

PSYCHOLOGY FOR
Living

FALL 2014 Vol. 56 No. 1

**Why Is It So
Difficult For
Me To Change?**

PART TWO

Why Is It So Difficult For Me To

by William Kirwan, Ph.D. and
Bruce Narramore, Ph.D.

In Part I of this article, September 2013 (http://www.ncfliving.org/index_emot_personality.php), we posed questions like “Why do so many Christians struggle excessively in our Christian lives?” “Why do we have such a hard time forgiving people who hurt us years ago?” “Why do I have recurring problems in my marriage and other relationships?” “Why don’t I feel closer to God?” and “Why do I sometimes feel so guilty, ashamed, or afraid of God?”

Often Christians have assumed we can resolve these and other long standing problems on a strictly spiritual basis. You may have even been taught that all you should need to do is study God’s word, confess your sins, pray, or have some kind of rededication, special spiritual experience, or “second work of grace” and you will be fine. But that’s not the way God made us. Uniquely spiritual disciplines and experiences are extremely important aspects of the way God works in our lives, but they are only some of His ways. Since God created us as psychological-spiritual, relational and physical beings, we have to take these sources of our problems into account as well. If we don’t, we are like physicians trying to help patients they have misdiagnosed. Their treatment simply doesn’t work.

Part One discussed the findings from a new field of study called Interpersonal Neurobiology (IPNB). Researchers in this field have made incredible discoveries about the way our brains develop and function and how they influence our personalities and our social, emotional and even our spiritual adjustment. These findings are changing the face of psychology and the field of counseling and have important implications for how Christians understand biblical doctrines like sin and sanctification. In this second part of “Why Is It So Difficult For Me To Change?” we will begin with a brief review of a few of those

Change?

PART TWO

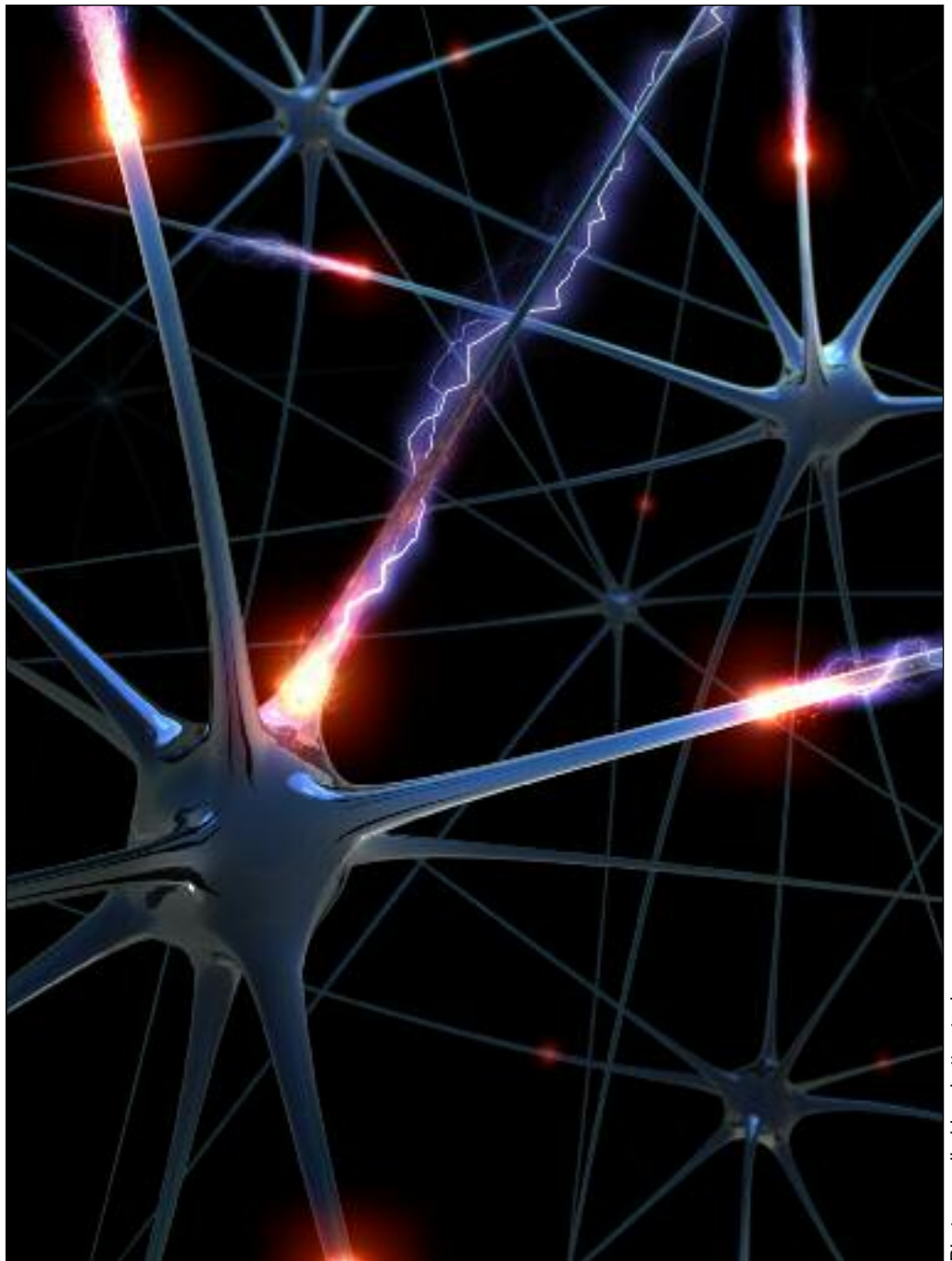


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LEFT BRAIN

- ◆ Logic
- ◆ Reasoning
- ◆ Analytical & linear thinking
- ◆ Language, math & numbers
- ◆ Detailed thinking

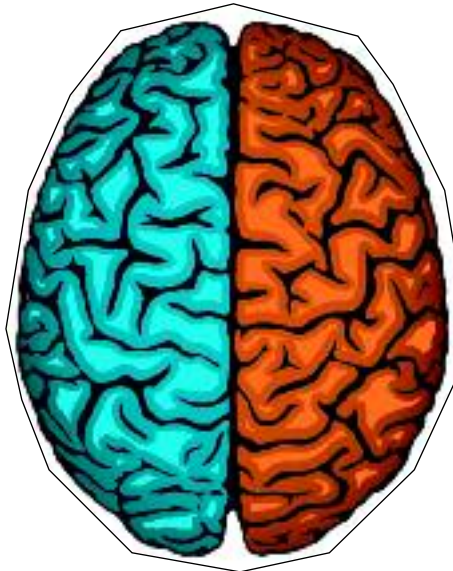


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RIGHT BRAIN

- ◆ Emotions
- ◆ Intuition
- ◆ Subjective & impressionistic
- ◆ Art & music appreciation
- ◆ Creative & global thinking

important findings. Then we will show how you can use those insights to overcome long standing problems and move further down the road to becoming the person God intends for you to be.

