

Third, we need to admit and accept responsibility for problems we have, and consider the possibility that our impaired relationships, dull marriage, unsatisfactory sex life in our marriage, anxiety, depression, destructive habits and any physical symptoms we have might be caused by hidden emotions and faulty communications.

Fourth, we need to be alert to medical problems and abnormalities that might be causing us to feel as we do.


Fifth, and most important of all, we need to learn to pray the right prayer. If necessary, tell God that you don't know how or are too afraid to be honest with yourself and need His help. Ask Him to give you the courage to see yourself as you are and to face the truth about yourself. His answer will probably come in an unexpected way – perhaps through a book, a personal setback, a friend, a difficult or broken relationship, or some other painful situation. Unfortunately, most of us only look at ourselves when we are hurting sufficiently.

Sixth, practice expressing your feelings openly and honestly, especially to the people who are important to you. If you're feeling hurt, afraid, confused, or angry, admit it and say, “I feel confused or angry.” Don't say, “You make me mad,” or “You hurt me.” This blames the other person for reactions which are actually your own problem and responsibility. Identify why you are feeling the way you do. For example, say, “I know my feelings are my problem, and I may be overreacting, but when you speak to me as you just did, I feel hurt and/or angry.”

If the person won't accept your feelings, write them out in a letter. If they still won't accept them, try what Gary Smalley and John Trent suggest in their book, *The Language of Love*. Share how you are feeling by using word pictures; that is, make up a story or parable that will clearly show how you are feeling.

Finally, always be open and honest as the Bible suggests. Strive to “speak the truth in love.”

Denying our faults and feelings, acting them out blindly, or lashing out and hurting others just maintains our problems and our “stuckness” in relationships. Acknowledging and talking them out in a responsible manner helps us and others to grow. It may not be easy, but it is true strength, and is the only way to develop growth-producing and intimate relationships.

1. *Leader's Handbook*. Yokefellows Inc., Millbrae, California, p. 32. 2. John Powell, *Why Am I Afraid to Tell You Who I Am?* Argus Communications, Illinois, p. 61. Copyright 1969. Used by permission. 

by Karen Johnson Zurheide

My husband and I married young and then intentionally avoided having a child for nearly a decade. After three graduate degrees and lots of quality two-of-us time, we decided we were ready to be parents. But it wasn't quite that easy, as we sampled the frustration and marital strain of infertile couples, when for over a year I did not conceive.

Although the psalmist claims, "Sons

many who would make wonderful parents are never given the chance, or have a long, difficult road getting there.

To be a woman without children was in biblical times to be as one cursed, with no place in society, no future, no hope. We read that, being childless, "In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the Lord" (I Samuel 1:10). By her own description to the priest Eli, she was "deeply troubled" and prayed out of her "deep anguish and grief."

Though today neither men nor women need to define themselves in terms of their offspring, there are still countless people who ache with

NO

that same age-old emptiness, who pray desperately for God to bless them with young life.

My husband and I were overjoyed, thinking our personal aching was over, when, after a

are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from him" (Psalm 127:3 NIV), this awesome treasure does not come to everyone. Conceiving and bearing children seems too easy for some, while



series of unpleasant exploratory tests, our efforts at conception did at last succeed. But a month shy of our first child's due date, I had an emergency cesarean section. At just two pounds, our beloved daughter suffered from a genetic syndrome which made her "incompatible with life." She spent 24 hours in a neonatal intensive care unit, before dying in our arms.

A few months later we got the good news that I was pregnant again. It was soon followed by bad news, when I miscarried — on Christmas, of all times.

Revelation

The next day, as my husband and

primarily through them. While they enrich my life immeasurably, they are not its center. That place is reserved for Jesus, whose presence is independent of circumstance, whose love and care I know at times of loss and times of gain and those many times in-between.

Helping Others

From my own childbearing struggles I became more sensitive to others in their disappointment and loss, especially to the possible feelings of those without children, who can be unintentionally hurt by those who are parents. What can we do for friends who want a child?

First, pray. Pray that God would

Third, set an example. It's easy to say that children aren't life's focus if we are the fortunate ones who are parents. That's not a message we should preach. But we can demonstrate lives in which our children are not objects to pridefully possess, or extensions of ourselves. That is a contrary view in our child-centered culture. It doesn't mean never talking about our kids or inviting our friends to a family gathering. It means getting a life beyond our children and sharing all of who we are.

