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COUNSELING TRENDS FOR CHAPLAINS AND CHURCH EDUCATORS

Gilbert W. Hull M.S.*

During the early 70's chaplains were leaning heavily on psychology for counseling direction. Humanistic skills were applied in many of the conferences I attended. Resource speakers were primarily concerned with counseling skills and a self-healing philosophy. When General Orris Kelly became chief, I observed a change. He reminded chaplains that religion was healing people long before psychology. The training conferences centered more on pastoral counseling. The word "minister" became as familiar as "shrink."

I see more of a healthy balance between humanistic skills and spiritual insight in recent years. This summer I worked with Chaplain John Reed at the Family Life Center at Ft. Lewis. We initiated a team Marriage Counseling approach. We complimented each other's style and blended spiritual and humanistic skills.

Eighty percent of the couples we worked with had a religious background and responded to spiritual contract challenges. They told us that they had made more progress in two weeks tying into contracts which required them to pray, forgive, establish faith and love than they had made in two years under a psychiatrist who only listened and did not challenge them.

I'm convinced that military people want chaplain counselors who have faith as well as skills, who will understand their values and challenge them to strengthen their relationship with God.

It pleases me to see the support and emphasis given to counseling in the chaplaincy. It's encouraging that more Commanders are willing to turn to chaplains and referral agencies to help their people cope.

There are two areas of concern for chaplains:

1. Volunteer Army

My concern with the volunteer army causes me to wonder about the level of their loyalty to the country. Can we buy loyalty with pay and fringe benefits?

After the Roman Empire became affluent, marriage became unpopular. Children were born without families to raise them. The boys were raised in military camps. You would think it would increase the military power of Rome to have soldiers trained from youth.

The soldiers were loyal as long as they got their benefits, but back in Rome all was not well. The bread lines became longer as people lost the desire to produce. The government had to reduce the rations to the army to meet the needs at Rome. It didn't take long for the

army to lose interest in defending Rome and the Huns came through without much resistance.

Who would think that the great empire would crumble? All it took was for the family to become disorganized. Without love and a feeling of permanence, trust and loyalty do not develop. Loyalty for country comes as a spin-off from family loyalty.

Do we have a lack of family integrity and loyalty in America today? Several years ago I worked in a psychiatric social work clinic at Ft. Lewis. I interviewed soldiers who had been picked up for AWOL. Ninety percent of those soldiers came from broken homes. Their behavior was without concern for consequences. They did not express feelings of loyalty for the country or responsibility for their conduct in the military.

The number I interviewed is rather small compared to the army total, but I am wondering how widespread the problem is. Does the military attract people who have had a problem home life? If so, can we help them fill in the blanks and help them learn to love?

National defense is not only a logistical problem; it is a human problem. What will it benefit us if we have sophisticated equipment unless our operators are loyal and willing to make personal sacrifices for the welfare of the nation?

2. Mobilization

In the event of war, reserve people will be required to leave their families in a relatively short period of time. It is my observation that units are preparing well for military performance, but are not preparing emotionally for a family separation. Active duty and Reserve Chaplains need to create a training model for helping mobilized families handle crisis. I have talked to several marriage counselors at universities who have indicated that we are lacking in understanding and skills to deal with war and mobilization crisis.

The crisis intervention counseling that is being done by chaplains is good for families facing peacetime interpersonal differences. Mobilization may create stress that will help some couples overcome selfishness. I suspect that those who have trouble handling mobilization will have high stress and will need insightful counseling before they will be able to function or perform well in the military.

As a MOBDEZ Chaplain, I feel a need to have open and frequent communication with active chaplains in preparation for mobilization. We need to know each other in gospel brotherhood. This will reduce the personal fear that many of our members will face in

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displacement because they will have the confidence of our relationship.

STUDENT COUNSELING AND THE ATONEMENT

Church education has always focused on effective teacher-student relationships, but the degree of emphasis on counseling skills and professional training has been reflected by the philosophy of the leadership. During my 23 years in the department, I have observed ebbs and flows.

During those years that seminary and institute teachers went to BYU summer schools, encouragement was given to teachers to take counseling. Several of our administrators received their degrees in counseling.

In recent years the emphasis has been directed toward teaching. I interviewed a zone administrator recently who indicated that fewer teachers are working for degrees in counseling now.

The charted course for seminary and institute instructors is to teach the gospel. When the gospel is taught effectively, the teacher is concerned about each student's needs and applies the subject in a personal way. Personal counseling can happen in a classroom when the teacher cares and is in tune with the Holy Spirit.