Our Brains Are Incredibly Complex.

The Bible tells us we are fearfully and wonderfully made (*Psalms 139:14*). Scientists have recently learned that our adult brains have approximately 100 billion neurons with between seven and ten thousand connections with other neurons, creating some 2 million miles of pathways inside our little three-pound brains (*Siegel 1999*)¹. Think of that! If you were so microscopically small that you could travel inside your brain you could take a two million mile trip on your neurons! Now that's "fearfully and wonderfully made!"

Our Brains Are Social.

God created us to be born into families, live with others, and have rich social lives (*Genesis 2:18-25*). Interpersonal Neurobiology research has now shown that although our genetic makeups provide the raw material for the development of our brains at birth, our earliest relationships with our mothers and other caregivers actually shape the way our billions of neurons connect with each other, including which ones

flourish and which ones atrophy and die. The failure of our brains to develop properly can cause any problem imaginable since our brains are responsible for processing every single aspect of our lives, even our ability to feel loved by God and safe and valued by Him!

Sin Travels In Families.

The Bible tells us "the sins of the fathers are visited to the third and the fourth generation" (*Deuteronomy 5:9*). How true that is. Both healthy and unhealthy traits can be transmitted through genetic inheritance, the types of brain malfunctions we briefly discussed in Part One, or the overall ways our parents rear and train us, including dysfunctional family dynamics.

Your Right Brain Rules!

Our right brains, the seat of our emotions, intuition and subjective impressions, come online earlier than our logical, analytical left brains. In fact, babies and their mothers initially don't communicate with words or reason at all. They communicate by emotions that are expressed through facial smiles or frowns, soothing or upsetting sounds, gentle or rough holding, and by mothers coming when needed, or leaving their babies crying alone for long periods. These experiences give infants and toddlers wordless messages like, "I am

loveable (or unloveable)," "I must be a good person (or a bad person)," "I am valuable (or not valuable)," "I am worthwhile (or worthless)," "My mother and other people are kind (or unkind)," and "The world is a safe (or dangerous) place."

Mental health professionals call these

CHANGE, continued on the next page ►

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wordless messages feeling beliefs because for at least the first year or two of life, babies have no words or concepts to express them. Even after our rational left brains begin to function, our deep seated right brain feeling beliefs don't easily give way to logic. Since they were established so very early, they are more deeply rooted than our rational thinking. If these early feeling beliefs are largely positive we tend to have a positive outlook on life, feel comfortable with others, and are able to handle even very difficult situations because deep down we believe we are loved and capable of coping. But when our feeling beliefs are excessively negative, even though we may be given a thousand left brain messages that we are loveable, or that God loves and forgives us, our more deeply rooted right brains silently cry out things like, "Oh no you aren't. If they really knew you they wouldn't be saying that," "Who would ever love you?" or "God wouldn't really forgive you!"



The Devil Made You Do It, But How?

We all know Satan was the first being to rebel against God (*Isaiah 14:12-17*) and that he tempts us to do the same. Sometimes when we sin or do something foolish, we even jokingly say, "The devil made me do it," implying that Satan supernaturally zapped us out of the blue with a sinful thought or temptation. But Satan can't do that because unlike God, he is neither

omnipresent nor omnipotent. He is strong and deceitful and has a cohort of fallen angels to help him but he can't be everywhere at once, he isn't all-powerful, and he cannot supernaturally place thoughts in our minds.

Satan is ultimately behind all of our problems. He convinced Adam and Eve to sin which set in motion the generational causes of problems that now impact everyone's brains and bind us into unhealthy patterns of thinking, feeling and reacting. He seems to largely use our fallen environment and brain malfunctions that are rooted in our earliest life relationships to make us susceptible to all types of temptations and difficulties.



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Much Sin is Not a Conscious Choice.

When we tie all of this together, we come to two important realizations. First, since our feeling beliefs are established so early in our first years of life, we are not consciously aware of how much they control and determine our adult feelings and behaviors. That means that many of our sins and problems of adjustment aren't things we consciously and purposely choose to do. We can't turn them on and off like a water faucet by the simple exercise of our wills. They are as automatic as the patellar reflex that happens when a physician strikes us just below the knee with his little hammer. No matter how determined we are to not let our leg jump, we still cannot prevent it. It is automatic!

Second, we can understand why many strongly committed Christians with a good knowledge of the Bible

haven't been able to apply the knowledge they already have to change their lives, feelings and behaviors. Their struggles are so deeply rooted in improper brain development or in the feeling beliefs of their right brains, that even wonderful biblical truths are not enough to change them by themselves.

Jesus Understands Our Brains!

Fortunately the Bible speaks to ways of effecting changes in even those deep and difficult areas of our lives. Unfortunately, however, we have often overlooked them because we have focused so much on the content of the scriptures and Jesus' teachings that we have failed to notice some extremely important aspects of his style of teaching and his way of relating to others. If we look behind the cognitive content of Jesus' words to the nature of his interpersonal relationships and teaching methods, we see that he knew precisely how to reach the deep levels of our brains long before the field of Interpersonal Neurobiology was ever conceived! That's no surprise, of course, since he's the one who created our brains! So let's take a look.

To begin with, Jesus was highly relational. He was an incredible teacher, leader and discipler but he didn't primarily spend his time imparting cognitive, left brain information. Instead, he spent most of his three years of ministry building his life into twelve disciples, living and traveling with them day by day. He communicated deep, life-changing truths to His disciples but he did it primarily through his loving relationships and daily experiences with them. As he neared the end of his earthly life, Jesus gave his disciples a new commandment that summed up how they were to live. "Love one another as I have loved you" (*John 13:34*). Love, the quality Jesus embodied throughout his life, was to be the key to the effectiveness of the disciples' lives and ministries. That's because it is love, not words, that reaches us at the deepest level.

