

Relating to Thirsty Souls

2019-10-20 by Ben Deaver at Tallgrass Church on Jeremiah 2:13; Proverbs 20:5; John 4:13-14

Mega Mingle Time:

You have 10 minutes to do four things: 1) Find a person or two. 2) Get a drink if needed. 3) Pick one question. 4) Use the rest of your 10 minutes for everyone to fully answer the question with as much detail as possible.

1. What's the scariest thing you've done for fun? Why?
2. What are three foods that aren't made better by chocolate, Ranch, or hot sauce?
3. What's your favorite children's toy? Why?
4. If you had an extra hour of free time a day, how would you use it? Why?
5. If you were the eighth dwarf, what would your name be? Why?
6. If you could instantly be good at something, what would it be? Why?
7. What is your favorite movie? Why?
8. What's your deepest, darkest secret? (Jk, don't answer this one!)

Announcements:

- Giving Intention cards
- Thrivent Workshop—Investment Basics

Stewardship Testimonies:

- Kate Deaver
- Chris Swanson
- Dan Chitwood
- Drew Fratecelli
- Terrance Thomas

Relating to Thirsty Souls

We are thirsty.

- We are people. We are human beings, embodied souls, created thirsty for relationship, relationship with our Creator and with one another.
- We were created thirsty. We were created for a lush garden that fed our souls with relationship with God, but not just that, relationship with one another.
- We are thirsty. We don't know how to quench our thirst. There is One who can and we can help one another connect to Him.

Jeremiah 2:13 NIV My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

PRAY

- Cistern—a receptacle for water conveyed to it; distinguished from a fountain, which denotes a place where water rises on the spot. Cisterns are frequently mentioned in Scripture. The scarcity of springs in Palestine made it necessary to collect rain-water in reservoirs and cisterns.
- The prophet Jeremiah is speaking on behalf of God who's sad because the people are not remembering how he made a way where there was no way.
- He's specifically addressing the Israelites at a certain time in history but his message holds true for all of humanity ever since the fall.
- CamelBak illlus: Get ready to go on a big hike and you've got a leaky CamelBak. How's that going to work out for you?

We don't know how to quench our thirst.

Jeremiah 2:13 NIV My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

- The ways we try to quench our thirst don't work. Broken Relationships = our thirst isn't quenched
- We've been sinned against and we sin against others. Hurt people, hurt people.
- We're living in a desolate desert when we were made for a lush garden. How are you doing living in a world you weren't made for?
- We've all dug our own broken cisterns that don't really hold water very well at all. These are strategies to make life work apart from God. At times, they even become our identity and that's who we think we are. Some are clearly broken, and with some it's really difficult to see the brokenness.
 - Some broken cisterns clearly don't hold water.
 - Drug Addict
 - Alcoholic
 - Some are more subtly broken cisterns.
 - Sex Addict
 - Workaholic
 - Some are even more subtle, like addiction to busyness, or ministry, or making people like you because you're a nice person.
 - Mr. Responsibility
 - Gym Rat
 - Cool Car Guy
 - Funny Girl
 - Social Butterfly
 - The Expert
 - Ministry Junkie
 - Figure-it-out Dude
 - The Loner
 - The Wealthy Person
 - The Family Guy
 - The Depressed Person
- **Proverbs 20:5a NIV** The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters...
- What all makes up these deep waters?
 - Childhood Scenes
 - Take a moment with me. What scenes come to mind from your childhood right now? Chances are, there's something significant from those scenes that have something to do with the broken cisterns you've dug apart from God.
 - Family of Origin
 - Divorce, drug use, suicide, mental health issues
 - Trauma