In an institute marriage class recently, we were discussing the need to understand psychological differences between men and women as a factor in mate selection. To illustrate the point I said, "Shannon, if you had a high sensitivity perception and loved the colors of a sunset and your fiance couldn't care less, would that matter to you?"

The next day Shannon told me that she had been trying to decide between two fellows. She had prayed and fasted to know where she should place her priorities. When I called her name and gave that illustration, she said she knew the answer; one of the men shares with her a love of nature and beauty; the other doesn't. Why did I associate her with this example? I felt inspired to. I did not know why. We were impressed that the Spirit guided that lesson direction to give her answers.

Teacher-counseling does not always happen with spiritual help unless the teacher knows the students' names and the subject matter so well that he can look beyond the worry of what idea comes next on the outline. A well-prepared teacher with a background in counseling is open to ideas of students and creatively shapes lesson material to complement the students' ideas or needs.

Effective classroom counseling is followed by an invitation to visit one-on-one. Shannon and I will always be close because we shared a spiritual experience and confirmed a feeling of trust that will create an open door for further individual counseling if she desires it.

A special warmth develops between students and a counselor-centered teacher. The subject matter becomes a tool to develop a close interpersonal relationship. This is the value of teaching the gospel. It is not an end in itself, but is truly "the way" for establishing trust and problem solving. It is people-centered, not subject matter-centered. The ideal counselor-teacher-student friendship is caught by this thought.

Oh, the comfort, the inexpressible
Comfort of feeling safe with a person,
Having neither to weigh thoughts,
Nor measure words, but pouring them
All right out--just as they are,
Chaff and grain together--
Certain that a faithful hand will
Take and sift them--
Keep what is worth keeping,
And with a breath of kindness
Blow the rest away.

by Dinah M. Craik

This quality counseling promotes unity and enhances a person's understanding of the atonement.

Jesus gave emphasis to life in his teachings and associations with men. He chided Mary and Martha for their sorrowing lack of faith at the death of Lazarus. When he was called to minister to the daughter of Jairus, he put out the mourners and told the girl's parents that she was not dead, but slept.

The death emphasis of Christian worship is more a product of the apostasy than the teachings of Jesus. He came to give life and to give it abundantly.

If we partake of the sacrament thinking of the death of Jesus on the cross, we may develop a reverence for him, but many may leave the service feeling they have "done their thing" as far as worshiping is concerned. The feeling sorry for the suffering of Jesus may become a surface ritual that does not transform the person into a more loving individual who plans for ways in the coming week to help a neighbor or to listen to a lonely person.

Jesus came not only to die for man to fulfill the law, but to teach men to make sacrifices in giving to one another and to God. This aspect of the atonement was explained by President McKay in a letter to his son David - (Reprinted in the "Instructor" - March 1959).

Then in the Meridian of Time came the Saviour of men, toward whose coming man in the morning of life had looked forward, and upon whose life man in the evening of life should look in retrospect. In the meridian of the earth's history came the Son of Man declaring the eternal truth so opposed to the promises of the earth, that *he that would save his life must lose it.*

And in His brief stay upon earth, how perfectly He exemplified this truth. He owned no land. He owned no house; for He had not where to lay His head. The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.' (Matthew 8:20)

His was a life of unselfish service--always helping those who were living incompletely to live completely--whether the incomplete living was caused by a physical defect such as

blindness or deafness, or whether through a moral defect such as the woman taken in sin--His mission was to give them life.

Now, my dear son, can you not carry this thought a little further and apply it even to the sacrificing of His life, to the shedding of His blood? Man's life is not dependent upon what this earth can give--his body, yes, but that is only the house in which man lives--but the spirit, the real man is above the selfish and the sensual, and seeks for its life and happiness the things which are eternal--faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, Godliness, brotherliness, charity.

In His life and death, therefore, Christ not only fulfilled the law of sacrifice but He fulfilled every conceivable condition necessary for men to know in order to rise or progress from earthly life to eternal life. 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.' (John 12:32)

In this I think I glimpse, ever so dimly, a reason for Christ's shedding His blood--in addition to the one generally offered for the redemption of man from the Fall. I confess that the latter has moved me less than the realization that in His life He lived for His fellow men, and in His death, he triumphed over all earthly elements, over the power of *Death, Hell,* and the Evil One, and arose from the grave, an eternal Being--our Guide, our Savior, our God.