It wasn't only Jesus' life of love that touched people at a deep emotional level. His teachings were filled with profound truths and his methods of teaching through stories and word pictures engaged his hearers' emotional right brains. As theologian Kenneth Bailey emphasized, Jesus was a



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“metaphorical theologian”², meaning that he primarily communicated through parables, stories, pictures and allegories (Bailey, 2008). He spoke about seeds falling on good or poor soil, birds of the air, and lilies of the field. The parable of the Good Samaritan in *Luke 10:25-37* is a great example.

Jesus was tested by a specialist in Jewish law who asked him, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus could have given him the answer but instead he responded with questions of His own: “What is written in the Law?” “How do you read it?”

The man replied with the right cognitive answer. “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus said, “You are correct.” But the legal specialist wasn’t satisfied. He wanted a precise description of who he ought to love, so he asked, “Who is my neighbor?” He was used to debating intellectually, honing precise arguments, and using his left brain. He was apparently more interested in the logical argument than he was in the kind of person he ought to be. But Jesus gave him more than he bargained for and took the conversation in an entirely different direction.

He told of a man travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho, a journey of about seventeen downhill miles on a crooked road that many of his hearers had taken. It was a rocky, desert road with many places where robbers could hide, waiting for an unsuspecting traveler to pass by. Sure enough, Jesus painted a word picture of some thugs robbing the man and leaving him half dead. A priest and a Levite, both respected religious leaders, walked around the man on the other side of the road and didn’t stop to help. But a

Samaritan, a member of a group despised by the priests and Levites because their Jewish ancestors had intermarried with non Jews and didn’t follow all of the Jewish laws, had compassion on the wounded man. He stopped, put the man on his donkey, and took him to the nearest inn where he bandaged his wounds and gave the innkeeper money to take care of him.

Notice how this story brought Jesus’ listeners right into the drama at an emotional level. It was no longer an intellectual debate by a couple of lawyers. Jesus’ hearers would have known each of the characters in this story and they would have identified with one or more of the them. Don’t you, even 2,000 years later? Perhaps you see yourself as the wounded man that others have mistreated or ignored. Or perhaps you realize that at times you have been like the religious leaders who ignored the poor man. Or maybe you have identified with the robbers or the innkeeper. But one way or another, nearly everyone enters the story. If we identify with the victim we probably feel gratitude. If we identify with the uncaring religious leaders we may feel guilt, anxiety or shame. And if we identify with the Good Samaritan, we probably feel good and grateful that we have been able to reach out and help others. But wherever we see ourselves in the story, if we aren’t too left-brained, we first engage at our emotional, right brain level. Then, once we are engaged, our left brains kick in and start analyzing what we are feeling

and experiencing and trying to understand the full meaning of the parable.

At the close of the parable, when the lawyer finally gives the right answer, Jesus simply says, “You go, and do likewise.” No more debate. No more logical arguments. No more fine points of the law. Just go and be like Jesus, reaching out to others across racial, economic and social lines. How powerful!

The same is true of the story of the prodigal in *Luke 15*. Which of us haven’t identified with the prodigal leaving home and wasting his inheritance? Or with the father waiting hopefully for his wayward son to return? Or with the older brother who was jealous when his father welcomed his prodigal brother home and threw a party for him. These characters usually trigger deep emotions in our right brains. Then we use the left hemisphere of our brains to deduce, “God the Heavenly Father loves and accepts rebels and sinners, therefore he must love and accept me as I respond to His love in Christ.” That’s the way our left and right brains should work together, and metaphors and stories help us do that. In fact, Allan Schore³ one of the main scholars writing on the functioning of the brain today, points out that metaphors are the perfect vehicle to actually stimulate our brains to grow in ways that increase their effective functioning and the integration of our right brain feelings and our left brain thoughts!

Preaching, Teaching and Mentoring For the Whole Brain.

The findings of brain research and the way Jesus lived and taught have important implications for Christian maturity, preaching, discipleship and counseling. In order to grow as God intended, every Christian needs a balance of experience and knowledge, that is, a balance of right and left brain functioning. If you think about it, nearly all church services begin with a portion of the time devoted to singing, praise and active participation in worship. Those experiences touch our right brains. Once they are over, however, some speakers go into a largely cognitive/teaching/left brain mode. If that is excessive, the service loses much of its potential power because it fails to keep the right

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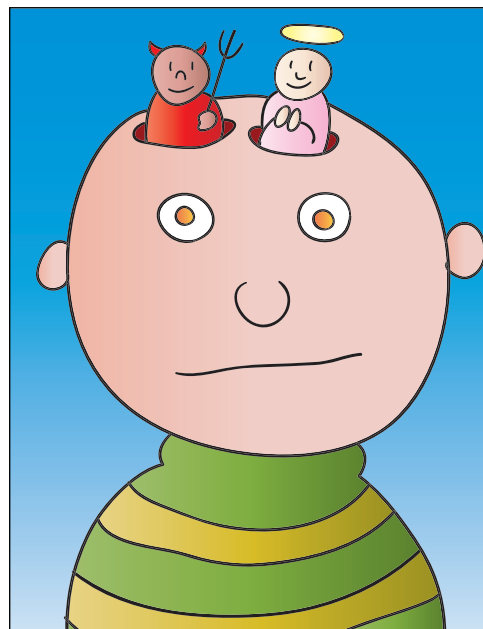


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brain sufficiently engaged.

We have all sat under teachers or ministers who had a terrific mastery of a subject but presented it in such a boring, factual manner that we could hardly stay awake. That's because our right brains were ignored. Left brain approaches to life and problem-solving can be helpful when we are facing a normal life decision that simply calls for more information. Selecting a college major, a profession, entering a business deal, or getting a wise new perspective on a problem respond well to relevant information. But they don't touch us nearly as deeply as empathic teaching that uses metaphors, stories and parables that engage both our right and left brains.