- Abuse
- Wounding
- Victim & Victimizer
- Lies
- Fear
- Shame
- Let me tell you a story about a nine-year-old boy who moved from Chadron, NE, a town of 5000 in the Nebraska panhandle, yes, there's a panhandle, to inner city Kansas City, KS, 29th and Minnesota to be exact. This boy's name is Ben. We moved when I was about a year younger than my oldest daughter, Kate.
- I went to Mark Twain Elementary School in the middle of the school year. I was super insecure...and afraid. I was told that you shouldn't wear red or blue because the Bloods or the Crips would kill you for those colors. The first day of school was school spirit day and we were to wear our school colors. Guess what our school colors were? You got it, red and blue. So I wore a red sweatshirt and blue sweat pants, and I was terrified. I remember hearing someone say, "Man, you're trippin'!" And I didn't see anyone trip so didn't understand what he was talking about so I quietly asked someone, "What does tripping mean?" This kid made fun of me. "Man, he doesn't know what trippin' means."
- **CRACK!**
- Thus began the last thirty years of being triggered by public shaming. You know how I figured out that situation? Next thing I remember, we're playing kickball and I get up to kick and kick a homerun. Everyone cheered, and now everyone liked me. I had figured it out. Perform well, and people will like you and you won't be publicly shamed. But it's up to me to figure it out, but I can do it.
- **CRACK!**
- My figure-it-out-ability became my strategy to make life work apart from God. That was the broken cistern that I dug, even at that early age. The lie, God won't provide for you, you must provide for you. Being made to look foolish in public is the worst thing that could ever happen to you. You must protect against that ever occurring again. This trigger follows me to this day.
 - We often believed lies before the Word of God ever had a chance to take root in our heart. Wounding normally occurs prior to our ability to have cognitive reasoning, probably around age 10-12 for most of us. We were misled before we could understand.
 - The Enemy of God, Satan, doesn't care about age appropriateness. He goes after us when we are young, when we are just beginning to be formed up cognitively.
 - **CRACK!**
 - Often our strategies work for a time and are almost necessary to help us navigate a broken world. My figure-it-out-ability helped me get through all of 5th grade through high school in KCK without getting beat up once. But it also set in motion an independence from God that I almost constantly need to repent from.
 - Most people don't see my strategy at first or ever. They see a pretty good dude who's in full-time ministry with a lovely family and a nice dog. They don't see the thirsty Ben trying to get life with a broken cistern who's in constant need of repentance, of turning back again to the source of life, Jesus Christ.
 - **CRACK!**

There is one who can quench our thirst.

- **Proverbs 20:5 NIV** The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out.
- In John 4 we meet a woman who had dug her own cistern, and it was so broken that she was done being around people. Watch how Jesus draws out the deep waters of her soul to connect her to the source of life, Himself.
- **Look at John 4:7-26**
- **John 4:13-14** ¹³ Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."
 - The goal is that Jesus would become my strategy for making life work.
- We *can* quench our thirst and help others quench their thirst. We can drink deeply! We can have restored relationships and we can make an impact on the world around us. But it'll take some soul work, a hard look below the waterline.
- *Understanding People*, Larry Crabb—In Proverbs 20:5 the purposes of a person's heart are said to be like deep waters. In shallow water you can see bottom. In deep water you can't. Part of the self-deception we practice is the denial of what our motives really are to the point where we simply do not see them.

Three Agents to Help Me Change

1. The Word of God (Hebrews 4:12-13)
 2. The Spirit of God (Psalm 139:23-24)
 3. The People of God (Hebrews 3:13)
- God uses us as agents of healing in one another's stories.
 - It's pretty much impossible to walk this out without community. Community is one of the things we were designed for. It is the place where we are responsible for the care of one another's souls.
 - "Shouting 'self-care' at people who actually need community care is how we fail people." —Nakita Valerio
 - Nakita is a Muslim woman. She's a community organizer who shared this Facebook post nine days after the massacre of 50 Muslims in Christchurch, New Zealand this past March.
 - This post went viral.
 - Self-care is about the individual caring for their own basic physical needs, whereas community care is focused on the collective: taking care of people together, for everything from basic physical needs to psychological and even spiritual ones. Community care is a recognition of the undeniable cooperative and social nature of human beings and involves a commitment to reduce harm simply through being together.
 - Community care that helps us connect with Jesus.
 - The guy on your left and the gal on your right may have a role to play in your healing, in your reconnection to the living waters.
 - I love learning about secular research that gets at what God has been saying all along.
 - *Everything you think you know about addiction is wrong*; 2015 TED Talk by Johann Hari
 - The opposite of addiction is not sobriety, it's connection.
 - "Rat Park" article—<https://www.psychiatrytimes.com/substance-use-disorder/what-does-rat-park-teach-us-about-addiction>
 - *This could be why you're depressed or anxious*; 2019 TED Talk by Johann Hari
 - Don't just be you. Be we. Be us.
 - All about relationships.
 - Yes, it's all about relationships but more specifically about relationships that culminate in relationship with our Creator!

