

# Mental Health & Spiritual Warfare

2021-10-31 by Ben Deaver at Tallgrass at The Well on Matthew 4:23-25

## Radical Jesus

- Between Two Ferns – Between two extremes
- **Raising the Heat = Pointing Out Hornet's Nests**—Each week we're just pointed out the fact that there's a hornet's nest and we're unable to do much about addressing the hornets nest...but we want to address each hornet nest as best we can over time together with great wisdom and discernment, care and courage.

## Mental Health & Spiritual Warfare

- When you see these topics—Mental Health & Spiritual Warfare—what comes to mind?
- What questions immediately emerge?
- Whose face do you put on the words—Mental Health? Do you think of that aunt you have who's kind of crazy? Maybe you think of yourself and the depression you're experiencing but with no place to turn to? Who do you think of when you hear—Spiritual Warfare?
- What next step comes to mind quickly, if any?
- **Let's all take a deep breath.**

**Matthew 4:23-25 NASB2020** <sup>23</sup> Jesus was going about in all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness among the people. <sup>24</sup> And the news about Him spread throughout Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and severe pain, demon-possessed, people with epilepsy, and people who were paralyzed; and He healed them. <sup>25</sup> Large crowds followed Him from Galilee and *the* Decapolis, and Jerusalem, and Judea, and *from* beyond the Jordan.

This is a story about Jesus and His grace and competency in helping people heal.

**Isaiah 40:8** The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

Pray!

**Matthew 4:23-25** <sup>23</sup> Jesus was going about in all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness among the people. <sup>24</sup> And the news about Him spread throughout Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and severe pain, demon-possessed, people with epilepsy, and people who were paralyzed; and He healed them. <sup>25</sup> Large crowds followed Him from Galilee and *the* Decapolis, and Jerusalem, and Judea, and *from* beyond the Jordan.

- All who were ill – those afflicted with various diseases and severe pain, demon-possessed, people with epilepsy, people who were paralyzed
- There's a complexity to humanities' various issues. Yes, there's a simplicity in the truth that we should bring people to Jesus to be healed. But the way in which Jesus heals isn't always the same...and He doesn't always heal every sickness in the time we'd prefer.
- The Gospel writers seemed to be able to differentiate between a variety of issues ailing the people that Jesus interacted with.
- Let's look at one mental health epidemic in our own state. Suicide.

## **Suicide Data: United States**

- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention – [afsp.org/statistics](https://afsp.org/statistics)
- Suicide is a public health problem that can be prevented – more investment in suicide prevention, education, and research will prevent the untimely deaths of thousands of Americans each year. Unless otherwise noted, this fact sheet reports 2019 data from the CDC, the most current verified data available at time of publication (January 2021).
- 47,511 American died by suicide making it the 10<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death.
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death for ages 10-34
    - *As Social Media Time Rises, So Does Teen Girls' Suicide Risk* in U.S. News on February 16, 2021
      - As the amount of time young teenage girls spend glued to Instagram, TikTok and other social media sites goes up, so does their long-term risk for suicide, a new study warns. The finding stems from a decade spent tracking social media habits and suicide risk among 500 teenage boys and girls, the longest such effort to date, the study authors said.
      - "We found that girls who started using social media at two to three hours a day or more at age 13, and then increased [that use] over time, had the highest levels of suicide risk in emerging adulthood," said study author Sarah Coyne. She is associate director of the school of family life at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah.
      - Among boys, however, no such pattern emerged. One reason why, Coyne's team theorized, is that social media and young girls tend to focus on the same thing: relationships. Boys, not so much.
  - 4<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death for ages 35-44
  - 36.6% of people who died by suicide were 55 or older
  - We should be investing way more energy in suicide prevention than concern over safety from immigrants or refugees.