The same is true of individual and small group discipleship. Solid biblical teaching and study is essential. However, it is within safe and caring relationships that allow people to share their personal life stories, needs and struggles, that our right brain is accessed. Once that happens, the knowledge of scripture can come alive in a deeper and more life-transforming way.

Nearly everything we have said so far in Part Two can be applied to all people who want to grow in their spiritual, emotional, or relational lives. But if you or one you love is struggling with long standing, deeply rooted problems, you may need to seek out a counselor, preferably a Christian, who can help you find healing with those issues. To help you select that kind of therapist and understand more about the process of depth psychotherapy, we will now look at five key dynamics that make good therapy effective.

What Makes Counseling Work?

The lessons from Scripture and Interpersonal Neurobiology both point to several important experiences that people with longstanding struggles need in order to grow. First, the counselor has to provide a safe, "tuned in" relationship for the counselee, much like infants need from their mothers during the first few years of life. When you remember that mothers and infants don't communicate by words, but by emotional attunement, you see why this is so important. A counselor

intending to help you primarily through advice and more knowledge most likely will not be nearly as helpful as one who will do what we call "depth therapy" that accesses your early life experiences and a wide range of your emotions. Greater understanding can be helpful, but it usually needs to follow a rather extended time of developing a safe, "tuned in" working relationship with a counselor.

Second, as counsees feel safe enough in their relationship with a counselor, they must go into the pain they suffered in early life. Although the recalled pain may be horrible, it is bearable because of the counselor's safe presence, active listening, soothing looks and reassuring tone of voice. This allows counsees to see the wide-ranging impact of negative experiences on their lives, including the way they now relate to their family members, friends, co-workers, and even God.

Third, as counsees get in touch with their long ago pain, they usually feel a mix of sadness, fear, guilt, or shame. They almost universally feel angry as well. Re-experiencing that anger in a safe relationship with the counselor gives them an opportunity to learn experientially that it is OK to be angry when you have been hurt. In fact, it is abnormal not to feel angry. Jesus experienced righteous anger and so should we. Of course we shouldn't strike out at others in anger, but we must allow ourselves to feel it, learn to sit with it, and explore what pain it is hiding or where it came from. As long as we try to avoid it, it will stay underground and keep causing problems like depression, temper outbursts, relation-

al struggles or even physical symptoms like headaches, ulcers and constant fatigue. Good therapists know how to help counsees release and resolve anger a little bit at a time, much like slowly releasing built-up pressure in a pressure cooker.

Fourth, at some point counsees must go through a process of grieving the impact of their negative life experiences. Although grieving is painful, it allows them to admit that some things in their past will never change. For example, they will probably never have the kind of relationship they wanted with their mother or father. They won't be able to restore a long ago broken marriage or lost friend or job possibilities. Or they may need to give up the false belief that if they can only find a new and better mate or job, everything is going to be fine. All of those are "fixes" to fill an inner void or to have the good parent they never had, but they won't work. They are like drugs that dull the pain but never solve the real problem. Accepting and grieving our losses is much like mourning the loss of a loved one through death or separation. Only gradually do we feel sufficiently good about ourselves and confident about our future without them to fully accept the finality of it. Once we do, we can move ahead with our lives.

Fifth, as effective counselors stay emotionally tuned in, their clients increasingly develop the ability to put words to their deepest feelings. This helps connect their right brain emotional experiences with their left brain logic. In turn, this helps them communicate with others without



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either losing control of their emotions, repressing them, or withdrawing. It also helps overcome depression, excessive worry, shame, guilt and anger, and usually improves their interpersonal relationships.

Everyone's experience in counseling is a little different, but for longstanding problems and struggles, these five steps are typically at the core of lasting change. In fact, we now have evidence that therapies that include these steps can actually lead to the brain rewiring itself. Sixty years ago medical professionals taught that damaged brain and central nervous system tissue could not be repaired because it didn't generate new tissue growth. Now we know differently. Under the right conditions, including those of a good relationship with a depth counselor, our brains can actually grow new dendrites that form new connections between neurons! The malfunctioning development that began because of problems with one's earliest caregivers and environment can be gradually rebuilt and reconnected through a long-term healthy relationship with a wise and sensitive therapist!

A Look Ahead.

There is so much helpful information on ways our brains impact our spiritual, emotional and relational functioning that we had to leave out some other very practical implications of the recent findings of Interpersonal Neurobiology in the first two parts of this series. Consequently we are extending this series into a third part. In the next issue of *Psychology For Living* we will show you how you can use metaphors and the disciplines of prayer and Christian meditation to help you continue growing in your Christian life. Stay tuned to see how those biblical disciplines can actually help change your brain! †

¹Siegel, D. (1999). *The developing mind: Toward a neurobiology of interpersonal experience*. New York: Guilford Press.

²Bailey, Kenneth (2008). *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academia.

³Schore, Allan "The Science of the Art of Psychotherapy." All Day Workshop. Ben Franklin Institute. Summit For Clinical Excellence, San Diego. October 2009. Lecture.

Mothers' Peer Relationships Can Impact Their Adolescent Children's Relationships

Common knowledge teaches that parental behavior acts as a model and is an important influence on children's behavior. Children's studies have shown that the impact of adult modeling on the behavior of children depends on many factors, such as whether the behavior is rewarded, whether the adult model is highly

esteemed, whether the behavior is practiced, and whether children were taught to take the perspective of others (empathy). Research also demonstrated that learned behavior did not necessarily generalize to other environments and that children needed to practice what they learned across environments to improve demonstration of the new behavior.