10 Tips for Drawing Out Deep Waters:

- These tips are also what's needed in group settings too.
- We want to be a soul-caring community.
- Most of these are taken from a great resource Dave Geldart put together that's on our website called *20 Practical Counseling Tips*.

1. Dive into your own deep waters.

- a. The most powerful way to be helpful to another is to have walked in your own story.
- b. We're convinced at Tallgrass Church that walking into your own story is so important.
- c. Paul can say he forgets what lies behind and strains forward to what lies ahead in Philippians 3 not because he doesn't think processing your past is important but precisely because he has processed his story already so well. He very much knew the strategy he was using. He had been a resume-builder.
- d. Philippians 3:4b-6 If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.
- e. We want to be people of understanding and discernment so we can enter into our own and others' stories and draw out the heart.

2. Find an intentional environment.

- a. You can dive deeper into one another's lives in certain environments.
- b. Central Gathering—LIFE Group—Smaller groups—One-on-One
 - i. Central Gathering Question and Response and Testimonies probably isn't the time to announce, "I have a terrible porn addiction." But there does need to be a safe environment for that statement to be said and heard.
- c. You can help one another by bringing curiosity in daily interactions. We're also trying to become equipped for more intentional Soul Care. Soul Care is have a set aside time for 6-8 weeks or more to really explore how lies of the Enemy were shaped in someone's life with an eye to how it's impacting current realities and how to increasingly rely on Jesus as one's strategy to make life work well.

3. Bring curiosity. Ask questions, and then listen.

- a. Curiosity about their story and curiosity about what God is up to. How does their story connect to God's story?
- b. Understanding the why behind the behavior.
- c. Why would I do that or think that? What's going on in your heart when you say that? What's promoting that kind of thinking? Where did this come from? What are you getting from this behavior?
- d. What is God up to in this person's life?
- e. Keep asking questions about the responses to your questions.
- f. Trying to get at what's below the waterline. Keep digging. Pay attention to how people tell their stories. Do they summarize with a throw away comment. "It's all good though." "It is what it is."
- g. We're often so content to skim the surface in conversation with one another because we're afraid of what's below the surface...but that's where lasting, inside-out type of change occurs, below the waterline.

4. Don't fix, because ultimately you can't fix it.

- a. Don't offer those attempts at quick-fixes like throwing a Bible verse at someone prematurely.
- b. "Just trust God." "Pray more." Romans 8:28. "It'll all work out." "Let go and let God."
- c. Don't move to behavior modification.
- d. Bob Newhart and Stop It
- e. The goal is not to fix anyone but to help bring a deep awareness of how our past wounds connect with our present behavior and impacts our relationship with Jesus and with people.
- f. The goal is intimacy with Jesus that leads to deeper, healthier relationships with our spouses, children, family, friends, and neighbors. We are not going to get "fixed" until Jesus returns.

5. Resist the strong pull to quickly identify.

- a. Brian Regan and the Me Monster

6. Don't act surprised when someone drops something heavy from their story on you.

- a. You can be surprised but try not to show it.
- b. "You did what?!?!"

7. Some things are "deal breakers" meaning you've got to let someone else know.

- a. Suicidal ideation. Comments about harming themselves or others. Abuse.
- b. We have a list of professional counselors on tallgrass.church. Refer to is as needed.
- c. We believe 95% of our issues can be addressed in healthy community but sometimes extra help is needed...and that's ok.

8. Pay attention to how their story is impacting you.

- a. What's been left out? What scenes of trauma are they sharing? Is there missing emotion? Do you feel that they are wrapping it up with a nice and neat bow but there may be more there? Are you feeling pulled to offer pity?

