COMPLEMENTARY CARE IN THE LIGHT OF THE BIBLE



GERARD FELLER
in cooperation with
Gezond & Weldoen

Complementary Care in the Light of the Bible

A Biblical Reflection on Complementary Care, Health and Spiritual Growth

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Complementary Care in the Light of the Bible

Physiotherapy, pastoral care and psychosomatics

Gerard Feller has more than 40 years of experience as a physiotherapist, working in hospitals and with his own practice in the field of pastoral care, physiotherapy and psychosomatics. He developed, among other things, a Biblically based course in dealing with stress, which has been followed by more than 12,000 people. In terms of methodology, this course, 'Whole Man', is a mix of breathing and relaxation exercises, Bible studies, praise, prayer, testimonies and group discussions. Gerard is married to Coby. They have two daughters, one of whom is disabled and still lives at home.

New input by LIFE Model

In 2000, Gerard Feller came into contact with Dr. Jim Wilder, an American neuropsychologist and theologian, during a conference on trauma processing in Canada. Jim Wilder has integrated developmental psychology and neurophysiology into psychosomatics and pastoral care and called this the LIFE Model. Gerard says: "This meeting and the many conversations that followed gave new input to my work as a psychosomatic physiotherapist. It concerns a new way of body-oriented practice, with non-verbal exercises and sensorimotor therapy. The LIFE Model is a Biblical holistic model in which there is room for both our spiritual growth in adulthood and our recovery. In addition to professional help, there is attention for help in a Christian community where attention is paid to the weaker, with Christ as the center. The LIFE Model is a common approach to various disciplines and counseling, recovery and reintegration ministries, pastoral care, prayer and deliverance ministries, inner healing, child rearing and care for the body and health. This is called: “living according to God's plan and becoming what Jesus intended.”

Gerard Feller introduced the LIFE Model of Dr. Jim Wilder in the Netherlands at various Christian healthcare institutions. De Hoop in Dordrecht, Het Heil des Volks in Amsterdam and addiction clinics of the Salvation Army in Apeldoorn, among others, have been introduced to the biblically holistic LIFE Model. This book makes Dr. Jim Wilder's ideas available to a larger group of interested parties.

FOREWORD

With this book, Gezond & Weldoen wants to provide clarity about the origins of complementary (also known as 'alternative') treatment methods and provide biblically inspired alternatives. What matters is that God the Creator gets the honor that is due to Him because we trust that He, as a loving father, has the best interests of us and our clients in mind.

If we want to honor our Creator, this means, among other things, showing our colours, setting boundaries and not blindly following what is secularly accepted.

It is also unique that scientific knowledge of neuropsychology is made transparent in this training based on biblical core values such as spiritual maturity and relational skills and that a practical translation is outlined for pastoral care. The church as a community has an important role with regard to relational skills.

BIBLICAL ALTERNATIVES FOCUSED

Until now, the Christian healthcare professional has lacked biblical options. Complementary medicine that is originally worldly or occult-oriented is all too often given a Christian sauce out of ignorance and/or for convenience (for example 'Jesus Yoga') and that is what we should do with it.

That cannot be the intention! God the Creator of heaven and earth, the great I am, the Father of our Savior and Redeemer Jesus Christ is also the great Physician, the Healer for soul, spirit and body. He is the good Shepherd and his sheep listen to his voice. In his Word we find answers, even when it comes to complementary healing methods

for soul, spirit and body that have their origin in the all-encompassing redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Conversion, rebirth, restoration of the relationship with God the Father, filling with the Holy Spirit: Jesus makes everything new, everything that is broken whole and everything that is dead alive again!

LIFE MODEL OF DR. WILDER

This book discusses the LIFE Model of Dr. Jim Wilder from the United States in detail and texts from his work have been translated and reproduced with permission. Jim Wilder is a graduated psychologist and theologian and specializes in trauma processing and identity recovery. He has worked with, among others, war veterans and victims of sexual and satanic abuse. He is the founder of Sheperds House.

With the LIFE Model, Dr. Jim Wilder from the US has started to make healing for soul, mind and body through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ insightful for Christian care providers and pastoral workers. Immanuel, God with us, for health of soul, mind and body! Pastoral workers, therapists, members of prayer teams, experts by experience, people who

convalescents and an international advisory committee of people from different traditions and theoretical backgrounds, have worked together to formulate this profound Christian vision of life.

THEMES

Complementary Care in the Light of the Bible

Themes that will be discussed include:

biblical holistic view of health

complementary medicine and biblical alternatives

introduction of the LIFE Model

pastoral skills.

In addition to the theoretical background, this book focuses on practical skills such as breathing, relaxation exercises, prayer, communication training, pastoral care and the importance of cooperation.

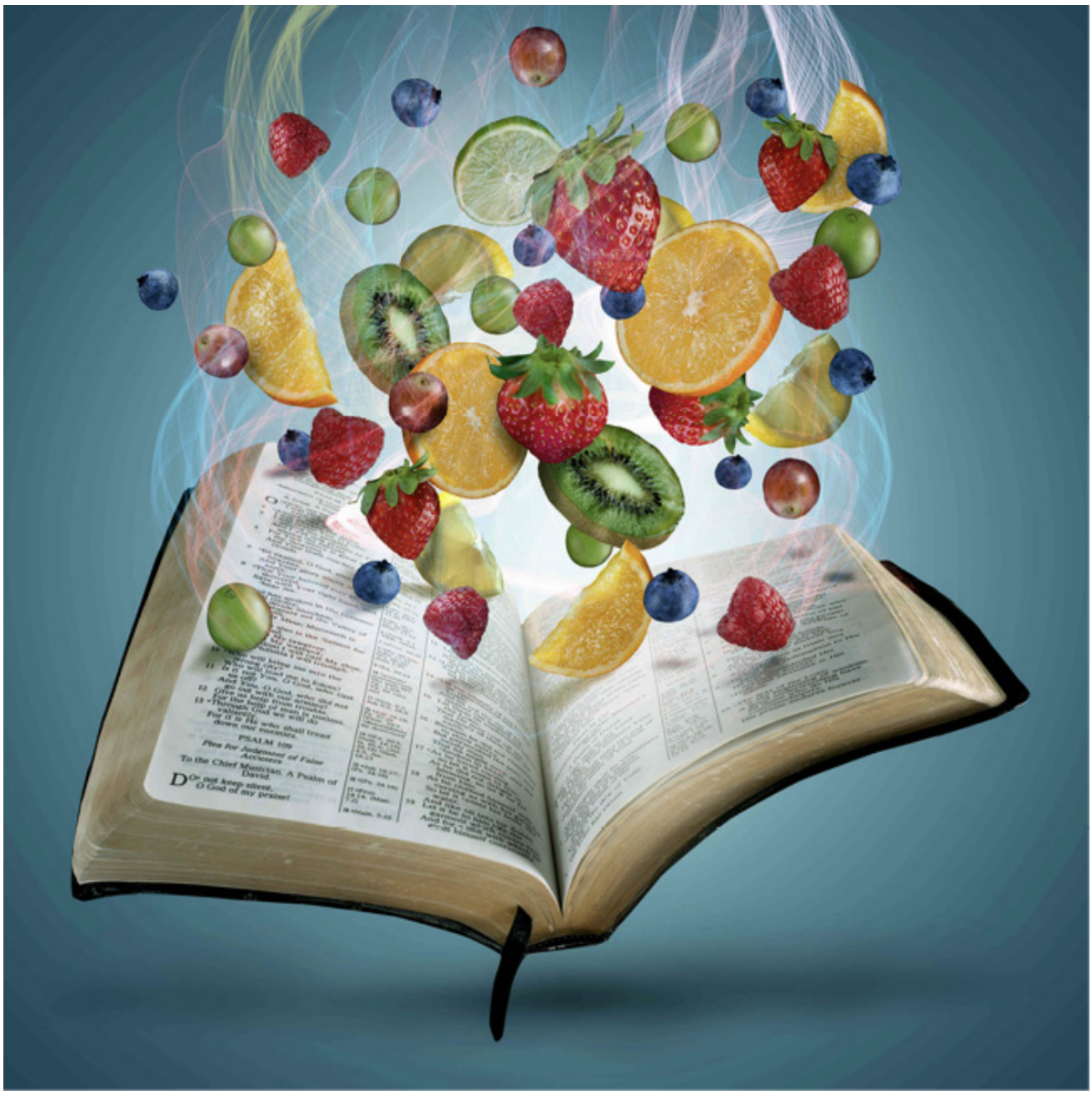
Let us delve into the wonderful biblical alternatives that exist for complementary care and share them together!

