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**MESSED UP PEOPLE**  
***I Love to Share Good News With You***  
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Our work for the Lord always brings great rewards; we received one recently when Elizabeth and I went back to Crossnore School for our third visit. On this occasion, we gave only one lecture to the staff, instead devoting our time visiting the cottages and interviewing some of the children. The children we interviewed ranged in age from five to 20 years of age. Almost all of them came to Crossnore needing affirmation and guidance. The older ones, who have been there the longest, testify they have received it, and what a difference it makes in their lives!

Let me say, before I describe what we have learned, that fifty percent of children these days grow up in broken homes. Others grow up in abusive homes. In both of these environments, they develop problems. They are always scarred by events that took place. Over fifty percent of children from broken homes end up with psychiatric problems resulting in symptoms requiring treatment. Sadly, treatment is not available, and the need for it is not recognized by social agencies or by psychiatry. The sheer volume of children who need help would overwhelm available treatment resources. If 50 percent of the children from broken homes need help, then the 950,000 divorces give rise to 209,000 children who will need help. This will be cumulative since the number of divorces tends to remain stable each year. Then there are children from intact homes who are abused physically, verbally, emotionally, and sexually. Since most of these come from homes where one or both parents are either alcoholic or drug users, they constitute a large cohort of children. Both children from broken homes and children who are from abusive homes, grow up to be "messed up" adults.

I realize the diagnosis of “messed up” adults is not an entity described in the official nomenclature of the American Psychiatric Association, but it describes their problems fairly accurately. The main problem of these people is that they have profound relational problems. Like their parents, they will end up with problems with their mates, children, friends, and God. Many will have emotional control problems, and/or bad attitudes. These attitudes will arise out of anger, fear, jealousy, emptiness, or they will be emotionally isolated and not be able to love. Some isolates will not allow themselves to feel anything. Others will have all kinds of phobias, but agoraphobia (fear of open places) will predominate. Almost all of them will have self-esteem problems that will handicap them in their relationships or in their education, and ultimately their vocation. Most of them will have problems with finances.

“Messed up” people who have been sexually abused will have particularly severe problems. Today, one out of four children is sexually abused. This is especially true of girls, who feel soiled and dirty, and they will harbor much anger toward the person who abused them. He is usually their father, grandfather, uncle or brother(s). They feel betrayed since natural law tells them what happened is wrong. It is written on their hearts. It is not part of the love relationship a girl should have with a family member, especially with her father if he is the perpetrator. Boys who grow up being sexually abused are rarely abused by their mother, but are abused by a sister, brother, older neighbor boy, or youth leader. They do not seem to be scarred as badly as girls, unless they are homosexually abused. Both men and women tend to have a dysfunctional sexual adjustment.

I can go on describing how they are “messed up,” but I think you realize the magnitude of the problem, and how it occludes happiness. It does so, because living life constantly elicits the negative emotions that are a residual of their childhood traumas. To illustrate, I will cite several persons who came to me for help in dealing with the misery in their lives.

One is a woman who was consumed with anger directed toward men. We will give her the name of Jeanna. As a preteen, she was sexually abused by her brother-in-law. When she told her mother what happened, she was accused of having brought it on herself by being physically affectionate with him. Although the abuse did not continue, this patient became increasingly angry through the years. Her relationship with men including her husband was, thereafter, one filled with resentment.

After her marriage, she was able to adjust sexually, but her husband became impotent. This angered her even more. To make matters worse the patient had ulcerative colitis. At that time, it was thought that ulcerative colitis is a psychosomatic disease, so her gastroenterologist suggested she see a psychiatrist. When he suggested a treatment that was quite radical, she was angered even more. As the years passed, she suffered enormously, always angry at some man who displeased her. Finally, she was referred to me for evaluation. I had been a Christian for only three years, and had not begun to integrate my faith into my practice. I did not know what to do with a person who was as pervasively angry as she was, but one thing I learned in my Bible study is that if you are angry you have to forgive the person who wounded you (Ephesians 4:32). I also learned that to truly forgive, you must to be a Christian.

In frustration, and tired of being subjected to her anger each week, I decided to bite the bullet and ask her about her Christian life. I began by asking her if she ever had a Christian experience. She said she did not know what I was talking about. To clarify my question I then asked her if she had ever been saved.

“Of course not,” she said, “only Baptists get saved! I’m a Methodist.”

I responded by telling her that even Methodists need salvation too, and I explained to her the need to be a “saved” Christian so she could truly forgive and be freed of her anger. With further exhortation, I was able to convince her to become a Christian. She accepted the Lord and her transformation began. I later persuaded her to forgive her brother-in-law, and another primary object of her anger – her boss.

There was dramatic change in her life thereafter. Her husband miraculously regained his potency, and for a few years until his death, they had a satisfactory sexual relationship. Jeanna later went with us on a tour of Israel. When some of us were to be baptized again in the Jordan River, she eagerly joined in, and came up out of the water glowing. God healed a messed up woman.

It would have been impossible to say that Jeanna had a DSM-IV described psychiatric disease. I could have given her a diagnosis qualifying her for psychiatric insurance coverage, but I did not have to do so because she had ulcerative colitis. Her problem, though, was not due solely to the colitis. She was just messed up by life circumstances. She had an existential problem unrelated to her colitis.

Another patient of mine was the daughter of very successful socialite parents whose religion was to be socially prominent. Marina was educated in private schools, and ran with the country club crowd in her city. She made her debut, and was ready for college. She wanted to go to the state university, but her mother insisted she go to an Italian finishing school. In spite of her protests, she was sent to Italy to learn how to “catch a successful husband.”