9. Curiosity, then connections.

- a. How is your life today connected to past scenes in your life?
- b. How can you now connect to Jesus better than before?
- c. If there's a disagreement between you and Jesus, who gets to be right?
- d. Disrupt and entice.
- e. This is what soul care is as we use that phrase, bringing curiosity to one another's stories and then making connections about how your story is impacting you today, and then helping connect one another to Jesus.
- f. We want to help people discover the positive side of their strategy to make life work apart from God. My strategy to make life work is also part of my design. I'm actually good at figuring things out. It's part of how God has made me and how he wants to use me for good. But when it's my strategy to quench my thirst for relationship and impact then it's no longer God-honoring and won't ultimately work.
- g. My recent attempts to figure it out to stave off public humiliation—fixing the Tallgrass budget! Sounds so silly, but I could feel myself trying to figure out how to make things go better for our church plant, more because I didn't want to look bad than because of my deep commitment to Jesus and His Kingdom. How's that for a confession from your pastor? I've been in need of repentance and I've

been battling for repentance, turning back to the source of life, God himself, to satisfy my deepest thirst for relationship and meaning. Yet, I still have an important role to play in figuring things out...while I'm connecting to Jesus.

10. Thank them for sharing. Then, what's the next step from here?

- a. It's scary sharing your story with someone.
- b. Receiving people's stories truly is a gift.

Gospel Connection

- Jesus was broken on our behalf. His strategy to make life work the way he wanted it to was to willingly be forsaken by God as he took upon himself all of our brokenness, hurt, shame, fear, sin, everything about our stories that makes us shrink in hiding or step into the public with a false image.
- **Isaiah 53:5** But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.
- Healing doesn't happen all at once. It's a process called sanctification. And I am honored to be able to play a small part in helping you connect with the source of life. And helping us help one another connect to the source of life.
- He will undo all the hurts and pains and brokenness. He will wipe away every tear.
- Just as Jesus' physically resurrected body bears the scars of his abuse and crucifixion so will we bear the scars of our broken cisterns...but in the light of Jesus, our story of redemption will be all the more beautiful.
- We dig broken cisterns, but Jesus makes beautiful things!

Pray

Q&R&Testimonies

The Chopping Block:

- **Luke 11:37-41** ³⁷ While Jesus was speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him, so he went in and reclined at table. ³⁸ The Pharisee was astonished to see that he did not first wash before dinner. ³⁹ And the Lord said to him, “Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. ⁴⁰ You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? ⁴¹ But give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you.
- **2 Corinthians 10:3-6** ³ For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. ⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. ⁵ We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, ⁶ being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.
- **Romans 12:2** Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.
 - Paul, Peter, Judas, Jesus
 - Emotional maturity will cap your spiritual maturity.
 - You’ll be controlled by your emotions unless you understand where they are coming from.
 - Soul care is about rewiring our brain’s pathways.
- **2 Corinthians 3:18** And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.
 - Soul care is about cleaning up that mirror so I can see Jesus in me.
- **Hebrews 10:24-25** ²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.
- **Galatians 6:1-5** Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. ² Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. ³ If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. ⁴ Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, ⁵ for each one should carry their own load.
- There’s need to discover some of the lies you believe, the damage those lies have done, and how to live in truth and freedom.
- This isn’t a template but rather a model.
- Jesus as someone who cares for souls.
 - Jesus with the rich young ruler.
 - Bleeding woman
 - Jairus’ daughter
 - Women of Luke 8:1-3
 - Moses story
- God and Israel
- Dignity and Depravity
- Everyone has been wounded in this fallen, broken world.
- God desires restoration for everyone.
- Shame
- Disrupt and Entice
- Emotional Intelligence
- Maris share her story with soul care.
- Maris and I demonstrate a conversation.
- All Souls’ Day—https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All_Souls%27_Day
- Spiritual Direction (more listening to what the person brings up) vs. Soul Care (more intense questioning)
- Prayerful, Subversive, Apocalyptic—Eugene Peterson