Founder Gezond & Weldoen, training institute for Christian lifestyle coaches and health professionals. For the Healthy & Well-being offer, see: www.gezondenweldoen.nl

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE HAVE TO DO WITH HEALTH?

God's Word claims to be healing. Many Christians often think of biblical health only in terms of prayer. That is of course also very important. But the Bible also speaks to us about our responsibilities when it comes to obtaining and maintaining our health. Various texts in the Old and New Testament speak of the healing (Greek: 'hygiainousa') influence. In 1 Tim. 6:3-4 (NBV) states: 'If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not conform to the sound (salutary in NKJV) words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the doctrine of godliness, he is puffed up, although he knows nothing...' See also 1 Tim. 4:3, Titus 2:1 and Psalm 107:20.

Now health is a concept that has quite different views in terms of content and meaning. The definition of the WHO, the World Health Organization, is: 'A state of complete well-being'. According to others, this definition is outdated, because it means that virtually everyone can be classified as a patient. A more contemporary term for health is the ability to adapt and take charge in the face of physical, emotional and social challenges of life. This emphasizes that it is much more about the potential to be or become healthy, even in the presence of a disease. Machteld Huber, a health psychologist, consulted practitioners, policy makers and patients and discovered various aspects of health: physical functions, mental functions and perception, the spiritual/existential dimension,



quality of life, social participation and daily functioning.

1.1 BIBLICAL VIEW OF HUMANITY

This holistic approach to health comes close to Biblical thinking about this. The Bible always defines health and even life in relationship to God. Man is above all a moral being. From that relationship with God, all the above dimensions take on a biblically healthy content. Although a distinction is often made in health between body (material), soul (relationship with fellow human beings and oneself) and spirit (relationship with God), man remains an inseparable unity in his complex creation. Nowadays it is now well known that sufficient exercise and good nutrition also have a major influence on our health. Maybe more about that later in another article. Now I want to focus on the relationships within and outside of man that 'sound doctrine' in the Bible pays attention to.

The Bible always defines health and even life in relationship to God.

According to the biblical standard, modern man is in danger of becoming increasingly unhealthy due to increasing secularization and individualization, due to loss of contact with his environment, with God,

fellow man and creation. This despite the development of medical science. Inner relationships are also increasingly devalued. Biblically speaking, after the Fall there is an increasing disintegration of the inner relationships between spirit, soul and body. This leads to a degradation of inner coherence. And therefore a removal of the biblical overall picture of health.

Through the gospel of Jesus Christ, the restoration of contact with God and the indwelling and connectedness of the Holy Spirit, there are opportunities for people to become biblically healthy. This goes through a process and of course takes time. Perfect eternal health, a gift of grace from God, will only be achieved in...

reaches the future in heaven with a perfect (sinless) and glorified body in a perfect connection with God and His creation. In this chapter I especially want to make it clear that one can only become and remain healthy in a biblical sense by continually learning and practicing and putting into practice.

> *Through the gospel of Jesus Christ, the restoration of contact with God and the indwelling and connectedness of the Holy Spirit, there are opportunities for people to become biblically healthy.*

Of course we must realize that the crowning glory of God's creation, man, cannot be summarized in a simple diagram. Of course, the Bible is not a medical manual. Yet there is a tremendous amount of information in the Bible about who that person is, how he was created by God and what his core problems are after the Fall.

Who am I? What is the meaning of my life? These are questions that have occupied humanity from the beginning. Are we just a new stage in the evolutionary process, a continuation of the tadpole, or are we a random product of time and chance? Or are we perhaps the masterpiece of the creative Genius, who is the God of the universe, the Creator of all things? According to the Bible, we are the last: created almost divine (Psalm 8:5). We are created in His likeness. (Genesis 1:26).

Like God, we have great intellectual powers. We are able to acquire tremendous amounts of knowledge and use this information to make complex decisions that affect our future. We are created by God in a unique unity of spirit, soul and body in relationship with God, fellow man and creation. With our brains, which no computer can match, we can receive millions of impulses at the same time, including visible three-dimensional visual images, we simultaneously receive a tremendous range of information in a wide range of sounds, we are simultaneously aware of our body, our posture,

we simultaneously experience smells, tastes and much more with our senses!

Every organ of our body is a miracle in itself. Consider a kidney, a small bean-shaped organ containing thousands of kilometers of tunnels, comparable to the largest chemical factory on earth. All kinds of filtration processes take place here, countercurrent principles, a wonderful whole in itself. In essence, every human cell is a creation in itself. The similarity with God goes even further, not that man is God, but created in His image. For example, we have a moral nature, in addition to being able to communicate through language, we are created with creative abilities, and because of our moral nature, we are able to address spiritual and ethical issues.

But what about sin, you may say. Weren't we finished and lost our worth when Adam and Eve plunged humanity into rebellion? Absolutely not! Sin seriously tarnishes our lives and mars our likeness to God, but it does not completely destroy it. Although our likeness to God has been greatly damaged, it still exists in a certain respect, but this likeness can be completely restored for eternity through the sacrifice and life of the Lord Jesus Christ. James warns against cursing another because he is made in God's likeness (James 3:8-10). According to Paul, the Christians in Corinth were the image and glory of God (I Corinthians 6: 1-7), this is remarkable when you know the condition that church was in (I Corinthians 1, 2).

> *Man is meant to be the crown of creation. Because Jesus Christ paid the price for reconciliation with God with His precious perfect life (blood), man is restored by grace to that heavenly, royal calling*

through faith in Him. The price Jesus had to pay was by far the highest price ever paid for anything, namely: His life.