- 12 million Americans have serious thoughts of suicide.
- 1.379 million Americans attempted suicide.
- 54% of Americans have been affected by suicide in some way.
- *Men died by suicide 3.63x more often than females.*
- *Females were 1.66x more likely to attempt suicide.*
- In 2019, the suicide rate was 1.5x higher for Veterans than for non-Veteran adults over the age of 18.
- 90% of those who died by suicide had a diagnosable mental health condition at the time of their death.
- Among adults with a diagnosed mental health condition 43.8% did not receive mental health services in the past year.
- 73.1% of the United States did not have enough mental health providers to serve residents in 2020, according to federal guidelines.
- We've worked at putting together a list of recommended local counselors. You can find this at [tallgrass.church/counseling](http://tallgrass.church/counseling).
- Kansas is in the top third of suicide rates in the U.S.
- ***Let's all take a deep breath.***
- There's a battle for life and death right here in our own state, in our own town, in our own homes.
- **Kurt Cobain** killed himself with a shotgun on Tuesday, April 5, 1994, when I was thirteen years old
- **Robin Williams** hung himself on Monday, August 11, 2014
- **My dad** attempted suicide on Tuesday, August 19, 2014. He has shared his story before.
  - Mental Health & Spiritual Warfare commingling for a toxic combination that was lingering for years.
  - My dad had been doing all the things up to the point of his suicide attempt. He was seeing a counselor and taking medication for anxiety and depression. He was fastidious in his Bible reading and prayer life.
  - Singing *There is a Balm in Gilead* at Prairie View, a mental health clinic, in Newton, KS the weekend of August 23, 2014.

**Chorus:**

There is a balm in Gilead  
 To make the wounded whole  
 There is a balm in Gilead  
 To heal the sin-sick soul

- Praire View: Our mission is to foster healing and growth in individuals and communities by providing behavioral and mental health services with compassion, competence, and stewardship in the spirit of Christ.
- More is going on than meets the eye.
- Grace and Competency
  - Grace and Truth (Jn 1:17)
  - Speak Truth in Love (Eph 4:15)

**Verse 1:**

Sometimes I feel discouraged  
 And deep I feel the pain  
 In prayers the holy spirit  
 Revives my soul again

## Spiritual Warfare

- **Ephesians 6:10-13** <sup>10</sup> Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. <sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. <sup>13</sup> Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.
- **Ezekiel 28:1-2** The word of the LORD came to me: <sup>2</sup> "Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre, Thus says the Lord GOD: "Because your heart is proud, and you have said, 'I am a god, I sit in the seat of the gods, in the heart of the seas, 'yet you are but a man, and no god, though you make your heart like the heart of a god—
- **Ezekiel 28:11-14a** <sup>11</sup> Moreover, the word of the LORD came to me: <sup>12</sup> "Son of man, raise a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, Thus says the Lord GOD: "You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. <sup>13</sup> You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, emerald, and carbuncle; and crafted in gold were your settings and your engravings. On the day that you were created they were prepared. <sup>14a</sup> You were an anointed guardian cherub.
  - Our society seemed to become increasingly disinterested in acknowledging evil until Nazi Germany and the Holocaust.
- Elijah and his servant: **2 Kings 6:15-17** <sup>15</sup> When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" <sup>16</sup> He said, "Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." <sup>17</sup> Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see." So the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.
- **Revelation 12:7-9** <sup>7</sup> Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, <sup>8</sup> but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. <sup>9</sup> And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.
- **Revelation 12:10-12** <sup>10</sup> And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. <sup>11</sup> And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. <sup>12</sup> Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!"
- Dialogue in Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers
  - Theodan: I will not risk open war.
  - Aragorn: Open war is upon you whether you would risk it or not.

- Our cultural interest in the supernatural, like *Stranger Things*, but practical disinterest.
- **Ephesians 6:14-18a ESV** <sup>14</sup> Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, <sup>15</sup> and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; <sup>17</sup> and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, <sup>18</sup> praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.
  - This is a battle for the mind, fought in the marketplace of ideas!
- **Romans 12:2** And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.
  - The devil is at war against God and humans.
  - The devil hates humanity, probably because we're made in the image of God and were given rule and reign over earth.
  - The devil is incredibly intelligent. He's been studying human behavior and patterns for thousands of years.
- **Let's all take a deep breath.**

**Matthew 4:23-25** <sup>23</sup> Jesus was going about in all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness among the people. <sup>24</sup> And the news about Him spread throughout Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and severe pain, demon-possessed, people with epilepsy, and people who were paralyzed; and He healed them. <sup>25</sup> Large crowds followed Him from Galilee and *the* Decapolis, and Jerusalem, and Judea, and *from* beyond the Jordan.