- Ezekiel 14:1-5

Understanding People: Why We Long for Relationship by Larry Crabb

- These questions, we must realize, are not being asked only by patients in a psychiatrist's office. They are rumbling within the hearts of the worship leader, the small group leader, and the young couple who just started coming to church. All Christians have deeply troubling questions that should be asked. Many never voice them, however, because to ask them breaks the rules of our community. Christians are supposed to have it all together. Many others have coped with life by denying their struggles for so long that they are really unaware they exist.
- I might also think through what brings pleasure to people by pondering the psalmist's statement that he longed for God the way a thirsty deer desires water (Psalm 42:1). Could legitimate longings for God somehow be perverted into a craving for bizarre forms of sexual relief? Perhaps the biblical category of male/female has implications that will help to put the puzzle together. Perhaps the male exhibitionist desires impact, the sort of impact that God intended men to experience as they take hold of their worlds. Maybe he has come to the wrong and sinful conclusion that meaningful impact is not available to him and therefore feels a profoundly frustrating emptiness. Shocking a woman by displaying the physical evidence of his maleness maybe his sinful strategy for finding the satisfaction he thinks he can find nowhere else. Perhaps the exhibitionist is an example of Jeremiah's description of thirsty people who hew for themselves broken cisterns, which hold no water but at least provide a temporary, counterfeit thrill of fulfilled maleness (Jeremiah 2:13).
- People have problems. By the standards of a flabby Christianity that is more concerned with how people look than with deep relationships with others, things aren't too bad. Every congregation has its share of depressed people, unfaithful spouses, and rebellious students, but most of the saints are getting along quite nicely.
- But when the measuring stick of panting after God with passionate love and serving others from compassion-filled hearts is applied, more of us can be seen to fall short. Relationships, by that standard, really aren't terribly good. It's not just the people struggling with anxiety attacks and misguided sexual urges who need help; it's all of us. If we are to know how to move ourselves and others toward life as it is meant to be lived, we must address three vital questions: Who are we? Why do we have so many problems? What are the solutions?
- Second, problems. It requires little insight to conclude that something is wrong with people. The human machine has got its wires crossed somewhere. Some people get depressed when a friend is unkind to them; others seem happily oblivious to massive rejection. Many of us wage an unsuccessful war against our urge to eat more than we should. A few exhibit commendable self-discipline. For increasing numbers of younger women, appropriate self-control changes into a determined pursuit of thinness through obsessive dieting, sometimes to the point of poor health and even death. Most marriages begin with the warm glow of anticipated intimacy. Nearly one-half of them end in divorce. Most fall short of expectation. Sexual frustrations often remain unresolved and are handled by emotional and physical retreat. Strong sexual urges sometimes press so urgently for gratification that people sacrifice family and career for a few moments of corrupt pleasure. Churches that begin with enthusiastic pledges of unity sometimes divide into two camps, resulting either in cold war, hot war, or a split. Some churches enjoy a measure of real unity, but none make it through without significant problems. When we hear of a friend's child who gets in trouble, we may notice a smug satisfaction mingled with our sincere concern. At other times or with other friends, we sense a more thorough ability to weep with those who hurt. What is wrong with us? We're really not very good at relationships. Why not? What is the root of our problems? That's the second question.
- My starting point as I try to understand people is this: People are fallen image-bearers. I accept this premise because the Bible accepts it.
- Each of us is — a personal being who longs deeply; — a rational being who thinks; — a volitional being who chooses; — an emotional being who feels.
- Why is that so? Why do we rarely attack a problem with a determination to get at the root of things? Do we suspect intuitively that it might be more painful to face the core problem directly than to continue enduring the obvious one? Why do we settle for a level of understanding that, whether accurate or not, gives us the