Finally, be inclusive. Make as few distinctions between parents and non-parents as you can. The last thing most couples wanting a

CHILDREN?

I took a slow, snowy walk around the block, I told him that God was speaking to me. God was telling me that whether I ever became a parent or not, I would be okay. My life — the value of it, the fulfillment I desired — was not contingent on parenthood. Whether I ever became a parent, Jesus loved me and would always walk with me and complete me. It was the child of Bethlehem I should seek, the rock of Jesus Christ upon which I should build my life — not children, if they ever came to me at all. The message was a variation on Jesus' words, "But seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness..." (Matthew 6:33). This was good news for then and the future.


As a result of those earlier losses, I consider the precious daughter and son later born to me as undeserved gifts, rather than as mine by rights. My identity does not come

bless your friends with a child if that is His will. Pray even more that they would have and keep Jesus as their center, rather than anyone or anything else. And pray that you would be sensitive to their hurts and needs, and wise in your words and actions.

Second, recognize the struggle. If friends share their difficulty concerning this with you, acknowledge their disappointment. If they have a miscarriage or other distinct loss, tell them, simply, that you are very, very sorry. Avoid explanations and cliches, or flimsy promises for the future. Open the door for them to express their feelings, perhaps by stating how difficult it must be. Without equating yourself with them, briefly share any common experience. Give them an opportunity to tell you about their options, such as medical treatments or adoption.

child need is to be excluded from their friends with children, put in some other second-class "childless" category. If they seem to enjoy it, encourage their involvement with your child. If they prefer to sit out an event full of children, they can say so. By including them, however, you reinforce the truth that identity and worth do not depend on being a parent. There is much more to share between friends than that.

Even though parenting is not always easy, a child is a most precious gift. May those of us who are parents remember to treasure our precious children daily, while growing in compassion and understanding of those whose loving arms remain childless.

Karen Johnson Zurheide is former director of a parent support network and co-author of *In Their Own Way: Accepting Your Children For Who They Are* (Augsburg, 2000). 

who transformed the medical world with his ideas on stress and its relationship to our bodies – believes the greatest stress reliever is a grateful heart. God said it first.

Model Godliness


My deceased mother was one of the most godly women I've ever known. As a single parent, she raised three children and she knew how to pray – to connect with her Father.

I could often hear the gentle murmurings of her intense prayer as I stood silently by her bedroom door. It seemed as though the glory and presence of the Lord escaped through the cracks. Mom knew how to touch God. She lived a life dedicated to Jesus. No person on earth has spiritually affected my life to such a degree. For all parents struggling to build the self-esteem of their children, that should come as an encouragement.

Kids with good self-esteem don't allow people to walk all over them or bulldoze through their relationships. Instead, they express their needs. An accurate sense of self-worth helps our kids strive to new heights, reach for their dreams, risk failure on occasion, and stand firm in their beliefs.

While boosting self-esteem in adolescents is not always easy, it pays off big in the end.

Note: For a free copy of Dr. Clyde Narramore's booklet, *"Ten Ways to Shape a Child's Life,"* contact the Narramore Christian Foundation.

Jeenie Gordon is a marriage, family and child therapist, author and speaker who lives in California. 

The same principle of relationship guides our prayers. Jesus said, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you" (John 15:7 KJV). It's normal and natural for God to hear the requests of His children. Notice, however, the two conditions for answered prayer: not only are we to abide in Christ, but we are instructed that His words are to abide in us. This means that the words of Christ are to have a permanent residence in our minds and hearts. We live by the Bible.

Sadly, not all Christians are living in this ambiance of abiding. They may be born again but still unwilling to fully commit themselves to Jesus Christ. They try to hold onto the Lord with one hand while keeping one foot in the world. The result is confusion and restlessness. They are not happy in the atmosphere of the world because they know they don't belong there. Yet, they are miserable in their Christian lives because they are not dedicated to the Lord. Such people have a serious spiritual problem that keeps them from abiding in the love of Jesus. Not until they yield to God will they know the satisfying joy of such abiding.

There are also other less obvious reasons why some people have difficulty "settling in" to an abiding relationship. Often it is because they are weighed down and burdened by heavy unresolved emotional conflicts – perhaps the residue of negative experiences and influences from childhood. I knew a young woman who spent much of her youth in a boarding school away from her parents; in fact, she felt abandoned by them. The boarding school staff remained distant, and the employees changed from time to time.