Recently, research was conducted at the University of Missouri using moms and adolescent children. This effort was undertaken to expand the knowledge of adolescent development as previous research focused primarily on elementary-aged children. This work entitled, "Association of mothers' friendship quality with adolescents' friendship quality and emotional adjustment," will be published in the *Journal of Research on Adolescence*. Mothers and their 10-17 year-old children were polled to measure their perceived negative and positive friendship qualities. The "results showed that positive friendship qualities were not always imitated by adolescents; however, negative and antagonistic relationship characteristics exhibited by mothers were much more likely to be mimicked by the youth studied."¹ The fact of the adolescent's increased tendency to



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imitate the negative modeling has implications for parenting our teens. The co-author Gary C. Glick, doctoral candidate at MU, acknowledged the importance of parental training of their teens with regard to relationships: model positive friendship qualities and when things are difficult parents should talk with their children about how to act with their friends, but more specifically, how **not** to act."² The wisdom of *Deuteronomy 6:6-7* can be seen through the research "and these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up." †

¹Sossoman, J. (2013). Mothers' relationships can influence adolescent children's relationships, MU study finds. *News Bureau University of Missouri*, 30. Retrieved from <http://munews.missouri.edu/news-releases/2013/1105-mothers%E2%80%99-relationships-can-influence-adolescent-children%E2%80%99s-relationships-mu-study-finds/>

²Ibid

Cornerstone's Tenth Anniversary

by Cindy Hibma, Interim Director of Operations, Narramore Christian Foundation

With deep gratitude to God, Cornerstone Counseling Foundation celebrated its tenth anniversary at its September Board meeting. A verse in Isaiah captures the essence of Cornerstone Counseling Foundation, this unique ministry in Chiang Mai, Thailand, which opened its doors in November 2004:

“Remove the obstacles out of the way of my people. For this is what the high and exalted One says—He who lives forever, whose name is holy: ‘I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.’”

—Isaiah 57:14b-15

In the past, many obstacles prevent-

ed missionaries and other Christian workers from receiving timely and professional mental health care. There were scarce or no mental health resources near where workers lived and worked. In some organizations, the belief was that one's Christian faith, the Bible, and prayer should be enough for handling emotional distress, depression or other mental health issues, and relationship and team problems. Workers often felt that their leaders and organizations were not aware of, or did not really appreciate, their needs and stresses. Because of these and many other obstacles, Kingdom workers would often “crash and burn,” leave the mission field either voluntarily or be mandated to leave by their organization, and return to their passport country with feelings of shame, disgrace, and failure. Many would never return to the mission field.

Thankfully, through the vision of Dr. Bruce Narramore and Dr. Tim Friesen, these obstacles were recognized, and the Narramore Christian Foundation helped to establish

Cornerstone Counseling Foundation as a 21st century expression of *Isaiah 57*. Cornerstone's vision statement—*Hope and Healing for Kingdom Workers*—matches the Lord's vision to “revive the spirit...and the heart.”

It was my privilege to serve at Cornerstone from 2005 to 2013, beginning as an employee mentor, then a project manager, and eventually the administrator. There were no two days alike at Cornerstone! On any given day, I might wear the hat of plumber, building crack assessor, fish inspector, or run outside to chase an errant horse peering through a window or eating the grass! But encouraging an employee preparing a service project for Thais, enjoying a retreat with colleagues, arranging clinical services for clients, or crying and praying with an employee encountering difficult personal challenges—oh, those were the times of feeling especially blessed to be part of God's work at Cornerstone.

I am so thankful that “removing the obstacles” still guides the work of Cornerstone. There are so many examples:

- Clinical services are offered on a donation basis. Each year Cornerstone on average serves clients from 25-30 passport countries who minister in 25-30 countries in Asia and around the globe.
- Professional Christian therapists raise their own support and serve as volunteers.
- Staff go “above and beyond” to help clients.
- Intensive seminars are co-sponsored with the Narramore Christian Foundation to train member care providers.

Please continue to pray that God may bless Cornerstone Counseling Foundation with skilled clinicians, dedicated employees, and an enduring vision to “*remove the obstacles... to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.*” †



NCF Welcomes New Interim Directors

At its June 2014 meeting, the Board of Directors of the Narramore Christian Foundation unanimously appointed Tim and Cindy Hibma as NCF's new interim leaders. Tim, a licensed psychotherapist, will serve as Director, and Cindy, a registered nurse and experienced mental health clinic administrator, will serve as Director of Operations. The Hibmas have stepped into the position Dr. Cherry Steinmeier so willingly and graciously filled the past ten months when Dr. Bruce Narramore was unable to continue as NCF's president due to illness.

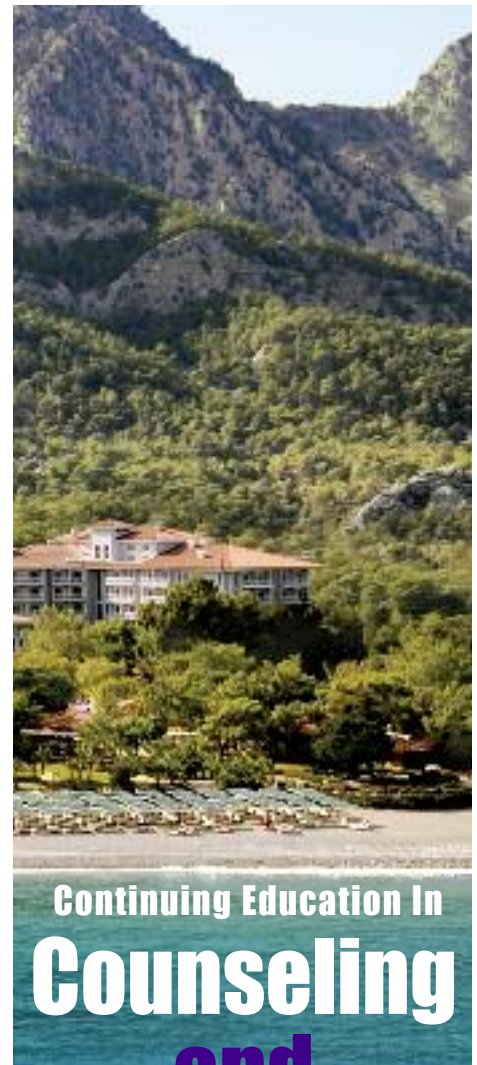
The Hibmas worked closely with Dr. Narramore since 2004 at Cornerstone Counseling Foundation in Thailand where Tim served first as Clinical Director and later as Executive Director and Cindy served as Administrator. The Hibmas returned to the United States in December of last year due to family



Tim and Cindy Hibma

responsibilities. Tim has resumed his clinical practice and Cindy has continued working part-time with NCF as the Coordinator of NCF's Counseling and Member Care Seminars and assisting with the administration of this year's MK Re-entry Seminar in Southern California. NCF's Board sees the Hibmas as exceptionally qualified for their new positions given their strong spiritual commitment, their long-term familiarity with NCF ministries, and their years of cross-cultural experience serving missionaries and their families who face struggles while sharing Christ's love around the world.