good feeling that at least we're doing something about our problem, but that at the same time shifts attention away from deep parts within us? Let me illustrate what I'm talking about. A middle-aged husband told me in his second session of marriage counseling, "I think we're communicating now. You were right last time when you pointed out how defensive we both were. You made us think, and we have really made some good progress in opening up to each other. Thanks for getting us on the right track. I think things will go pretty well now." I turned to his wife and asked if she shared his optimism. With tears forming in her eyes and a trace of anger in her otherwise sad voice, she answered, "I hope so. I'm not sure if I'm feeling all that I wish I were feeling. Some things I just couldn't say to him — I'd be too scared." Her husband glared at her in angry disbelief. Another man — a pastor — wanted to talk about his teenage daughter who had recently been slipping into depression. Grades were dropping, she was associating with "undesirable" friends, and her attitude toward spiritual things was cool. The father shared, "I think the real problem is peer pressure. She has a poor self-image, probably because she's taller than most girls — she's always been sensitive about that. I think that makes her more concerned with group acceptance than she ought to be. Our plan is to keep a tighter rein on who she spends time with and to get her more involved with the youth group in our church. She says she doesn't like our new youth pastor, but I think that's part of her bad attitude right now toward the Lord. I wanted your input to see if you might suggest some additional steps that would be helpful." I suggested that we might look more closely at relationships within the family (including the husband-wife relationship) because tensions in one member often reflect difficult patterns of relating among others. The pastor stiffened, his wife (who had said nothing during our first fifteen minutes of interaction) looked away from us both, and our conversation was cut short when the pastor remembered a meeting he needed to attend. When I wondered out loud if they felt uncomfortable with the prospect of discussing their family life, they both smiled and said no as they hurried out.

- Most of us simply are not good at observing ourselves and reflecting honestly on what we see. There is an almost reflexive resistance to asking if perhaps we are haughty or defensive or resentful or scared or controlling. We quickly feel uncomfortable when someone interrupts a perfectly pleasant social chat by offering to give us direct feedback about how we come across to others. Even clear expressions of warm feelings that come from deep parts within us are sometimes hard to force out of our lips, and even more difficult to respond to from others.
- The whole point of self-exploration is to learn that we are dependent beings whose life requires union with God.
- All false routes to joy, it should be noted in passing, have one thing in common: they represent strategies for living that in some measure we can control. They do not require us to yield our core commitment to independence. God's message is consistent: complete trust in another is the route to satisfaction.
- Let me try to reduce this profound longing for relationship to a simple definition: Each of us fervently wants someone to see us exactly as we are, warts and all, and still accept us.
- Let me define this thirst for impact as a desire to be adequate for a meaningful task, a desire to know that we are capable of taking hold of our world and doing something valuable and well.
- Biblical counseling, I submit, must aim toward a unique kind of change. Relief from depression, happier feelings, improved marriages, and more biblical behaviors may be involved in change worthy of an image-bearer, but they do not define it. Image-bearers must change in a way that enables a deeper, worshipful, intimate enjoyment of God and a compassionate, penetrating, rich involvement with others. Enjoying God and involvement with others — in a word, improved relationships — that's change!
- Healthy people deeply enjoy God, expressed with occasional bursts of ecstasy followed by long periods of quiet allegiance. Their lives are anchored in him. They know that in their deepest parts they have felt his touch. That touch increasingly liberates them to be more fully involved with others. They are free to enter into other people's lives, openly and vulnerably, with neither protection nor defensiveness, because they are not threatened by the pain of disappointment and conflict that inevitably occurs in rich involvement among fallen people. This inevitable pain does not cause them to back away behind walls of appropriateness ("I'll do what is expected of me") or spiritualized retreat ("Well, we must pray about it"). Mature Christians don't retreat, they increase the level of their involvement. Healthy people do understand the importance of timing and discretion as they move toward people with whom they experience conflict. And they know, as not-yet-

glorified saints, that their efforts at involvement will never be perfectly timed or thoroughly discreet. But still they move toward, not away. Involvement, not retreat, is their lifestyle. And therefore their lives have quiet power. Their very presence is felt by a few people in a way that makes them want to live more nobly. Another reality is that healthy people experience a marred joy. For them, life is lived in the minor key, but with an eager anticipation of the day when the Master Musician will strike up the eternal anthem in the major key. Healthy people are sad because they know things are not now as they should be, yet their disappointment with the world is not expressed in anger. They long for a better day, confident that it will come but groaning until it does. Healthy people are not afraid of confusion. They have given up their claim to independence and control and can therefore tolerate, even welcome, uncertainty. Confusion deepens their vulnerability to being led by someone who is not confused. They enter warmly into their inherent dependence as finite beings by defining faith as the courage to move on in the absence of clarity. They struggle — and sometimes fail. They feel some temptations more deeply than less healthy people — and occasionally they yield. But they know what it means to repent from the core of their beings, to tear down the idols to which they looked for satisfaction, and to return to the God of life through whom relationship and impact are available.