I Peter 1:18-19: “You know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, silver or gold, from the vain conduct handed down to you from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and spot.” What a reason to respect yourself. The purchase price tells us something about the value of the purchase (I Corinthians 6: 20, Matthew 20: 28, I Timothy 2: 6, Revelation 5: 9).

And if that is not enough, God considers us important enough and loves us so much in Jesus that He wants to share His life with us forever! Moreover, He is interested in our lives now. Through the Holy Spirit who has come to live in us through His goodness. Later we will be perfect with Him and rule the new heaven and earth. We can already act under His authority. Never think too low or inferiorly about a person, regardless of condition: a demented person, a psychiatric patient, an unborn person, a person in a coma, a beggar, a severely disabled person, or any other person! They are all the property of God and God has a Divine love for that person, who is a speck of dust in the universe.

Don't ask me if I understand, but I want to believe it, because God is truth and continually confirms it to us through His words in the Bible. I do not want to be guided by my own thoughts nor by just the things I see, but I want to integrate the revealed spiritual reality into the earthly reality!

The growth of a Christian from the moment of conversion is in fact the growth towards spiritual maturity in Christ, the growth towards the full Christian identity as God intends and set out by the apostle Peter in 2 Pet. 1:3-11.

The translation of The Book states:

'It is important that we get to know Him better and better. Because then He can help us more and more through His divine power. He will then be able to give us everything we need to live the way He wants and to serve Him.”

In the New Testament, Paul paints a great picture of the inner life of man in the letter to Romans. The similarity with holistic New Age thinking is that man in the Bible is also a relational being. Man lives primarily in the relationship with Himself, but also with fellow man, nature and creation (Genesis). Health of the whole person will therefore have to be defined and diagnosed in these relationships in addition to all relationships within the person himself. We will go into this in more detail in the next lessons.

1.2 PRACTICE OF HEALTH

Health must be learned! Many Christians do not realize that confirming or recognizing theoretical and/or intellectual knowledge does not guarantee a biblically responsible healthy effect. Rebirth is an important basis, but does not mean that someone is healthy in a biblical sense. Only the constant practice ('gymnazo') and practice of the new person (Eph. 2:14; 4:24), the 'new software' (Rom. 12:1,2) has health-giving consequences. What we know must be put into practice step by step, must become 'flesh and blood' within us.

In principle, biblical health can only be effective if two essential conditions are met. First of all, the old relationships, customs and standards must be recognized as wrong and negative, and this must lead to the insight that new biblical relationships are needed. One must learn to think and act in a completely different way, which is guided by God and often goes against what we normally think and do. You are completely different' (Eph. 4:20). The point is 'that your spirit and your mind must be continually renewed, and that you must put on the new man, who has been created according to God's will in true righteousness and holiness' (Eph. 4:23,24). In addition to intellectual insight, change of mind also requires a decision of the will and then an actual practice process to put it into practice.

1.3 LEARNING PROCESS OF IMITATION

Knowledge and learning processes have a common denominator, a common goal, namely Jesus Christ Himself. We must learn to live His life. In Luke. 9:23 says: 'Whoever would come after Me (Jesus) must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life (read: old life) will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake (new identity) will save it."

The basis of biblical health is the new identity in Christ! "I am crucified with Christ: I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20).

> *Our learning process is to live in that new identity of Christ. This means: learning to live like Christ in the aforementioned dimensions of our health.*

The learning process of imitation also needs role models, people who have followed the path of Jesus in their lives. In addition, Christian counselors, coaches and pastoral workers can encourage people to follow the way of Jesus. In the Promise Foundation magazine we have often paid attention to the 'LIFE Model'. This model uses a biblical holistic model of health. In addition to the often enthusiastic reactions about this 'neuro-theological model', criticism is sometimes expressed that it is not biblically based, but that is true.

> *The learning process of the new person to become healthy has everything to do with the skills mentioned in the LIFE Model.*

1.4 LEARNING TO LIVE IN THE NEW IDENTITY

Central to the Bible and the LIFE Model is confessing and safeguarding the new identity in Christ. In the hierarchical functioning of brain centers, the center of identity (in the prefrontal cortex) is at the top of the command structure. The most important factor of health is behaving according to your identity (as God intended). Remembering who you are in Christ in all possible and difficult situations and thinking about that and acting accordingly. Or put another way: "What would Jesus have done?" (WWJD). Not by an effort of the old man, but by being led by the Holy Spirit. This does not happen automatically, because the born-again Christian must learn to put off and put on (Rom. 13:12; Col. 3:12; Heb. 12:1). Intellectual knowledge alone is not enough. After all, skills also need to be practiced and honed. If that is not the case, the born-again person will not behave according to his identity in Christ, but according to 'the flesh', i.e. live in his old nature. Christians must learn to live and act in the new identity of Christ. Dying to the old identity is an important condition. 'Because we have come to the realization that one has died for all. So they all died, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them and was raised again.' See, among others, 2 Cor. 5:15 (NKJV)

Mistaking the old person for dead is an important skill that must be learned and practiced (in terms of the LIFE Model: ingrained in the fast circuit of right brain function). So no autonomy, self-justification, self-salvation, limitless freedom or a-morality. We must learn by practice to become "doers" of the Word and not just hearers, for then we would deceive ourselves" (Jas. 1:22).

1.5 LEARNING through INTIMACY WITH GOD

The first skill a born-again Christian must learn is to develop intimacy in personal prayer with Christ, guided by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. A.W. Tozer encourages an intimate in his book 'The Pursuit of God'

conversation with God. "Lord, teach me to listen. Teach me to pray like Samuel: 'Speak Lord, Your servant is listening.' Let me learn to listen to Your voice despite all the noise of the world in and around me." This speaking often happens through the Word of God, the Bible, sometimes through other believers or through circumstances. In any case, we must also learn to understand and test that voice of God.

Speaking in neuro-physiological terms, this listening to God is a skill of the 'fast circuit' of right brain function.

If it is only taken for granted by the slow circuitry of the left brain, it lacks the emotional context and connection needed to store the learning process. The skill of remaining relational with God (and subsequently with others) can be learned despite difficult feelings such as sadness, anger, fear, shame, disgust and despair. But more about that later.

According to Psalm 34, God will answer a seeking man. Postmodern man is generally superficial, easily irritable, impatient, insecure, autonomous, knows best and clings to his own assumptions. Psalm 34 indicates that God wants people to seek Him, for He will answer, and that when they see Him, He will delight, and when they fear Him, He will provide for their needs. This is not about a single moment but about a (learning) process.

1.6 LEARNING TO EXERCISE CONSCIENCE BEFORE GOD AND MAN

In the Bible, conscience occupies an extremely important place, both in the liberation and redemption of the entire human being and in communicating with God and getting to know His will. The skill of behaving according to your identity in Christ despite all the temptations of the old man is also called self-control in the Bible (2 Peter 1:6). Biblically speaking

self-control is a fruit and also an attribute of the Holy Spirit. At the new birth, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in our heart, mind (consciousness) and is eternally connected to it (Rom. 8:35). The precious blood of Christ cleanses man's mind, intuition, and conscience (Heb. 9:14). It cleanses our consciousness from dead works to serve the living God.