"Sometimes they didn't seem to know I was even there," she commented. It's terrible being in a family where they don't know you're there!

Similar dynamics can take place in a home where the parents are cold and uncaring. Warm, understanding relationships are never a part of their family scene. No wonder people raised in such an unloving environment often find it difficult to comprehend the concept of a loving, enduring relationship with their Heavenly Father. They may know the Bible verses, but the experiences of their own childhoods say the opposite.




If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it shall be done for you."

—John 15:7

Sometimes a physical problem will interfere with a person's ability to abide. Take Mrs. Jackson, for example. Although she was a born-again child of God and really wanted to live for Christ, nothing seemed to work out. She kept blaming herself for not having enough faith. She was nervous, frustrated, and often depressed. After years of searching for peace and contentment, Mrs. Jackson finally consulted an endocrinologist who identified a serious chemical imbalance. This was treated and in time her problems cleared up. She is now able to abide.

Are you abiding? If not, take time to identify the reason for your state of unrest. Is your problem a spiritual one? You can correct this problem today. If you are certain that it does not carry spiritual overtones, determine whether or not the cause may be emotional or physical, and take the necessary steps to correct it.

Then enjoy the matchless blessings of an abiding relationship with Jesus Christ! 

Can A True Christian Commit Suicide?

by Bruce Narramore

Q *A respected man in our church recently committed suicide. He had a wife and three lovely children, and I just cannot understand how a Christian could do that. Do you think that a true Christian can commit suicide?*

A It is a great tragedy when any person chooses to end his or her life and it seems especially sad when the person is a Christian and seems by all outward appearances to be functioning so well. But by all means a true Christian can commit suicide. God forgives this sin just like every other. We do not become His children by our works and we do not maintain our salvation by our good deeds (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Your other question is more difficult to answer. "How can a Christian do that?" People commit suicide for different reasons but there are several common causes. The first is a loss of hope. Above all else, people who end their lives feel depressed and despairing. They do not believe things are ever going to get better. Typically they have tried everything they know. They have tried to live good lives. They have worked hard. They have prayed and confessed their sins. They have begged God for relief from their terrible sadness. And they may have

even consulted physicians or counselors. But for whatever reason, they have not been able to overcome their despair. Sometimes there are hidden biological causes of depression. Other times the reasons are more emotional. But whatever the cause, the person remains despairing and depressed. When you feel absolutely horrid and see no way out, suicide looks like your only means of relief. As one person put it, "I felt like I was

in complete darkness at the bottom of a well. I couldn't see anything but blackness."

Underneath the hopelessness and despair of suicidal patients, psychologists typically find deep feelings of worthlessness, badness and/or loneliness. In fact, one of the most likely times for a person to attempt suicide is when he or she has suffered the loss of a spouse, close friend or family member, or even a job. People who already feel rather unloved can lose their final vestige of hope when they lose the one person they have turned to for comfort and encouragement.



Bruce Narramore, Ph.D.

Feelings of worthlessness and inner loneliness are often accompanied by another less apparent emotion—the emotion of anger. Most depressed people have difficulty facing their own resentful feelings. Many have life long resentments toward parents or other influential people in their lives which they have never been able to resolve. As a child, they were probably too frightened to share their anger for fear of being punished, shamed, rejected or abandoned. They had to deny their feelings



Above all else, people who end their lives feel depressed and despairing. They do not believe things are going to get any better.

in order to protect themselves emotionally. So they buried their hurt. But where did it go? It didn't magically vanish. Instead, it was unconsciously turned toward the self. Instead of hating someone else, they start hating themselves. That accounts for the strong recriminations many depressed people make toward themselves.

Have you ever heard a depressed person, for example, say how worthless and no good he or she is? If so, think of how that would sound if they accused someone else of being that horrible. We would immediately see the anger in their accusations. But when those statements are directed toward oneself we tend to miss the anger. We see the despair, but not the anger. Every suicidal person I have worked with has eventually come to realize that a good part of their despair is caused by their habit of turning their anger and accusations on themselves. Once they realize the true source of their anger they are finally able to start moving beyond despair.