Marina had never been loved unconditionally. While in Italy she was lonely and looking for love, so she desperately sought relationships that would satisfy her. She soon was involved sexually with a succession of Italian men. After two years, she came home and did attend the state

university. There she met a man who was destined to be very successful. She married him and had three children.

When her husband became very successful and was consumed by his success, her life began to fall apart. Her life had never had love or meaning, except in her relationships with her children, so she often thought about ending it. Still looking for some meaning, she joined a Bible study of women in her neighborhood. Even though she sought the Lord, she felt out of place, and the emptiness of her life overwhelmed her. Unable to tolerate her suffering, she made an unsuccessful, but serious, suicidal attempt.

I admitted her to the hospital as it was obvious she was a threat to herself, for her depression was biological and quite severe. After treating her with electric convulsive treatments, she recovered from the biological illness, but there was still the niggling existential depression that had precipitated her biological problem. It was then that she revealed her indiscretions in Italy, and the profound shame and guilt she carried with her through the years.

As she told me of her sin, she wept quietly. The Holy Spirit then guided my thoughts, and I realized Jesus told me that since I had received the Holy Spirit, I could pass on God's forgiveness to a sinner, and they would be forgiven (John 20:23). So I said to her, "But you are forgiven!"

"I am? Who forgives me?" she asked.

"God does, and I do!" I replied.

“Oh thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you!” she sobbed. The Holy Spirit detached the shame and guilt from the memory of the sins she committed and she was finally totally healed. She had no further depression and became a loving Christian disciple, mother and wife.

Both of these cases are characterized by a combination of biological and existential problems. The existential problems had to be treated spiritually to bring about healing. Jeanna’s ulcerative colitis continued to bother her, but she was able to handle it. Marina had a biological psychiatric disease that was precipitated by a series of existential life circumstances that eventually overwhelmed her. These resulted from a dysfunctional home environment and the desires of her parents to have her life parallel theirs.

In some instances, the problem is solely existential. At Crossnore, going to one of the cottages, we walked up to the entrance and saw two girls sitting on the porch. One of them was scowling and did not return our friendly greeting. She came into the cottage reluctantly and sat sulking on a couch opposite us. As we went around the room for introductions, she refused to talk. I asked her why she was so angry, and she would not tell me.

I persisted in trying to draw her out when she finally exploded in a rage, and after accusing me of being rude for persisting in my inquiry, she stormed out of the room saying she was going to see her counselor. We let her go. I do not know what the outcome of her encounter with her counselor was, but I am sure she was able to ventilate her anger in a constructive way. We knew she came from a terribly dysfunctional environment, and her anger had its origin in her experiences in that environment. She needed to be healed.

Existentialism had its beginnings primarily in the philosophical writings of Soren Kierkegaard, who was a Christian; and in the philosophical writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, an atheist. Nietzsche

was the father of the “God is Dead” philosophy. Later, Martin Heidegger influenced Jean Paul Sartre and Albert Camus to promote a secular form of existentialism. Theirs was, however, a philosophy of despair that offered no sure hope for the future.

Christian existentialism is a philosophy of hope. God says he makes new people out of us, in spite of our past, and in believing we will have eternal life. William James said the only thing that changes a radically bad person into a radically good person is conversion (salvation). In my 62 years of practice, I can testify to the verity of his statement. I can add, further, that the only thing that will heal a “messed up” person is the action of God in their lives. To bring this about, we Christians are called to witness to the world and to minister to them in love. The fact that we have the God of love dwelling in us, gives us the power to pass on the supernatural love he has showered on us, to the battered and bruised “messed up” people who are our friends and neighbors. God gives us no other alternative. Even so, most of the church today does not do what it has been called to do.

We are like the woman who fell asleep in church. The pastor was preaching on Ephesians 5:14, and he was exhorting his congregation to “Wake up, wake up, wake up sleepers, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” The lady roused herself and listened to the rest of the sermon. As she left the church she said, “Pastor, how can I sleep through your sermon if you keep hollering, “wake up?” We have been asleep and have not witnessed to the world the healing power of the Gospel. The strategy for doing so is simple.

Lovingly come along side people and listen to them. They will reveal their conflicts and troubles to you.

As you listen attentively to them, pray silently that the Holy Spirit will reveal to you the interventions you can use to bring about healing. They may need:

1. Love
2. Prayer
3. Salvation
4. Confession, repentance and/ or forgiveness
5. Inner healing
6. To be disciplined
7. A friend

I realize most people who read this are inhibited by society (the enemy) to refrain from sharing the healing power of God. If you are one of them and lack the boldness to witness, sincerely surrender completely to the Lord, and ask him to give you the boldness to speak out. The scripture says, "Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story – those he redeemed from the hand of the foe" (Psalm 107:2). Throughout my Christian life, I have found the personal witness of a believer creates an encounter with Christ whether their witness is verbalized or written.

I never cease to be amazed at my response to stories of people's salvation experiences in "Decision Magazine" or in "Voice of the Martyrs" magazine. Then, too, when I personally hear someone relate what God has done in their lives, I am moved by the recounting of the love of Christ. It is because God anoints a person's witness that it is the most effective form of evangelism. I must, however, say that a witness without an invitation to accept Christ after you have told your story defeats the entire purpose of witnessing.

Our witness is anointed with the love of God. It is possible, then, to love someone without telling them God loves them or that you love them. You can look at a person with love, and they will know you love them. Once they know the source of your love is God, they will desire God's love for themselves. They are, then, most often ready to be evangelized.

The approach is first to come along side of them. Listen to them, and let them pour out their troubles to you. If God has an answer to their problems, you can offer them spiritual interventions to help them find healing.

I leave you with one last admonition. Don't forget there are messed up people sitting in the pews of your church. You can start with them.