The 'neuro' theology of the LIFE Model claims that the control center of our (new) identity is seen by most scientists as something located in the prefrontal cortex. The center assesses stimuli and responds according to the identity of the 'self'. In other words: it is about the smooth running of the synchronization process between the inner world and the outer world, regardless of what happens. Often emotions such as joy, sadness, fear, anger, shame, disgust, despair and humiliation occur. Sometimes they arise from within and sometimes they are evoked by others around us.

In other words: it is about the smooth running of the synchronization process between the inner world and the outer world, regardless of what happens.

When our control center is undeveloped and disorganized, the synchronization process does not go well and these strong emotions can cause us to lose control of our lives. However, if our control center is strong and well trained, we are able to remain ourselves regardless of the intensity of these feelings. Conscience tells us whether the relationship with God and with fellow man is pure, whether our thoughts and actions come from our own will or from God. With spiritual growth you see that the two are coming closer together. For example, the Holy Spirit can speak to a believer, for example with Paul: 'I speak the truth in Christ, my conscience testifies with the Holy Spirit.' (Rom. 9:1). An important secret of a victorious healthy Christian life is a clear, clean conscience. In Acts 23:1 Paul tells the Jewish council that he has walked with a clear conscience before God (see also 2 Tim. 1:3). However, this is a matter of practice

every Christian must train himself (Acts 24:16). An important aspect that is mentioned in the Bible when exercising conscience before God and people (which belong together) is found in 1 Peter 3: 15,16: 'Sanctify Christ in your hearts, as Lord, always ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account of the hope that is in you, but with gentleness and fear and with a good conscience, so that in all the evil that is said of you, those who understand your good conduct in Christ to be reproached, to be put to shame."

Conscience tells us whether the relationship with God and with fellow man is pure, whether our thoughts and actions come from our own will or from God.

Important aspects such as identity formation, impulse control, socialization, self-control, group identity, processing experiences of knowledge and culture, developing empathy, synchronization and practical brain research and of course, not least spiritual life, fit seamlessly into a biblical analysis of conscience and health. Of course, the biblical view is decisive and not just scientific research.

1.7 LEARNING TO CALM DOWN AND RETURN TO JOY

> *"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, for to this purpose you were called as members of one body" (Col. 3:15). "Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). Building joy is not usually considered a spiritual task. Joy is rarely seen as an important tool in character changes. Yet Jesus spoke of joy as an important part of His teaching and a central feature of prayer. "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:11). "But now I come to You and speak these things in the world, that they may have My joy fully in themselves" (John 17:13).*
>
> *From the perspective of brain function, joy stimulates the growth of the brain involved in character building, identity strengthening and moral behavior.*

If we intend to change character through brain changes, it is best developed and perpetuated through joyful relationships. Joy is just as powerful as when we experience pain. It makes us feel good when someone enjoys being with us when we suffer. When we fall into the arms of a friend who, like us, has rushed to the emergency room to wait to see if a loved one survives, we cry with relief, but it is joy. There is someone with us, we are not alone. Joy makes us rejoice with people who are happy and cry with people who cry, we feel deeply connected.

Perhaps it is because of the lack of appreciation for this relational nature of joy that we tend to view our spiritual development as a solitary experience and therefore fail to view joy as a spiritual activity. Returning to joy is one of the most important skills to learn in the LIFE Model. After all, we may rejoice in the Lord at all times (e.g. Luke 1:47; Phil. 4:4). Often, an untrained and poorly organized brain gets stuck in depression, anxiety, loneliness and hopelessness for a long time. People have often not learned to build up capacity for feelings and process them in their brains. We don't often see Christians practicing and developing joy. The presence of too little joy may have something to do with this, but it is much more the result of the fact that we cannot hold on to joy.

The joy we have gathered and built up in the natural course of our lives is comparable to heat that easily escapes through open windows and doors in an uninsulated house. It's easy to fall in love, but much harder to maintain joy and avoid divorce. It's easy to get people excited

for the church, but it is more difficult to keep them there. This is about the relational skills needed to prevent loss of joy; these skills are more difficult to learn than the relatively simple principles of building joy. In the LIFE Model, this is referred to in the 'hierarchical brain functioning' as exercising at level 3, the right cingulate cortex, the so-called 'mother heart'.

1.8 LEARN TO SUFFER

It is important to learn to suffer well. Most of the time we try to prevent suffering. We can distinguish different 'capacities' to suffer: namely that of a baby, child, adolescent, parent and eldest. In the Bible, suffering is often connected to love. Those who love must also learn to suffer (1 Peter 4:13). "The more you share in Christ's sufferings, the more you should rejoice, and the more exuberant will be your joy when His splendor is revealed." As you share in Jesus' life you will also share in His feelings, and that includes the suffering in this world. When you are connected in love, you also share in the suffering of the other.

In his book Rare Leadership, Jim Wilder shows how Jesus suffered on the cross and yet showed His perfect love:

He thought of His mother's need and arranged for John to become like family to her.

He prayed on the cross for those who crucified Him: “Father, forgive them.”

He connected relationally with the thief next to Him on the cross and played the role of Savior to him. (He behaved according to His identity).

He endured the scorn and ridicule of His adversaries and was not tempted into aggression.

He referred to the Word of God, His Father, to remember who He was.

He remained in a relational mode with His Heavenly Father through all the pain.

Although Jesus was also God, He suffered fully as a man (Phil.2:5-7).

Also read about the suffering of the heroes of the faith in Heb. 11.

> *To learn to suffer in a biblically good way, we can learn to remain relational in difficult circumstances. Relational to God and to fellow man.*

The relationship is always more important than the problem. While expressing emotions, one can maintain constant contact with the other person's thoughts and experiences. Every emotion must be recognized with the intention of achieving better bonding and bonding with the other, which is also a biblical motivation. The relational circuits (RC) must remain active and one must be willing to pause when necessary for the other person to process, with the aim of improving the relationship. This does not mean that we always agree with the other person, but that we stay in touch with the other person's thoughts and feelings. This principle gives us insight into the extent to which someone can return to joy from the aforementioned six unpleasant emotions with an individual, family, group or culture. Wrong, 'toxic' motivation is often the cause of the inability to return to joy from those six unpleasant emotions. If our relational brain does not know how to maintain a relationship during such a feeling, it wants to be left alone and is unable to generate that peace. We often avoid painful feelings, and this even becomes a motivational pattern in our relationships with others.

1.9 LEARN HEALTH BY EXERCISING THE BRAIN

The difficulty in responding based on the new identity in Christ is explained neurophysiologically in the LIFE Model because one does not have control of the nucleus accumbens. This is the

notation center in the brain that plays an important role in positive experiences such as desire, motivation, passion and satisfaction. With healthy brain functioning, the identity center controls this pleasure center; in biblical terms this is called self-control. Self-control of the nucleus accumbens means that we must control the brain pain and our 'craving center'. By delaying reward we learn to tame this center, the nucleus accumbens, and to resist our desires and urges.