The Hibmas will serve in their new roles for at least one year as the NCF Board of Directors continues its planning for long-term leadership for NCF. Please keep the Hibmas in your prayers during this important transition time in NCF's ministries. †



Continuing Education In **Counseling and Member Care**

An Intensive
Counseling Seminar
for Cross-Cultural
Workers

Sponsored by the
Narramore
Christian Foundation

**Thank you
for your support of
the seminar held
October 2014**



“The good news is, you’ll be spending Thanksgiving with a large group of happy people.”

Reflections By Our New MK Reentry Seminar Director - Debbie Hewitt

Have you ever had the opportunity to tell your full story to another person who listened well and validated your experience including the high points and very low ones? To share yourself so honestly with others can be frightening, particularly in the wrong context or with the wrong people. But at this past MK Reentry Seminar, we invited 32 MKs to share their stories with one another in small groups led by empathic counselors in a beautifully safe environment. We invited the counselors and other adult staff, who are a bit further along in their journeys, to also share their stories in the morning sessions. They shared honestly and openly, reflecting God's redemptive work and His grace to each of them in their ongoing stories. Over and over again the students remarked that one of the best things about the seminar was the community of people who were safe and caring and who allowed them to talk about painful experiences of grief and loss and trauma. Many of them have started the healing process!

In addition to gravity-defying roller coasters at Knott's Berry Farm, relaxation and fun at the Narramore's pool party, and a beautiful day at the beach, one student summed up his experience

of enjoying the safety of 12 days together with other MKs this way, "I understand more of who I am and I now have the tools to not just survive but to thrive." – S. Another MK wrote that from sharing his story and listening to so many others he 1) released bottled emotions, 2) resolved problems, 3) explained behaviors, and 4) received pertinent warnings! - D. While he is just beginning the healing process in some areas of his life, he IS beginning!

"I understand more of who I am and I now have the tools to not just survive but to thrive."

– S.

Another MK wrote that from sharing his story and listening to so many others he

1) released bottled emotions,

2) resolved problems,

3) explained behaviors, and

4) received pertinent warnings!

– D.

He, along with so many of the MKs, is entering college with greater understanding and careful attention to how God is working in him.

I think about the trajectory of each MK's life if he or she had not had the opportunity to attend the seminar. By God's grace the healing process may have started much later but because of your donations to cover the abundant costs of the seminar, 32 sons and daughters of missionaries received love and care and preparation for their future much earlier and at an extremely significant time of transition in their lives. At the end of the seminar, one young lady shared, "My faith in God was renewed, I think the relationship is now worth pursuing. I realized his love is so great, it's just amazing!" - E. It was such a privilege to partner with you through your giving and prayers and to watch God work through the wonderful staff as they helped the MKs experience more of His grace and presence with them going forward. THANK-YOU!

While these students are off to a great start, please be praying for them in the ongoing transition to life here in the States. As we shared with them throughout the seminar, it takes time AND God is faithful. ✝

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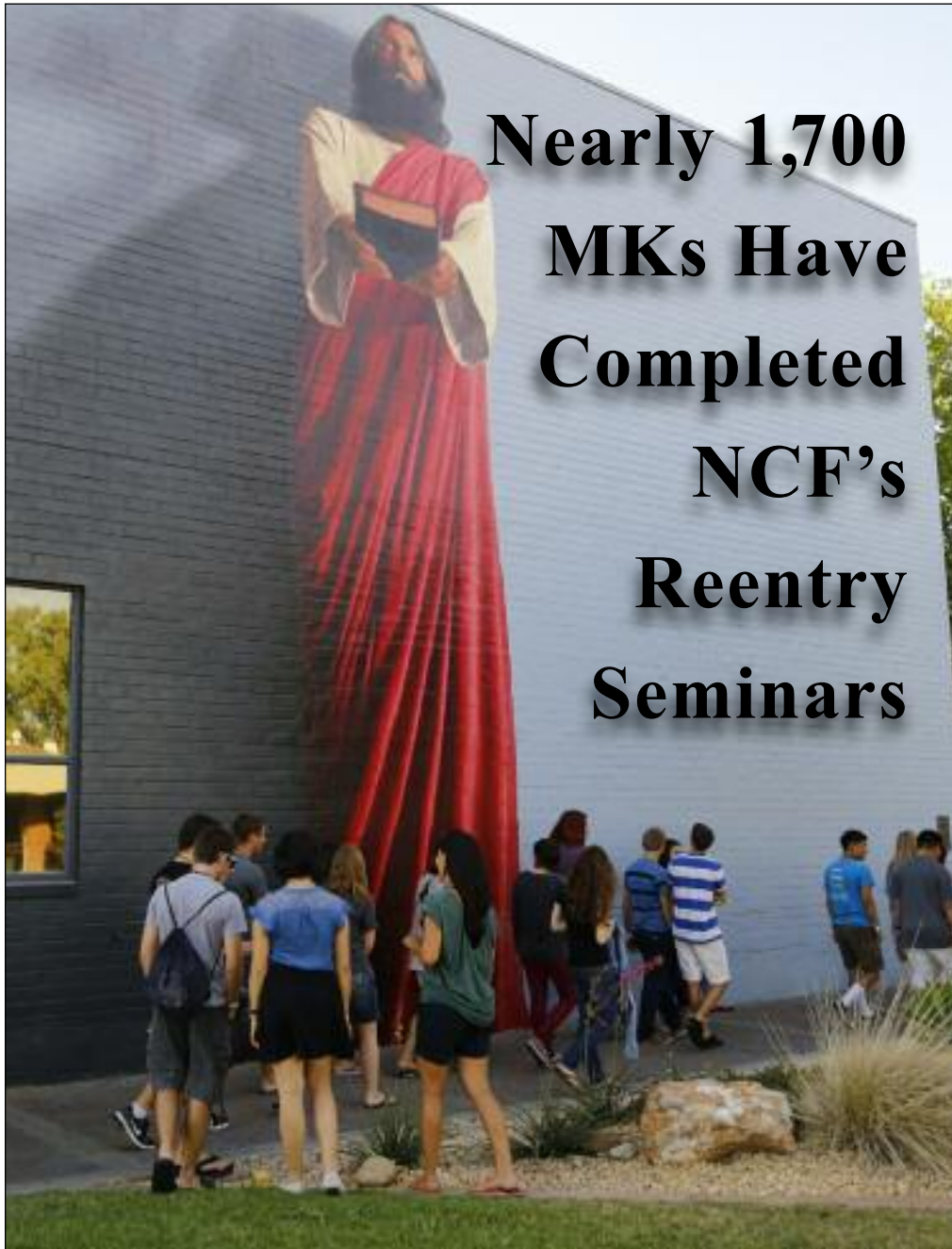
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Lora Mae Lent
Lora Mae Lent
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Presented by:

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**Nearly 1,700
MKs Have
Completed
NCF's
Reentry
Seminars**

by Bruce Narramore, Ph.D.