Guilt is another common dynamic in suicide. The severely depressed person doesn't just feel helpless in general. He or she also feels helpless to be a good person. Quite often these people are some of the nicest, most giving, good people you will ever know. But inwardly they don't feel that way. They fall so far short of their inner perfectionistic standards that they look

Suicide, continued on page 24 ►

Tribute Gifts

Would you like us to join you in honoring your loved one? You can send a Tribute Gift or Living Memorial Gift to the ministries of the Narramore Christian Foundation.

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Dr. Lee & Gloria Bendell

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HEALTH WATCH

Compiled by Eva Hallam Solberg

Doing Well By Doing Good

Volunteering for community service may actually help prolong your life and can boost vitality and self-esteem. Researchers at the University of Michigan recently reported that retired people who volunteered just 40 hours a year tended to live longer, compared with those who did no community service. A study of 762 retired people, conducted at Cornell University, found that volunteers were happier than retirees who did not do volunteer work and had more energy and a greater sense of control over their lives. Constructive work confers a sense of well-being and identity.

If your social support system is thin, volunteering can provide you with chances to make friends. Although people of all ages can benefit, older people — especially the retired — seem to benefit the most.

Retirement is a time when we can give back to society the lessons, the wisdom, and the resources we have learned throughout our lives. The desire to give back is surely a sign of health — a chance to do what you lacked time and wisdom to do at earlier stages of life.

— UC Berkeley Wellness Letter

Exercise and Mental Health

Exercise may help preserve cognitive function, according to a new article in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*. Researchers surveyed 5,925 older women on their physical activity and tested their mental ability. Six to eight years later, the women who performed even moderate physical activity (such as playing 18 holes of golf once a week, playing tennis twice a week, or walking 10 blocks a day) had a lower risk of cognitive decline than their less active counterparts.

— The Johns Hopkins Medical Letter

Depressed Teens

Depression in a teenager should not be dismissed as “just a stage.” Adolescents are sometimes expected to have serious emotional problems — to be lonely, confused, angry, rebellious, and despairing. But however it may sometimes seem to their parents, normal teenagers do not go through a period of emotional turmoil that resembles a psychiatric disorder. Studies show that most of them do not feel misunderstood or miserable most of the time. When an adolescent does show signs of severe depression, it should always be treated as soon as possible, especially since there is some evidence that each untreated depressive episode makes the next one more likely.

— The Harvard Mental Health Letter

Encouragement In Action

by Ruth E. Narramore

“Ruth, do you have to play the piano?” complained my grandmother. “It sounds awful and it gives me a headache!”

“But Grandma,” I answered, “I really want to learn to play ... and it takes practice.”

My pleas were to no avail. She did not enjoy listening to this amateur musician picking out songs on her piano. And this was not a scenario that happened just once in a while. It took place every time I



Ruth Narramore

attempted to play, which was often.

In Grandma's defense I will say that listening to a beginner pianist is not always the most satisfying thing to do. But if a child practices faithfully, hopefully he or she will improve. However, this was of little comfort to Grandma.

I grew up during the Depression and there was no money in the family budget for piano lessons. Both my parents were musical and I had inherited my talent from them. Mother played the piano quite well, and Daddy played the cello and the trumpet. Both of them sang and often provided special music at church in the form of solos and duets. Mom and Dad were eager for me to learn to play. But Grandma (my mother's mother) saw me as a nuisance – not a budding musician.

When we first returned home from China where my parents had served as missionaries, we had our own apartment – and a piano. But

when I was about eight years of age, my grandfather, Dr. John Nelson Roe, left this earth for heaven. It soon became apparent that Grandma needed someone to look after her. Her house was larger than ours (and we would need the room) so we moved in with Grandma. Since she already had a piano, the piano belonging to my parents was put in the garage for storage. (Incidentally, that is not a good place to store a piano.)

This arrangement may not have posed a problem except for one minor (or major) detail. There seemed to be a magnet in the piano that constantly pulled me to those black and white keys. I couldn't walk past them without wanting to sit down and play. I recognize that as a beginner, what came forth from my fingers was not always polished or harmonious. Yet, I wanted so badly to play, and my parents realized that God had given me a measure of innate talent.

They wanted me to keep practicing ... but Grandma, in whose home we were living, did not enjoy the beginner stage that I was in. This created a conflict.