> *With healthy brain functioning, the identity center controls this pleasure center; in biblical terms this is called self-control.*

If children learn to tame their desires before puberty, they will have an easier learning process by the time the sex hormones start to influence the nucleus, because they are even more difficult and irritating to control, and thus sexual self-control is more difficult to exercise. Untrained adolescent brains find pain a horror, and delay of pleasure mind-numbing and tormenting. That is why, in their view, masturbation seems better than struggling to build a relationship with a partner. They want gratification as quickly as possible. Born-again Christians are also often addicted to all kinds of things: drinking, smoking,

overeating, masturbation, porn, money, power, status and so on. From the perspective of Christian identity, the Holy Spirit can help curb the pleasure center. Self-control is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. This also needs to be practiced (2 Peter 1:10). In 2 Pet. 2:19b says: “Whatever one is controlled by, one is a slave to.” (See also John 8:34).

Faith communities can also help addicted people through buddies, small groups with spiritual practices such as prayer and worship, involvement, joy, and sharing their lives. In this way, addicts can develop a spiritual fruit as they grow in their relationship with God and each other: self-control. Now that's a healthy factor!

1.10 LEARN TO BE HEALTHY BY FIGHTING AGAINST THE EVIL

James 4:7,8 says: 'Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.”

> *The learning process of self-control and control of the Christian identity over often wrong drives of the nucleus accumbens is, as mentioned, a struggle or practice and learning process in which the old man must die and the new man will reign.*

That old man is ruled by Satan. He is a spiritual reality that rules over the old man. In order to think from and behave in that new nature, we must also learn to fight against that evil one with spiritual armor. “Put on the armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Our battle is not against people but against heavenly princes, the rulers and rulers of darkness, therefore against the evil spirits in the heavenly spheres. Therefore take up the weapons of God that you may be able to resist in the day of evil, so that you may be prepared to stand firm” (Eph. 6:11-13).

1.11 LEARN TO LIVE HEALTHY IN A COMMUNITY

Faith communities are often equipped to address the vast array of human problems because they profess the “transcendental” reality with God, who is able to heal and restore man from the most devastating traumas, addictions and failures. We live in a broken world where many people struggle with existence, never reaching adult maturity and often opting for self-destructive 'solutions'. Yet man was created with a nature to withstand the attacks of the world, and has the ability to become the person God wants him or her to be.

> *Maturity is the attainment of one's God-given and intended potential. It means developing skills and talents and using them well, while growing optimally in the development of our individual plans.*

What is true of the maturity of the individual is also true of a community of faith. To achieve the unique potential of the God-given plan, one must choose to develop the skills that are effective in a process of growth and change. True spiritual communities mature spiritually through a process of continually focusing on the real needs of the suffering people in their midst and around them. A spiritually mature community can meet people's need to bond within a context of meaningful, personal relationships that they enjoy.

1.12 GYMNAZO = PRACTICE

The Bible is realistic about new behavioral principles, standards, and programs. They must be practiced until it has become a habit, a lifestyle in all areas of life. We often get rid of it far too easily by slipping back into our old norms after a one-off experience of a new program. That is why the Bible calls us in various places to gymnazo (= gymnastics).

> *The Greek word can be translated as practicing, honing (Heb. 2:11). In neurological terms: practicing until a skill of left brain function is anchored in the right hemisphere.*

During the exercise process to become healthy, relapses often occur. Relapse often also represents an opportunity to 'reset'. In His great longsuffering and love, God has mercy on us, lifts us up, comforts us, struggles with us, carries our burdens and blesses us with His presence. Biblical health is therefore also a continuous practice and learning process.

1.13 DO YOU WANT TO GET HEALTHY?

In Jerusalem there is a pool with five porticoes at the Sheep Gate, which is called Bethesda in Hebrew. There lay a large number of sick, blind, lame and deformed people. There was also someone who had been ill for thirty-eight years. Jesus saw him lying there, knew how long he had been sick, and said to him, “Do you want to be healed?” The sick man replied, "Lord, when the water starts moving, there is no one to help me into it; I try, but someone else is always in the water before me." Jesus said, “Get up, pick up your mat and walk.” And immediately the man was made whole, and he took up his sleeping mat and walked (John 5:2-8).

This man had probably had an illness or accident that left him unable to walk. The duration of his illness is striking, namely thirty-eight years; that is almost more than the average lifespan at that time. There were no social insurances at the time, which probably meant that the man had to survive by begging. That's no fun! All the more strange does Jesus' question seem: “Do you want to be made well?”

The man replied that he had no one to help him get into the pool if the water started moving (vs7). That statement shows great loneliness. A great need also in our time. Still, I'm not so sure he was telling the whole truth. How can such a sick man survive for so many years without any help? Did he have no friends or family to take care of his basic needs? He said no one wanted to help him get to the bath on time. He believed that his healing would work. It could be that those who cared for him did not want to believe that he could become well. It is also possible that they are the story of

'being the first to get into the bath' was superstitious and did not want to participate in that nonsense. Perhaps they did not see the possibility of what we today call a psychosomatic illness and therefore the importance of his experience, thoughts and faith in healing with the movement of the water.

The power of suggestion is well known in our time, but of course, from a Biblical perspective, even more so is the belief in healing by God. Perhaps his caregivers recognized that he was ill differently than others who had an accident or illness and perhaps even thought that he was acting out or consciously or unconsciously pretending to be ill!

> *Therefore, the man may have been drawn to the place Bethzata (derived from Bethesda which means 'house of mercy'). He longed for kindness and understanding for his ailment, which may have had much deeper emotional roots than bystanders would think.*

Back to Jesus' question: “Do you want to be made well?” It seems like a stupid question, but this question goes further than you think. First of all, the Lord Jesus asks whether the man wants to be healthy, not whether he wants to be healthy. Many people, including in our time, want God to provide healing through prayer and often think that God blesses much more by allowing people to be healthy immediately than by blessing a process to become healthy. They often do not have the vision that healing is also a process that God uses and in which the sick person is also involved to learn skills and exercise faith.

The phenomenon of 'disease gain'

One of the aspects that many people often do not recognize in chronic diseases is the possibility of 'disease gain', which can even cause acute complaints to become chronic. Healing therefore means giving up all the 'benefits' that illness can provide. That is why many chronically ill people become attached

to the somatic (physical) illness label and are often unwilling to face the psychosocial and emotional aspects. In the 35 years that I have been involved with psychosomatics, I see less and less the difference between a so-called physical or psychological illness. Every physical illness has psychological and emotional implications and vice versa.

Kees Meijer has described some examples of disease gain in his 'Handbook Psychosomatics'.

Primary disease benefit

The first 'advantage' that the client can gain from his complaints is that his complaint provides him with an alibi to avoid confrontation with or choice in a situation. This allows him to avoid feelings of anger, fear, sadness and uncertainty, for example. The client has been excused due to his complaint or illness. He can no longer do anything about it and is no longer responsible. The complaint has become an 'escape problem'.