In July 2014, the Narramore Christian Foundation completed its 35th year of offering MK Reentry Seminars for the sons and daughters of missionaries. This year's MKs lived in 21 different countries literally from A to Z: from Albania, Brazil, Chile, and China at the beginning of the alphabet to nations like Switzerland, Thailand, Uganda, Uzbekistan, and Zambia. Most have lived in two to three different countries, plus furloughs in the

United States or Canada, and several speak two or three languages.

The parents of these young men and women are serving the Lord in a variety of roles and contexts. Some are serving as church planters. Some are faculty at Bible colleges and seminaries where they are preparing nationals to take leadership in their churches. Others serve as teachers, administrators, or dormitory parents in schools for children of missionaries and other cross-cultural workers. Several work in orphanages, in holistic

ACTION, continued on the next page ►

MKs reentry



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

**July 12-24,
2015**

ACTION, continued from previous page

ministries to help the poor become self-sufficient, or in ministries providing vitally-needed health education and medical services.

The MKs have a great variety of interests. Here is one young lady's list of enjoyable activities: "I like music, sports, gardening, acting, playing Legos with my little bro,

henna, cricket, flying kites, cooking, writing raps and performing them at conferences, writing funny letters to people, water balloons, elevators, microphones, swimming, building forts, dessert, Lord of the Rings, Narnia, and God." That's quite a list!

Most of these 17- and 18-year-olds arrived at the seminar straight from their overseas homes. They left their families and friends and the familiar

sights, sounds and smells of their adopted homelands behind. And while the United States was probably their parent's home country, it is not theirs. For them, coming to the U.S. is almost like moving to a foreign country. They don't know the social customs, and few if any of the students they will meet at college will understand what it is like to have grown up in another country and to



Above: Seminar Director
ing with MKs during

Right: Kathy Narramore
AND enjoying special



MKs spent time praying for each continent - in English or their second and often "heart" language.



Pool party at the Narramores: A true SPIRITUAL
and restful!

have had radically different life experiences and values. Harder yet, many young adults from the U.S. don't really care about the experiences missionary kids have had. When others find out an MK has lived overseas, they say things like "That's nice" or ask for just a little information, then move on quickly to other topics, leaving the MK with a ton of life experiences bottled up inside and no place

to share them.

The reentry program is designed to address these and other needs. Morning lectures and discussions cover topics such as *Understanding Yourself and Others*, *Coping with Grief, Loss and Trauma*, *Dealing with Depression*, *What to Expect in College and the U.S.*, *Young Adult Culture*, *Dating Relationships*, *Setting Realistic Boundaries*, and *Growing Spiritually*

and *Choosing a Church*.

In the afternoons, the students meet in small, confidential groups where they share both some of the great rewards of growing up as MKs and some of the difficulties and struggles. Most of these late adolescents were doing well, but they all had some areas to discuss and some had suffered severe traumas or abuse.

A unique feature of the program is that each student takes three different personality tests and receives feedback from a trained Christian counselor who is experienced in working with missionary kids. This allows them to look at their personality style from an objective point of view, seeing both their areas of strength and areas of needed growth. Several of the MKs sought out additional counseling sessions to seek help with deeper struggles and others were given referrals to Christian counselors near the colleges and universities they will be attending so that they can receive ongoing help in resolving those issues.

What did the MKs say about their time at the seminar? "I can't express to you enough how much this time changed my life. I have been to many camps and activities, but this was different. I have never felt God's hand so strong and so enjoyed a time like this before!" Another MK wrote, "My experiences here with God and the other MKs and staff have been super impactful, and I've learned so much useful information to help me with my transition." A young man confided, "God has met me in my pain. I am slowly but surely learning to trust in him with my grief and troubles."

Most of these wonderful young men and women are now into their first semester of college, while a couple are taking a "gap year" to have more time to adjust and get settled before heading off to college. Please pray for these wonderful young adults as they continue adapting to this strange new country of their passport, the United States of America! And pray for their parents and siblings who continue faithfully serving the Lord around the world. ☩



Director, Debbie Hewitt Narramore, interacting in class.

Narramore, an MK from China herself, hosting a Mandarin class!



WASH event! Fun



Another delicious meal and beautiful setting hosted by Bruce and Kathy Narramore at their home.

The Road to Recovery

by Dick Innes

I grew up in what used to be called a broken home. Now it is called a dysfunctional family and I am defined by a fancy title. I am now an ACDF—an Adult Child of a Dysfunctional Family!

Home for me was not a happy place. My parents' continual fighting ensured that. For their own painful reasons, my father and mother were unable to make a happy home. Eventually they divorced but my scars remained. My dad was physically present but emotionally absent. Consequently I felt unloved and rejected by him. And, while my mother was outwardly functional and held the family together, instead of her meeting my emotional needs, she leaned on me to meet many of hers which were not being met in her marriage. Thus my parents' dysfunctions were passed on to me and I, in turn, repeated them in my marriage. And unless I resolve these, I will pass them on to my children. Some I already have.

Like my mother, outwardly I was very functional, but inwardly I was hurt, angry, afraid and insecure. To overcome, I needed to get into recovery.

As loved people love people so hurt people hurt people. And what we the parents don't work out (resolve) our children will act out in one way or another. This is because what we fail to resolve is destined to be repeated in one form or another.

The Bible pointed out 4,000 years ago that the sins of the parents visit the third and fourth generation.¹ Probably more than anything else, it is the "emotional and relational sins" that are passed down from generation to generation.

Unless we who have been hurt break the chain from generations past, our children will be attracted to spouses from dysfunctional families and repeat the cycle and their children will do the same.