- Paul's encouragement to Timothy in 1 Timothy 5:23 – Do not go on drinking only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.
- Luke was referred to by Paul as the beloved physician... (Colossians 4:14)
- This conversation about mental health and spiritual warfare brings to mind what some see as a dissonance between science and faith.
- If the Bible were a scientific textbook, as some would want it to be, then to which point in history should it have been written?! 1500 BC, 50 AD, 1950 AD, 2050 AD, 3050 AD?
- The Bible is God's reliable Word about the nature of the world, the nature of humanity, and our pathway back to relationship with Him and one another. There are many things that we face in life that the Bible doesn't give us all the details on how to engage.
- The Biblical worldview affirms...
- Each person's story is unique. Each person is made in the image of God.
- Each person is deeply flawed due to human nature and also the environment into which they are born.
- Our Three-fold Opposition
  - Evil – Spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places
  - Environment – Cosmos: world forces of this darkness
  - Ego – Self: our own flesh

## *Finding Quiet: My Story of Overcoming Anxiety and the Practices that Brought Peace*

by J.P. Moreland

- “The disciplines of psychiatry and psychology are widely rejected by evangelicals. As one Christian leader put it, ‘True psychology (“the study of the soul”) can be done only by Christians, since only Christians have the resources for the understanding and the transformation of the soul. Since the secular discipline of psychology is based on godless assumptions and evolutionary foundations, it is capable of dealing with people only superficially and only on the temporal level... Scripture is the manual for all “soul work.”’” –p. 28
- “In stark contrast to the approach, consider the words of John Wesley: ‘To imagine none can teach you but those who are themselves saved from sin, is a very great and dangerous mistake. Give not place to it for a moment.’ In valuing extrabiblical knowledge, our brothers and sisters throughout church history were merely following common sense and Scripture itself.” –pp. 28-29
- Repeatedly, Scripture acknowledges the wisdom of cultures outside Israel...
  - Egypt (Isaiah 19:11-13)
  - The Edomites (Jeremiah 49:7)
  - The Phoenicians (Zechariah 9:2)
  - The remarkable achievements produced by human wisdom acknowledged in Job 28:1-11
  - The reputation of wisdom of others compared to Solomon’s wisdom (1 Kings 4:29-34)
  - Jesus’ careful reflection on nature as the basis for loving one’s enemies (Matthew 5:44-45)
- “We can and must cultivate a Christian approach to anxiety and depression, but in that tilling we may also include the study of extrabiblical knowledge that supplements and does not contradict Scripture.” –p. 29

**Matthew 22:37-40** <sup>37</sup> And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup> This is the great and first commandment. <sup>39</sup> And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. <sup>40</sup> On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

- Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength (Matt 22:37-39; Mk 12:30-31; Lk 10:27)
- Love your neighbor as you love yourself. When self-care works towards others-care.
- Resource Page on our website
- My journey
  - My mind outpaces my body at times
  - Tendency towards discouragement and depression with a little anxiety mixed in
  - Waking up at 3:30am
  - Dad’s suicide attempt
  - Personal Board of Directors
- **Let’s all take a deep breath.**

## A Caution – Don't oversimplify and/or over-spiritualize things.

- **Jeremiah 29:11** For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.
  - **Jeremiah 29:10-14** <sup>10</sup>This is what the LORD says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place. <sup>11</sup>For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. <sup>12</sup>Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. <sup>13</sup>You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. <sup>14</sup>I will be found by you," declares the LORD, "and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you," declares the LORD, "and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile."
- **Romans 8:28** And we know that for those who love God ***all things work together for good***, for those who are called according to his purpose.
  - **Romans 8:35-39** <sup>35</sup>Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? <sup>36</sup>As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." <sup>37</sup>No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup>For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup>nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## Application: tallgrass.church/counseling

1. Decide there's an issue
2. Discern the work
  - Grace and competency
3. Do the work
  - I've been hearing many stories of people experiencing significant healing as they do the work.
4. Disciple others to do the same
  - *20 Practical Counseling Tips* Resource
  - I'm so encouraged by our church as there are many who I would trust to listen to someone's story and help them take the next right step.
  - There are several who are either on their way to becoming therapists or strongly considering it.
  - Our neighbors need to be met with grace and competency.
  - Emotionally Healthy Discipleship over the summer
  - Pastoral counseling
  - What's next?