Secondary disease gain

The client acquires secondary disease benefit if he succeeds in drawing attention to himself through his complaints, away from someone or something else, especially from a problem or choice. The benefit of the complaint then consists of: receiving attention and care and enjoying the exemption from effort, work or responsibility.

Tertiary disease gain

The partner and the system can also benefit from a complaint. Actual conflicts can be avoided and the partner can feel better, stronger and more powerful in the caring role. A man with phobic complaints can camouflage his complaint under the alibi of having to take care of his wife. Often mutual benefits perpetuate the complaint and create resistance to change. During treatment, both client and partner often find it difficult to give up the 'benefits' of a complaint in order to confront underlying feelings and conflicts. It is therefore often desirable to involve the partner or family in the treatment.

The term 'disease gain' suggests that clients have conscious goals. This is often incorrect, because it is often an unconscious process that can be made understandable. Complaints are often the last resort for the client to meet his needs, keep his life bearable or give it meaning. If you remove the complaint and thus the disease gain without offering an alternative, the client may collapse or become depressed. Therefore, give the client an alternative to his complaint that outweighs the benefits of the complaint, such as better solutions and skills or another way to get attention, says Kees Meijer.

Someone who has not participated in society for thirty-eight years, like the man in John. 5 can look forward to the choices, responsibilities and skills that are required in a new situation to participate in a complicated society. Then the question of whether the man wants to get healthy suddenly no longer seems so strange.

Psychosomatics through a biblical lens

Let's look at the "benefits" of being sick through a psychosomatic lens and discuss the path to healing according to the Bible. Repression of emotional problems in the brain ultimately leads to pathological changes in the body. Because someone can no longer cope with the emotional problems, which are often related to loneliness or insecurity, and has the feeling of being destroyed by this, the brain switches to survival mode. The bottom line is that the brain deliberately causes physical complaints via the unconscious nervous system to divert attention from the emotional problems to the physical complaints. This happens due to vegetative reactions of the nervous system and blood vessels. This often leads to poor oxygen uptake in the tissues with chronic pain complaints.

Dr. Sarno described these reactions in his book 'The Mind Body Prescription'. He regrets that many care providers limit their help to behavioral therapy and medication and do not deal with the unconscious, repressed emotional

pain that often underlies chronic complaints. Focusing on only the physical complaints gives room for other varying complaints.

> *The Bible shows that there is a mechanism between sin and complaints. Sin is a broad concept and indicates being cut off from God. The relationship between us and God plays an especially important role here.*

About the illness of the man in John. 5 and its origins are given a little more information in the chapter. When the man has been healed by Jesus and He later encounters him in the temple, Jesus says in verse 14: “You are now healthy, so do not sin anymore, otherwise something worse will happen to you.”

Here too it seems as if there is a relationship between his personal sin and illness. On the one hand, living with a clear conscience in communion with God has a healing influence and even life-prolonging influence. On the other hand, the Bible also indicates that the consequences of sin in general and personal sin in particular can lead to disease. I am not (!) claiming that all illness is a result of personal sin. Many psychosomatic complaints arise from unresolved emotional problems or from unresolved trauma and overload.

Either way, a peaceful relationship with a cleansed conscience is a great benefit to good health. We also read about this in the book of Proverbs. Proverbs 4:20-22: “My son, pay attention to my words and obey my declarations. Always keep them in mind, keep them in the depths of your heart. They are the life for those who accept them, they strengthen the whole body like a medicine.'

According to the Bible, inner peace is obtained by keeping God's commandments, and the result is a long and happy life. Proverbs 4:4 says, “Let your heart keep my words, and do according to my instructions, and it will be well with you.”

A Christian who only looks at himself or someone else or circumstances, but not at Christ, will suffer

a guilty conscience, which is a burden that is almost impossible for the body to bear. A person who does not see or know Christ in his ways relies on his old nature, the old heart, from which not much good comes. In Mark 7:21-23 the Lord Jesus says that what comes from within makes a man unclean: “For from within, out of the hearts of men, come evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder, adultery, covetousness, wickedness, craftiness, intemperance, an evil eye, blasphemy, arrogance, foolishness.”

Here we find the psychosomatic causes clearly described! In biblical thinking about the born-again person, the Holy Spirit, who receives a believer, guides our spirit. And our spirit guides our soul and body. If we live by the Spirit, it will have a beneficial effect on our body. If we live out of the flesh, out of our old heart, we extinguish and quench the Spirit and what comes from the old heart will defile and make the person sick. The contrast between life by the Spirit and carnal life, and their effect on the body, is found in Proverbs

14:30: “A meek heart (life by the Spirit) is life to the flesh, but jealousy (life of the flesh) is devouring to the bones.” Or in another translation: “A contented spirit is good health, but envy gnaws at the bones.”

Decomposition of the bones can therefore be seen as a result of inner tensions on the body. From the above it appears that when the bones are consumed, not only the skeleton, but the entire body, aches and is affected by sin. One of the most common causes of inner tension that many Christians suffer from is unconfessed sins. Many psychosomatic complaints have their origins here.

Proverbs 28:13: “He who conceals his faults will not prosper; but whoever indulges and avoids them is forgiven.' As in Psalms 51, 38 and 32, the Proverbs speak of physical discomfort due to emotional reactions of a downcast spirit.

Confess

God is a holy God, who tolerates no sin in His presence, who has no fellowship with the fleshly life in which our body is not guided by the beneficial action of the Holy Spirit, but by our (old) spirit. Psychosomatic complaints based on unconfessed sins are an abomination to the Lord, who sees through everything.

Proverbs 5:21-23: “The Lord sees all the ways a man walks, and He watches all his steps. He who does evil sets a trap for himself and becomes entangled in the ropes of his sin. Because he refused to listen to a wise lesson, he is lost in his own folly and death awaits him.”

Confessing guilt is the remedy that provides relief and joy for these psychosomatic complaints. The Bible provides a picture of such a situation, but also a solution. Psalm 32 mentions a person who pushes his problems and especially his guilt away. 'As long as I was silent, my bones wasted away, and I groaned and suffered all day long. Your hand was heavy on me day and night; my strength was withered as in the heat of summer” (Ps. 32:3,4).

It is a striking image of psychosomatic complaints such as depression ('Your hand pressed heavily on me', the vital fluids, synovial fluid, saliva, etc. dry up in the body, it seems as if the aging process is increasing rapidly). It is striking that this old psalm so links the physical and inner condition. At the same time, it unequivocally indicates the way not to get into such situations, or, if we are already in them, to be radically liberated from them. The path we must take is always the path to God. Not in the sense that we should 'wail' about our troubles (verse 3b), but: "Let those who are faithful to you pray to you, if they find sin in themselves" (verse 6a). The Lord God will then prove to be not a condemning or avenging God, but a merciful God, as He has made Himself known in Christ Jesus, our Savior. "With you I am safe, you keep me in my distress and surround me with joy. of liberation.”