As loved people love people, so hurt people hurt people.



*"As loved people
love people, so hurt
people hurt people."*

Photo supplied by fotosearch.com

How then do we recover? It isn't easy, but with humility, honesty, courage, persistence, God's help and, where necessary, the help of a trained counselor and/or a support-recovery group, it can be done.

First, **face reality.** Realize that you are not alone; most families have some dysfunctions because nobody had perfect parents. The important thing is that we admit our dysfunctions and avoid denial—the major barrier to recovery.

Sometimes when a family is in denial the one acting out negatively is made the scapegoat for the family sickness. Other members reason, "If he would change we'd be okay." However, in every dysfunctional family there are no innocent parties. All are contributing something even if it is being an enabling codependent, like the spouse of an alcoholic.

Second, **accept responsibility.** As long as we blame anybody else for our problems, we avoid facing what we are contributing—and never recover. It would be easy for me to blame my parents for my problems, but they were also the products of their upbringing. So I look at my family, not to blame, but to understand what I need to resolve. Blaming others for my difficulties is a handy excuse to hang on to if I don't want to grow up. And if I continue to blame I will B—LAME!

No matter what happened to me in the past, I am responsible for what I do about it now and for what I become. It may be true that "I was a victim in the past but if I remain one, I am now a volunteer."

Third, **recognize the rules of dysfunctional family living**, which have been identified as follows: you don't talk, you don't trust, and you don't feel. That is, there is no trust in sharing family problems openly and honestly. Family secrets are kept hidden. Members are afraid to share their feelings. And the family lives in denial.

Fourth, **get connected to your pain.** We remain stuck in destructive behaviors because they serve a purpose. They are ways we learned to protect ourselves or try to solve our childhood problems. Some, like alcohol, are escapes. We learned others from our parents' dysfunction. Until we resolve



Photo supplied by fotosearch.com

those early pains it's incredibly difficult to give up our dysfunctional patterns.

We act out in destructive behaviors because we don't feel loved.

Fifth, **connect with others.** At the same time it is absolutely essential

***"We act out in
destructive behaviors
because we don't
feel loved."***

that we be connected to loving, accepting, and non-judgmental people with whom we can share our darkest secrets and who will love and accept us as we are. Through their love and acceptance we learn to love and accept ourselves. It is this love that heals us and sets us free. But we can only be loved to the degree that we are known. As the Bible teaches, when we walk in the light and confess our sins and faults to trusted friends we get connected, we find forgiveness, and we are healed.²

Sixth, **follow God's plan for recovery.** We were damaged in unhealthy family relationships—we are healed in healthy family relationships. The church, when it is functioning as God intended, provides wonderful help in recovery. We can find love, acceptance and forgiveness through Christ and through the family of God.

As the rules for a dysfunctional fam-

ily are don't talk, don't trust, and don't feel, the rules for a healthy family are talk, trust, and feel. So, to recover from the effects of a dysfunctional family background, you need to find a church or chapel that has recovery and support groups where it is safe to talk, to trust and to feel—where you will be loved for who you are and not for what you have or haven't done.

Small groups—be they care groups, support groups, therapy groups, or twelve-step recovery groups—are the closest thing to a family you can find. And as long as they are open, honest, safe, non-judgmental and loving, they have held the key for the recovery of millions of families and individuals. If you need further help for difficult problems, seek out the help of a professional Christian counselor or psychologist.

Finally, **ask for God's help to continue growing.** It is important not just to ask for help to overcome acting out symptoms. These negative behaviors show us that something is wrong at a deeper level of our life. So, we need to pray as follows, "God, here are the symptoms I see in my life (name the problems). Will you give me the courage to face the causes behind them and lead me to the help I need to resolve them." If you truly want God's help and do your part, God will help. [†]

¹ Exodus 34:7

² 1 John 1:7 with James 5:16



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THANKSGIVING

Praising the Lord

by Dr. Clyde M. Narramore

The book of Psalms ends with a magnificent symphony of praise! Let the earth praise the Lord! Let the heavens praise Him! Praise the Lord with instruments and voice. And finally, this majestic book of divine poetry ends with "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!"

What a sweeping command! Everything! Everyone! No one is too small, too old, too poor, or too rich to praise the Lord. Everyone has the blessed privilege of praising God.

Praise is the outgrowth of thankful hearts. When we are truly appreciative of someone, it is only natural to express our gratitude in praise. And so it is with God. When our hearts are overflowing with God's manifold goodness to us, for the great salvation He freely gives, we cannot help but praise Him. Sometimes people do not praise because they are so preoccupied with themselves and their activities that they fail to see God's mercy surrounding them day after day. Blessings brighten when we count them and we tend to see what we are looking for. If we want to be gloomy, there's gloom enough to keep us sad. If we want to rejoice, there is joy enough to keep us rejoicing! A clever real estate salesperson once told prospective buyers, "The only drawbacks to this lovely home are the litter of rose petals and the noise of songbirds!"



Photo supplied by iStock

Praise and thanksgiving should not depend on our circumstances. The Apostle Paul wrote, "In everything give thanks." Notice that Paul didn't say, "For everything give thanks." He said, "In everything give thanks." Some things are terrible and we should never give thanks for them. But we should give thanks in even the worst situations because God is with us and can help us grow and become more like Christ through difficulties and trials.

Think of Paul and Silas-how they were unjustly accused and beaten and thrown into prison. Their circumstances were miserable and gloomy. And yet the Bible says, "At midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God. And the prisoners heard them. As a result of their praise, the jailer and his entire family found the Lord as Savior. Yes, sometimes it is difficult to praise. There is little incli-

nation to thank the Lord when we are confronted with illness, financial reversals, or the loss of a loved one. It's hard to praise when our hearts are breaking because of some unresolved situation in life. But God tells us to offer the sacrifice of praise continually. Yet praising God is more than a duty. It is a joy and a blessed privilege.

We have so much to praise Him for! But undoubtedly the greatest praise in all the universe is simply to praise Him for Himself. Yes, praise Him for gifts of salvation and undying love. Praise Him for material blessings and for help for loved ones. But most of all, just praise Him for Himself. To this end were we created, that we might praise and adore our wonderful, wonderful Lord!

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you," (1Thessalonians 5:16-18). †