## What if...

What if we were known as a place to find hope and healing for a variety of mental health issues? What if people said, "Over there at Tallgrass at The Well, they care about your mental and emotional and spiritual health. They will meet you with grace and competency. They will help you get connected with good resources and good people to help you make significant headway on your journey towards healing. And then you'll be able to begin offering grace and competency to others in need of hope and healing."?

## Next Week: Racism

### The Apostles` Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;

On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,

he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy \*catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting.

Amen.

### The Lord`s Supper

- **Jeremiah 8:22** Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has not the health of the daughter of my people been restored?
- There is a balm in Gilead...beyond the Jordan. His Name is Jesus Christ, and He is the Great Physician.

### Isaiah 53:3-6

<sup>3</sup> He was despised and rejected by men,  
a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;  
and as one from whom men hide their faces  
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

<sup>4</sup> Surely he has borne our griefs  
and carried our sorrows;  
yet we esteemed him stricken,  
smitten by God, and afflicted.

<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> All we like sheep have gone astray;  
we have turned—every one—to his own way;  
and the LORD has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all.

## Let`s pray!



# The Chopping Block:

## Ideas:

- **Genesis 37:25** Then they sat down to eat a meal. But as they raised their eyes and looked, behold, a caravan of Ishmaelites was coming from Gilead, with their camels carrying labdanum resin, balsam, and myrrh, on their way to bring *them* down to Egypt.
- Britannica.com: The “balm of Gilead” (Genesis 37:25; Jeremiah 8:22), used medicinally in antiquity, was the mastic obtained from *Pistachia lentiscus*; it now commonly refers to buds of a species of North American poplar (*Populus*) used to make cough syrups.
- **Luke 8:1-3 NASB2020** Soon afterward, Jesus began going around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God. The twelve were with Him, <sup>2</sup> and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses: Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, <sup>3</sup> and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and many others who were contributing to their support out of their private means.
  - Luke 8 women as a mini-series
- **Luke 9:1-2 NASB2020** Now He called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all the demons, and the power to heal diseases. <sup>2</sup> And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing.
- *Thanks You For Your Service* documentary
- Mental Health Stats
  - Girls 12-18
  - Covid-19
  - Military
    - <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2021/08/31/fort-riley-mandates-counseling-every-soldier-help-battle-suicide-stigma-of-seeking-help.html>
    - <https://www.ksnt.com/news/special-report-ksnt-investigates-fort-riley-deaths/>
  - University
- Don’t use your own self-awareness (or understanding of the Enneagram) as a SWORD or a SHIELD but rather as an INVITATION into CONNECTION.
- Someone with unaddressed mental health issues will struggle to love God and love others until they address their mental health issues.
- Karl Marx: “Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.”
- Lily Tomlin: “Reality is a crutch for people who can't cope with drugs.”
- C.H. Spurgeon: “A lie will go round the world while truth is pulling its boots on.”
- Any worldview that doesn’t take the supernatural seriously is either naïve or incompetent
- *The Christian Contribution to Medicine* article in Christian Medical Fellowship – <https://www.cmf.org.uk/resources/publications/content/?context=article&id=827>
- Modern science made possible by the Judeo-Christian worldview
- Scientific development as a gift to humanity, even an answer to prayer

- Gabe Lyons interviews Adam Blai – <https://www.christianpost.com/news/gabe-lyons-why-dont-protestants-talk-more-about-demons-exorcism-spiritual-world-227216/>
- The goal – Experience the joy of the Lord. Maturity in Christ.
- *The surprisingly dramatic role of nutrition in mental health* TED Talk by Julia Rucklidge – <https://youtu.be/3dqXHHcc5IA>
- **Luke 8:1-3** Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, <sup>2</sup> and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, <sup>3</sup> and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.
- **Luke 9:1-2** And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, <sup>2</sup> and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.
- **Matthew 4:23-24** <sup>23</sup> And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. <sup>24</sup> So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures, and paralytics, and he healed them.