He will be our refuge and a refuge in our troubles (verse 7); and even more wonderful: “He will surround us with songs of deliverance. He will teach us and instruct us in the way we should go” (verses 7b, 8).

Confession means: saying the same thing that God says about sin. Only by confessing his sins can a man stand righteous before God (in fellowship), or as Prov. 15:13 says, “A merry heart brings a smile to the face, but a sad heart torments the spirit.”

When a regenerate man comes boldly to God, with a true heart, in the full assurance of faith, with a heart that has been purified by sprinkling (confession) from the sense of evil, and a body that has been washed with pure water (by the washing of the Word, Heb. 10: 22), then the heart will be glad and rejoice in the Lord, and it will be medicine to the flesh and refreshment to the bones. Or, as Proverbs 17:22 says, “A cheerful heart is good health, but a gloomy spirit weakens the body.”

Repentance

Confessing sins also includes repenting and distancing from sin. Sin should never be trivialized, because that only makes the problems worse.

Jac. 4:8b-10: 'Clean your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you who are divided within. Realize your misery, grieve and weep, let your laughter turn into sadness, and your joy into depression. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you."

If the health problems are a result of sinful behavior, then a condition for healing is confession of our sins. A lack of a sense of reality is presented in Proverbs 25:20 as follows: "To sing to one who is sad is like undressing on a cold day, or pouring vinegar on lye."

So we should not be 'fake happy' with a sad heart. There is only one solution for a mind and body weighed down by the burden of sin. That is going to the mercy seat of God and declaring before God the true nature and burden of sin in order to be set free through forgiveness

in fellowship with the Lord. This does not happen through all kinds of 'outside' therapies, such as work or play therapies that distract the person for a while so that he no longer thinks about sin. Even working hard for a while or immersing oneself in all kinds of trivialities does not lift up the contrite spirit of one who is burdened with a guilty heart!

Grace

We may not have all the information in those few sentences in John 5 about the nature of the disease. Jesus may have had a longer conversation with this man that is not recorded in John's Gospel. The Lord might have spoken to him about his loneliness, fears, or other emotional pains. He might have encouraged him to think differently and to learn to trust God in all the difficult prospects and responsibilities that he had never learned and that he dreads in the event of a recovery. Perhaps Jesus encouraged him to bring the loss of so many years, of so many things he had missed, to Him so that he could learn to process it all together with Him. Perhaps Jesus explained to him why the people who brought him food did not carry him to the bath. Anyway, Jesus had compassion on him and gave him mercy. 'get up, take up your mattress and walk'. And then say: 'Watch carefully! Sin no more."

Clear connection in the book of Proverbs

The book of Proverbs speaks clearly about the connection between physical complaints and the spiritual condition of man. The connection between mental and physical problems is repeatedly emphasized. In Spr. 18:14 says: "The strength of a man's spirit sustains him in his suffering, but who can lift up a depressed spirit?" We can see from this text that emotional problems are much more serious than physical problems.

physical pain, felt in illness. Painful feelings are generally worse than physical pains. People often focus only on the consequences of emotional complaints, and therapy does not progress beyond 'outside work'. It can sometimes be the case that something that initially seems minor is the core of the problem. For example, depressive feelings, which arise from the fact that one is not doing one's job properly, can be a cause instead of a consequence.

Mental laziness

Sometimes the deepest cause of depressive feelings can be laziness. Proverbs also mentions this. Spr. 19:24: 'Though the sluggard put his hand into the dish, he will not even put it to his mouth.' In Prov. 24:30-34 we find a characterization of a sloth: 'Sleep a little longer, slumber a little longer, lie down with folded hands for a while; there comes your poverty and your want like an armed man...' In Prov. 6:9-19 we read more about this sluggard in whose heart there are twists and who always devises evil and stirs up strife. A sloth ends up in a vicious circle, a circle of increasing sins and strain on the heart and body. Guilt of negligence, guilt of promising but not delivering, guilt that someone feels when others rely on him. This often causes feelings of depression, which prevents a person from doing his work - and the circle is complete: trapped under the spell of sin.

Sloth is one of the many examples of sins that burden the heart and body of man. Complaints then arise that are generally called psychosomatic, and that tire and burden the person.

"Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

Tired and burdened?

In Matt. 11:28 the Lord Jesus says: 'Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest; take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.' Or as Prov. 10:27-29a expresses it: 'The fear of the Lord prolongs the days, but the years of the wicked are shortened. The expectation of the righteous is joy, but the hope of the wicked comes to nothing. The way of the Lord is a defense for the upright."

What can we learn from the man in Bethesda?

What can we learn from all this? How can we apply these words to our lives? We often tend to feel sorry for ourselves and are full of fear because we are losing control in our lives. Self-pity does not bring us closer to God. I don't think God is happy with it either, self-pity is often pseudo-pious chatter. Perhaps we are not as severely handicapped as the man in Bethesda, but (emotional) stress can still have a detrimental effect on our health. We too must learn to trust and rely on Him in all circumstances. In Phil. 4:11 Paul says: 'I do not say this because I lack, for I have learned to be sufficient for myself in all circumstances.

I know what it is to suffer poverty, I also know what it is to live in abundance. I am fully initiated. I can eat in abundance and I can go hungry, I can live in abundance and I can suffer poverty. I can do anything, thanks to Him who gives me strength."

Obedience and dependence on Jesus is the highest goal in our lives. Jesus was merciful and at the same time very direct towards sick people. He can cuddle and punish at the same time. This is also a task for all Christians (and care providers) to approach people with weaknesses in love, not by talking to them, nor by standing above them, but by standing next to them and serving them in love and truth.

The core of Christian care

In short: there is also a beneficial, biblical path to recovery for people with psychosomatic complaints. Sometimes one needs a Christian counselor who must make it clear that good advice can only be found in God and His Word. Spr. 19:20: "Listen to counsel and accept instruction, that you may become wise in the end."

Christian assistance should be assistance focused on the meaning of life, organized according to God's Word, focused on His honor and His healing of the entire person. This leads to the fullness of Christ in body, soul and spirit. Spr. 4:18: "But the path of the righteous is as the bright morning light, which shines brighter and brighter until the full day."

1.14 Can faith make you sick?

There are many current questions among many contemporary psychologists regarding the consequences of the Christian faith for humans. Some examples: Can faith in Jesus Christ make people sick? Is faith the opium of the people, i.e. does faith in Jesus lead us into unhealthy dependence, into sickening relationships with people? Isn't faith often an escape from an unprocessed reality into unreality?

We are also very concerned with the health-giving and preventive possibilities of faith. Yet we must consider these many questions regarding the sickening and unstable consequences of the experience of the Christian faith. This is therefore important, so that we can address some "pathogenic" aspects in a good preventive or therapeutic manner. If we wonder whether faith makes us sick, we must first make this distinction: the church, the dogma, can be sickening; not faith. Of course, church and dogma have

something to do with faith. But if we follow church history, we see that both liturgical forms and dogmatics keep moving away from Biblical truth. For example, our question: “Can faith make you sick?” for everything

orient ourselves on the sickening doctrine and recognize some fundamental points.