- Real change means change in the inner person, where a deceitful heart, full of motives hidden even to ourselves, and a darkened mind, holding ideas that we may consciously disown, must be exposed and confronted by the message of God.
- The child whose awkwardness never fails to provoke Dad to anger has learned to see herself as a clumsy kid in a world where clumsiness is rejected. These perceptions of herself and her world constitute her primary images. Her task now becomes to figure out a strategy by which a clumsy kid in a world that rejects clumsiness can find a measure of happiness. Because she is sinfully committed to independence as the route to life, she must come up with a strategy over which she has full control. As with images, one's particular environment limits the range of strategies that may be employed. Perhaps this clumsy girl has a mother who is terribly conscious of her social standing. (The example is oversimplified for the sake of illustration). Therefore she may highly value graciousness and courtesy in her children, especially in the presence of socially "important" company. The girl observes her mother's warm smile whenever she behaves well with other adults, saying things like, "Thank you," and "It's been a pleasure to meet you." So her corrupted rational faculties may arrive at an idea for gaining what she deeply wants. Perhaps sociability could serve as her route to acceptance and value. If she is too clumsy to carry a glass of water without spilling it, maybe she can put people at ease with well-chosen words. A few successful experiences could confirm her mistaken belief that sociability leads to life. Depending on a host of factors (such as opportunity and natural talents), this child may become a maître d' in a posh restaurant, a prosperous salesperson, a smooth-talking politician, or a well-loved pastor regarded by her congregation as a caring people-person. The motivation energizing her pursuits will likely be labeled (by herself and others) as a love for people coupled with a fortunate ability to relate well. Her ability to win approval through sociability may even be hailed as a spiritual gift. Beneath her lifestyle, however, is a sinful and foolish belief: sociability is the route to life. Real change from an unhealthy person who lives for herself to a healthy person who loves and lives for God requires a change in that belief. It must be identified and exposed for what it is — part of a commitment to make life work without God. Her confident belief in herself amounts to rebellious unbelief in God. The only cure is repentance.
- Understanding where we have been victimized provides us with rich opportunity to practice forgiveness. Understanding how we have chosen to respond to what has happened to us defines where we need to repent.
- But if no work is done beneath the waterline, then work above the waterline results in a disastrous externalism in which visible conformity to local standards is all that matters. That community will be characterized by pressure, judgmentalism, legalism, and pride rather than by deep love for God and for others. Pastors and other Christian leaders who work only above the waterline produce either robots or rebels. And the robots, who agreeably conform to expectations, continue in their unconscious pursuit of broken cisterns that can hold no water. Images that preserve the opportunity to live in the strength of their own resources and beliefs that map out a strategy for finding fulfillment (problems beneath the waterline) remain unidentified, out of awareness, and stubbornly in place.