## 20 Practical Counseling Tips

*The purpose in a person's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.  
- Proverbs 20:5*

We all have issues and we all need help. Recognizing that you yourself may need and would likely benefit from counseling is a great place to start to be able to help others. Your well goes deep and there's much to work through. The greatest thing you can offer others is having walked through the pain of your own story. Many of people's struggles and issues can be deeply engaged within our community of faith. We want to help equip all of us to wisely and effectively handle one another's hearts with both grace and competency, to help them both heal and grow. Toward that end, here are 20 basic counseling tips to help as you engage with one another below the surface:

1. **Don't quickly identify.** Don't show how you know what that's like or how something similar happened to you. It feels natural. And it is appropriate in some settings. But if you're wanting people to feel safe opening up, it typically doesn't help. It effectively takes the focus off of them, their story, their hurt, etc... and puts it on you. And it even subtly dismisses their situation by making them feel unseen and invalidated.
2. **Listen and ask questions.** Bring great curiosity. What is God up to? There is great power in your mere presence.

3. **Resist the urge to quickly offer advice.** This actually isn't helpful. If we were fixing a Buick, maybe. But not when we're engaging with people's stories and hearts.
4. **Validate their feelings.** No matter the rightness of the reasons for their feelings... they are feeling hurt (or sad or afraid, etc). So it really helps them feel seen and valued to validate their feelings. Often this must be done first before being able to talk more deeply about details or root issues.
5. **Their GREATEST need is for Jesus.** It is our secret goal to help them see this. But it often takes lots of time, patience, wisdom, and care to get there. We cannot rush to this conclusion with someone and may often need to journey with them until the time is right to share this truth.
6. **Beware of the temptation to offer them mere moralism or legalism.** This point flows from the previous point. The real hope for this person is not merely that they'd get their career back on track, or save their marriage, or quit looking at porn or sleeping around or getting drunk. The real hope for them is not merely ultimate restoration of relationship with their children or friend. Or for them to find a way out of their financial troubles. We need to be wary of helping them just "do better."
7. **Some presenting issues do need to be dealt with first before further progress (toward Christ or even general health) can be made.** Deeply depressed people need to take initial steps of dealing with their depression...especially the physical effects that can hinder their ability to actually be able to engage with the issues beneath their depression. Medications here can often be the right first step (but always with an eye toward them seeing that their deepest need is for Christ). Other issues of safety must often be addressed first. One giving or receiving abuse must usually remove themselves from the situation for a while. Those with addictions must get sober.
  - Be aware of how multi-faceted people's issues are – our biological, mental and spiritual faculties were all deeply broken as a result of the fall.
  - Help people get out of crisis mode so they can move towards maturity in the Gospel.
8. **Some things are "deal breakers."** If someone tells you they're going to kill themselves or harm others, you have to believe them. No matter the context (within reason) you dignify them by believing them and bringing in the appropriate authorities or caregivers. Suicide threats must be dealt with by going with them to a local crisis center, such as Pawnee here in Manhattan, or taking them to the ER or calling an ambulance if a local crisis center isn't an option. Threats to others must be reported to the police. This isn't being dishonest or disloyal by breaking confidence. They broke the confidence, not you. You were obligated out of care to respond seriously.
9. **Give them your complete attention.** Don't check your phone. Don't text. Don't take a call. Don't be doing laundry or cleaning the house. Sit down with them. Look them in

the eyes. Don't just be thinking of what you'll say next. Be present and respond appropriately with verbal and nonverbal affirmation. Don't be afraid to ask clarifying questions (but not too many). This shows your interest. Pay attention to your nonverbal. Lean forward. Don't lean back or cross your arms. Don't interrupt.