The meaning of AT-ONE-MENT brings man into oneness with God. Jesus, by His loving grace and infinite power, gave man hope. Through personal repentance we can increase our faith in Christ's forgiveness and overcome the self destructive influence of sin. We can become whole again with God. A spiritual conviction of the atonement of Jesus and love for people may help transform lives through using the atonement principle.

The atonement is not only an act performed by Jesus but a principle of power that worthy priesthood counselors may use to help heal. We do not have the power to forgive sin, nor do we have the divine calling of the Savior, but we do have potential to give to those who are troubled.

Satan is a clever cleaver. He not only works to separate us from God through sin, but also from ourselves and others. I do not imply that all those who find it hard to deal with mental problems are into sin, but that Satan's purposes are accomplished either way if the person is out of harmony with their best potential.

Psychological atonement happens when a counselor combines Christ-like love and caring skills. The person coming for help temporarily leans on the counselor's credibility with faith that help will come. At that point the counselor is doing something for that person that they feel unable to do for themselves. Healing happens as the counselor, using a variety of skills, helps the person identify the problem and look at alternatives for solving the problem. Dependence on the counselor is supplanted by self responsibility and success conviction. The person being counseled also increases his faith in the counselor and the principles on which he operates.

As a bishop I have thrilled to see many members go

from despair and uselessness to a smiling unity with their Heavenly Father. This AT-ONE experience not only happens between the member and Heavenly Father, but his self-wholeness is demonstrated in self-reliant behavior.

It is an honor and a sacred trust to use the power of the priesthood in counseling. When I have been willing to make sacrifices to meet the needs of those seeking to be whole, I have been closer to the Savior and have more clearly felt the love He expresses.

Using the atonement as a principal of counseling helps a teacher prepare students to understand parenthood:

Here it is 3:20 A.M. The baby is crying. You have a test in sociology at 11:00 A.M. Your first impulse is to awaken your wife, but then you remember she was up late with the baby and had bottled ninety-five bottles of peaches. One higher note of distress brings your feet to the floor, soon your trunk and head follow. Staggering from sleepiness and darkness you make your way to the fridge. After pouring formula over your hand for several seconds you finally get enough coordination to get the bottle filled. Fully awake, you pick up your little boy and in the peace of the September night you meet his needs.

As his crying changes to contented slurps and you can sense his relaxed trust, the rocker becomes a sanctuary as you begin to glimpse the joy of sacrifice, of giving to another person. By doing something for him that he cannot do for himself, you understand more clearly the mission of the Savior.

The Spirit enhances your thinking, as does the melody of the squeaking chair. You think, "maybe that is why babies are dependent for such a long time."

As our children travel farther each year away from home, Marilyn and I pray that they will make contact with spiritual counselors that believe in Christ and practice in harmony with the principles of the atonement. Oneness, unity and personality wholeness are the anchors for religious and emotional maturity.

Our young adult members of the church who seek help from counselors who practice from a humanistic orientation exclusively are often encouraged to separate from their religious values. Kinds of behavior are suggested that are meant to liberate the young adult from what is viewed as "unhealthy restrictions." In some cases, I have observed the counselors to be personally disturbed and confused about religion. Their skills were not the problem.

In every case that I am familiar with, young adults who were convinced to behave contrary to their values suffered from intense guilt or from self-imposed social displacement.

Jung, in explaining his theory of personality, implied that trouble comes when there is too wide a gap between the persona or fickle self and the collective

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Can we be worthy of the trust people have in us? Are we grateful for the challenge to give, that Jesus taught so well in the atonement?

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unconscious. Maslow and Rogers impress upon us that mental health depends on harmony and being "fully functioning."

"Wholeness" of self is the mountain ridge that leads to knowing God according to President Brigham Young.

The greatest lesson you can learn is to know yourselves. When we know ourselves, we know our neighbors. When we know precisely how to deal with ourselves, we know how to deal with our neighbors. You have come here to learn this. You cannot learn it immediately, neither can all the philosophy of the age teach it to you; you have to come here to get a practical experience and to know yourselves. You will then begin to learn more perfectly the things of God. No being can thoroughly know himself, without understanding more or less of the things of God; neither can any being learn and understand the things of God without knowing himself; he must know himself, or he never can know God."

8:334

Discourses of Brigham Young
p.269

The ultimate goal of spiritual counseling is not only to help a person gain a healthy self-concept, but to put water in the lock that will open the channel between self understanding and a loving relationship with Christ and Heavenly Father. This is our charted course.