- Soloists sing for their own glory and are appreciated for their talents; teenagers faithfully spend time with God every day and are therefore admired as godly kids; business executives give generously to the church and are treated with respect by pastors and church staff; and the congregation overflows with Pharisees, people who above the waterline are clean and spiritual but who below the waterline are filled with unrecognized corruption. We must learn to deal with problems below the waterline that typically remain unidentified but still have serious effects on how we live. We must understand what is going on within the personality and figure out how to help people deal with those parts that block movement toward increasing dependence on God.
- Because of our commitment to remain in control of our world for purposes of self-protection, we are unwilling to experience our desperate pain and to repent of our sinful strategies. It is therefore true people do not see themselves clearly until they are exposed by another. God has provided three instruments to promote self-exposure: • The Word of God (Hebrews 4:12 – 13) • The Spirit of God (Psalm 139:23 – 24) • The People of God (Hebrews 3:13) It is my responsibility to solicit help actively from these three agencies to understand better the wrong directions I am unconsciously choosing and to cooperate with them as they seek to expose me.
- But still the pain exists, and we are motivated to find relief. As relational beings we devise strategies for responding to life that will keep the pain out of awareness and, we hope, gain at least a measure of the satisfaction we want. The particular strategies we develop emerge as the product of our images of ourselves and the world and our beliefs about what can be done.
- In Proverbs 20:5 the purposes of a person's heart are said to be like deep waters. In shallow water you can see bottom. In deep water you can't. Part of the self-deception we practice is the denial of what our motives really are to the point where we simply do not see them.
- The task of counseling is identical to the task of the church: promoting maturity.
- Maturity will be most clearly visible in the way people relate to one another. Bible study habits, ministry involvement, frequency of sharing one's faith, discipline in lifestyle, time spent in prayer, willingness to sacrifice personal comforts, spending patterns — each of these is important, but all can be evident without maturity as their basis.
- Love cannot be measured by above-the-waterline activity. Compliments, warm smiles, and affectionate pats never define love. So much of what passes for Christian community represents the well-developed art of graciously distancing one another for purposes of personal comfort. To love means to come toward another person without self-protection, to esteem others greater than ourselves. Our Lord, as always, is the supreme example. As Philippians 2:7 tells us, he "made himself of no reputation" (KJV), giving up the privileges of deity, in order to experience death for us. To involve oneself with another for the purpose of ministry is risky. It requires that we concern ourselves with another's welfare rather than our own. Easy words. But vulnerable ministry offered to people who cannot be trusted to respond appreciatively is frightening, and when their response is neglect or rejection, the pain can be unbearable. Continued involvement at that point is the ultimate measure of love. Our Lord died for friends who rejected him and for soldiers who beat him.
- The woman who as a child was laughed at for her simple ideas will not share her opinion when her husband asks for it, even though he sincerely desires and respects it. Why? Is it because of the unhealed memory of her father's derisive scorn? Or is it rather because she regards her very life at risk if her husband fails to be thoroughly sensitive? Her silence is not submissive; it is self-protective. Love requires that she voice her thoughts.
- Another woman, whose background required her to speak up in order to win the attention she coveted, offers her opinion easily to her husband. To the degree that sharing her ideas represents her effort to keep her husband responsive to her needs, love might insist that she hold her tongue when she senses that her husband is threatened by her words.
- Mature people are committed both to the abandonment of self-protection and to involvement in whatever fashion will encourage others to move toward God. Mature people are aware that self-protection can be terribly subtle; they never treat the issue as simple (e.g., "Since I really don't care what people think of me, I have no problem with self-protection"). Mature wives respond more to the hurt beneath their husbands' ill manners than to their own feelings of rejection. Mature husbands recognize their own struggle with

inadequacy but do not require their wives to be for them what they want. Mature parents feel keenly the joys and sorrows of their children's ups and downs, but they grant them a separateness that frees them from the responsibility of keeping their parents intact. Mature singles face the necessary emptiness in that part of their souls that only a mate can touch. Yet they still regard themselves as full, open to marriage, and dedicated to ministry. Mature people relate to others without self-protection as their controlling motive. They love. Their actions may be gentle or brusque, silly or serious, traditional or progressive, quiet or noisy, gracious or severe, tolerant or confrontive, but they will be patient, kind, not envious, humble, sensitive, other-centered, slow to anger, quickly forgiving, haters of wrong, lovers of right, protective, trusting, hoping, persevering. They relate to others on the basis of a trust in God to look after their deepest welfare that frees them to direct their energies toward helping others. Something is different about people who love. They convey a presence that goes beyond the words they say, the things they do. We know they are for us. In their presence, our growth seems more appealing to us than required of us. Because the relationship is never at stake, we sense a freedom to enter fully into the enjoyment of relationship rather than to keep the relationship intact. The visible evidence of maturity is relating in love. As people learn to love, the internal structures that sustain their emotional and psychological ills are eroded. Love really is the answer. It is the defining mark of the Christian, the visible measure of maturity.

- When character is measured by local standards, the model of character development (really a model of sanctification) that we implicitly follow deals only with above-the-waterline realities. Such a model might be called the Acquisition/Performance Model. Make sure that our children, congregations, and students acquire certain knowledge and behave in approved ways.
- A second model emphasizes two ideas: (1) character that enables love develops best when hidden issues of the heart (primarily deep longings and self-protective relational strategies) are directly addressed, and (2) the ideal soil for character growth is rich community. Only in personal interaction can hidden issues of the heart be substantially surfaced and resolved. Call this model "Character Through Community."