Dad was eager for me to play, but he also wanted peace in the family. So he got a very innovative idea. He would dismantle our piano that was stored in the garage and put it back together in the basement of the house. Then I could play to my heart's content.

So every day when Dad came

home from work, he began the challenging job of dismantling that big upright piano. And every afternoon I was out there watching and thoroughly excited about the tremendous project Dad was working on for me. This went on for months.

At last Dad had taken the whole piano apart except for the huge sounding board that could not be made any smaller. Unfortunately, it wouldn't fit down the cellar stairs. But Dad didn't let that deter him; he removed the cellar stairs! After moving the sounding board into the basement, he replaced the cellar stairs and started on the long, arduous job of putting the piano back together — piece by piece by piece.

By the time Dad had completed his piano project, it was summer. And although he had put that massive piano all together again, there was one problem: he couldn't get



Everyone needs encouragement, and God is pleased when we encourage one another. And while it is good to encourage others by what we say, it takes on even richer meaning when our words are coupled with action.”

the pedal to work. Now anyone who plays a piano knows how important it is to have the sustaining pedal in working order. Without it, everything sounds choppy and incomplete.

Another thing had also happened

Encouragement, continued on page 24 ►

during those months of "Operation Piano." Whenever Grandma was in another part of the house, I continued to play the piano in the living room. And I improved.

"I really don't mind your piano playing any more," Grandma said. "You can play up here if you want to."

Well, what child is going to go down into a damp, dreary old cellar basement to play a piano on which the pedal doesn't work if she is allowed to play a better one in the convenience and comfort of the living room? The hard fact is that I never used that basement piano. The living room was no longer off limits.

Some years later after I had become proficient in music and had graduated from Columbia University with a master's degree in that field, Dad and I were reminiscing about the above episode.

"Well," Dad said, "you never used that piano. It was truly a lost cause!"


"Oh, no!" I protested. "That was one of the best things you ever did for me. Your actions proved to me that you truly wanted me to learn to play. And if it was that important to you, I was determined to learn."

How true! Dad was one of the greatest encouragers I've ever had. Not only did he encourage me in words but in action. How blessed I was to have had a father like that!


The Bible admonishes us to be encouragers. Barnabas, the traveling companion of the Apostle Paul became known as the great encourager. We also read in Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome that he longed to see them that they may be "encouraged together" by their mutual faith (Romans 1:11, 12). Yes, everyone needs encouragement and God is pleased when we encourage one another. And while it is good to encourage others by what we say, it takes on even richer meaning when our words are coupled with action. My Dad was a living example of that.

"One thing is for sure," Dad would tell me with a chuckle, "I'm never going to take our piano out of that basement. It is there to stay."

I have often wondered if in the ensuing years, others who bought and lived in our old Richmond Hill, Long Island, home may have asked, "Why is that old piano in the cellar? How did it ever get there?"

They'll never know! But to me, the very memory of this incident says, "Encouragement. Yes, encouragement in action!" 

horrible by comparison. And no amount of encouragement can dissuade them from their guilty self condemnations. Even the knowledge that God has forgiven their sins through Christ doesn't seem to penetrate their deep neurotic guilt emotions.

If you know someone who is seriously depressed or threatening suicide, don't take those threats lightly. Make sure they see a licensed psychiatrist or psychotherapist, preferably a Christian. A combination of medication and counseling can help them work through the poor self esteem, anger, guilt, depression and despair. A Christian therapist can also help them correct distorted understanding of God so that they can utilize the rich resources of knowing God personally. Change won't happen overnight, but help is available and hope can be rekindled. 



I always enjoy your poems, Ruth. They are very meaningful. I keep some copies in my poetry notebooks. The articles in the *LIVING* magazine are very good.

— M.O., Alaska

My husband recently went home to be with the Lord whom he loved and served all of his life. I enjoyed the article on dealing with grief in your last issue of *Psychology for Living*.

— Mrs. HSW, Texas

I'm writing from state prison and want to say thanks for the booklets you have sent and I'm reading — *Anxiety, A New Biblical Self-Image, The Emotionally Healthy Family, and Why a Psychologist Believes the Bible*.

— MRE, Chino, CA

I've been blessed by the article in the Winter 2002 magazine about the horse, Pilgrim, and Tom. God will wait for me to draw close to Him. He doesn't get upset with my slowness.

— BW, email



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