10. **Don't communicate surprise at what someone shares.** You can feel it inside, but don't share it. Shock or disgust will cause them to feel unsafe. A Biblical view of sin and grace enables this. Because of the rampant effects of sin, we should never really be surprised at what depths of sin people share with us (or indeed what we find in ourselves). And yet grace and the Gospel gives us the freedom to engage with these people with grace and acceptance because we know how much we've been forgiven and the depths of the grace available from God. Acceptance at this stage can lay critical foundation work for helping them embrace the Gospel.
11. **Tell them what you think they were trying to say.** "So what I hear from you is that you're feeling \_\_\_\_ because of \_\_\_\_." Is that right? This not only helps folks feel validated and shows you've been paying attention, but also helps clear up any misunderstanding (on either side).
12. **THANK them for sharing that with you.** Consider it a high honor, a gift even. Know this, it really is. The more you engage with people's hearts, the more you begin to see that seeing inside the secret thoughts and hearts of eternal souls, beings made in the image of God himself.... IS a truly high honor.
13. **Learn to ask yourself some basic questions while they're sharing.** They usually point to important things:
  - Always be curious about the story beneath the story. What is really at the bottom of what's going on... even if the person sharing it doesn't know themselves. What you see is not always what you get. The presenting issues may just be the tip of the iceberg...
  - Not only what they're saying, but what they're meaning.
  - And what do you wonder.
  - What jumped out to you?
  - Where did the person seem most connected or energetic?
  - What emotions keep coming up in them?
  - What emotions keep coming up in you?
  - Where did you feel bored?
  - Do you feel pressure to say or do anything?
  - Do you feel like you are having to work really hard to carry the conversation?
14. **In general, if you share anything about yourself, paint yourself in a negative light.** Share about how you failed at something. Or how you made a mess of your life.

This helps them put down their guard against you being “holier than them” -- which, on your own, apart from Christ, you’re surely not!

15. **When at all possible, communicate your love and acceptance of them.** But this must be real. People can smell fakery. Pray for this kind of heart. It paves the way for them to think they could approach God this way, and be accepted likewise.
16. **Beware of just throwing Bible verses at them in response to what they share.** This usually at its core borders on moralism or legalism – ironic, huh? Also, people often have great baggage with religious people not caring for their hearts, so it’s best to tread lightly here, at least at first. But don’t shy away from sharing biblical truth – especially in context appropriate, non-churchy language. This frankly shows that you truly know Scripture... not that you can parrot back verse references, but that the Word truly lives in your heart. The right thing at the wrong time is the wrong thing.
17. **Offer the person HOPE – a vision for what you think their life could look like if they move forward (on a path towards Christ).** Communicate this vision and hope to them. Make it specific and concrete. Often this will require you to get the vision yourself intentionally. Picture the person perfect. Redeemed. Whole and fully alive. Pure and Holy. Mature and complete in Christ. This takes practice but is vital.
18. **Beware of being the only person holding the rope.** Some people can knowingly or unknowingly tie a rope around their waists, hand you one end, and then jump off a bridge. Then, dangling there they beg you not to let go. This is manipulation and dependency. And it is dangerous. You’re not anyone’s savior. And you can’t bear the weight of holding someone’s heart alone for long. Always be looking for ways to involve others (usually just one extra person to start). And don’t be afraid to confer with other leaders if you feel unsure. Push back on confidentiality. It takes a village...
19. **Look into some basic books, equipping classes, or podcasts about counseling – specifically personal issues.** Learn to spot basic and common mental illnesses, relational dysfunctions, and emotional states like depression.
  - *The Place We Find Ourselves* podcast by Adam Young
  - *Unwanted: How Sexual Brokenness Reveals Our Way to Healing* by Jay Stringer
  - *Redeeming Heartache: How Past Suffering Reveals Our True Calling* by Dan Allender
  - *Understanding People: Why We Long for Relationship* by Larry Crabb
  - *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* by Paul David Tripp
  - *Soul Talk: The Language God Longs for Us to Speak* by Larry Crabb
  - *Pure Desire Ministries* podcast
  - *Finding Quiet: My Story of Overcoming Anxiety and the Practices that Brought Peace* by J.P. Moreland

20. **And don't forget: look for wise/strategic opportunities to steer people towards Christ.** Remember that their deepest needs are for Jesus, and only in Him will they ever become fully alive, fulfilled, happy, healthy, loved, healed, accepted, etc...

*Also, the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation website has a lot of resources to offer. Check it out here: [www.ccef.org](http://www.ccef.org)*