1) CIVILIZATION DISEASES

Many people today are not aware of how many pathogenic factors we are exposed to these days. In this context we speak of civilization diseases or phenomena. For example, thanks to all the motorized transport, modern people move about 60% less than people in the last century. This has very adverse consequences on our total organic functioning and on our musculoskeletal system. Especially since there is a danger that people, for so-called health-enhancing reasons, overload their untrained fitness through incorrect fitness programs and excessive sports practice.

It is very clear that today's extremities are much more pathogenic than we are aware of; they are usually accompanied by feverish, hectic situations under constant stress. It would be particularly useful if preaching and church teaching pointed out these time-dependent circumstances and made statements about this time from a biblical perspective. Paul and the other apostles also dealt extensively with the temporal circumstances of their age. Many problems and time-bound themes should also be discussed freely in the churches, so that believers can deal with them early and deeply. Precisely because the teaching is often constantly concerned with a few selected problems, the followers of Christ have to suppress or bluff much of what comes to them as problems.

2) ONE-SIDED GOSPEL

Certain criteria are used to present a doctrine as perfect and complete (while this contradicts the biblical fact that our knowledge is only partial). As a result, dogmas are often posited that offer a one-sided, poorly differentiated gospel. There might be some

cherry picking, but that is often not representative of the whole.

Completely dangerous and misleading is the view that, if one believes enough, everything in life is up for grabs. Such simple patent recipes may be correct in an individual situation, but people who propagate such a position as the full gospel will quickly run aground on these principles and end up psychologically wrong. It is also dangerous to view everything from a passive attitude, in the sense of believing, praying and then receiving. Passivity has always been an instrument, which often makes people open to certain messages and can be manipulated. Esoteric techniques often base their entire teaching on passivity. (esoteric = only for initiates)

3) IDEAL IMAGE

Often the weekly Bible study or the Sunday sermon only shows the ideal image of the faithful person. Little is said about the path that leads to the goal. The result is that people want to be that way, as is said every Sunday, but it is not. It is a great danger that a Christian will become inauthentic, that he will feel better than other people because he has to copy an image. Such a false attitude can quickly become a mask and lead us astray.

However, anyone who rejects this and honestly confesses their difference is always confronted with a large gap between the ideal image and the current situation due to such preaching. This often causes severe depression. This is because the honest man must sometimes experience his condition very deeply, as a condition of failure, of defeat, of setbacks, etc.

According to our insights, people in the sermon should not only be confronted with the ideal image (last goal in the imitation of Christ), as a result of which they do not receive true comfort or do not understand

it. They often come under a great delusion of consciousness of sin, which can culminate in a decisive final judgment: I have sinned against the Holy Spirit, otherwise I would not always be so rebellious and unsuccessful.

4) MUFFLING

An essential, if not the most important, point is that the contemporary churchgoer is silenced when he is confronted with a certain liturgical form or an absolute dogma. Everything is so highly developed, fully matured and well packaged that all one has to do is consume it. The mental packaging, as is done nowadays, also from a certain laziness, only leads to passive consumption, in which one's own thinking and tests are often eliminated.

This is why the content of the Bible as the most important information channel for people is increasingly lost. Our own knowledge about the content of Scripture is becoming less and less. I myself have been able to conclude in unpublished research that the individual Christian today no longer has any Biblical knowledge. Considerable numbers of books and cassettes are consumed, but Bible knowledge is constantly shrinking.

In difficult times, and these are also part of God's educational process, the tried believer has no spiritual resources of his own and is once again dependent on others. Thus the army of insecure and helpless Christians who need pastoral care, health seminars, etc. is growing. The Bible continually points out how important it is for the believer to have Bible knowledge that he can use practically and which he can appropriate through continued diligent study of the Holy Scriptures.

5) MANIPULATION

Many teachers abuse their position as “specialist” and manipulate the audience consciously or unconsciously. The following authentic example illustrates this:

In a sermon on the theme of 'forgiveness' it is emphasized again and again that forgiving = forgetting. This statement is biblically based on some biblical passages that show that God no longer remembers our sins. Unqualifiedly, 'no longer remembering' is equated with 'forgetting'. The preacher

However, in his explanation he uses one of the two Biblical aspects. This is because this text has been taken out and is not seen in the light of the entire Bible. This gives it a manipulative character, and people are asked to do something that they are completely incapable of doing. Unless, in order to forget something, they repress something. The Bible tells: that, regarding

to the subject of forgiveness, our attitude must be one of non-recrimination. Now not remembering takes on a differentiated meaning. But the preacher fixates on not remembering in the sense of forgetting and chokes on the logical unanswered question: Isn't God omniscient? We see here that in dealing with forgiveness, God voluntarily relinquishes his omniscience in an attitude of not remembering.

This example of unspiritual insight leads to a very serious situation, which clearly has a sickening effect, in which the Bible is violated. The manipulative character in the last statement is also clearly expressed in the introduction: We see that .... Here it is suggested without argument that all listeners have the same opinion and who would dare to say: I don't see it that way.

Examples can be cited to show how quickly preaching and teaching take on a manipulative character, causing shortcomings to God and people.

6) OVERSPIRITUALITY

What we have discussed so far already partly shows that when people are out of touch with earthly reality, they can easily escape into 'over-spirituality'. We see this particularly in interpersonal relationships. If one can no longer cope, one can easily hide behind one's over-spirituality, such that one can e.g. does not have to be accountable to the partner or family, because in one's own over-spirituality (which is confused with faith) one can appeal to God, God's will or the speaking of the Holy Spirit, etc.

Very often, such an attitude in a relationship conflict is also approved by church leaders or members. But

over-spirituality always has the character of delusions. We must become aware of this again and again, as we are no longer in touch with earthly reality. This delusion then quickly turns into a morbid disorder, which makes a normal life impossible for this person and others.

7) AUTHENTICITY CRITERION

There are also many special phenomena in the evangelical world today. The “Power Gospel” is very much in vogue. We have nothing against the power of the Holy Spirit, but if this gospel no longer has any Biblical basis and especially seduces weak people, because they do what they cannot do in society, i.e. If you have to compensate for something great with this power spirituality, then that can be very problematic.

We should also not forget that non-religious people can recognize very quickly and relatively well what is real and what is not (intrinsic, extrinsic religiosity). The result of a false spiritual show is usually based on manipulation of weak people and people who have abandoned their critical thinking. So here too we must remain critical and inquisitive and not allow ourselves to be carried away too quickly into something that is not good for us and our souls.

8) APPEAL TO OUR FEELINGS

We have experienced that large evangelization actions can also be very problematic. On the one hand, when making a decision for people before God, a strong appeal is made to feelings and faith is often offered as the only solution for people in need. In psychotherapy and pastoral care, it often emerged that these people had few problems during their conversion experience. But afterwards they did, because they were often 'inundated' by the content of the faith and a discord arose in the world of experience between the spiritual dimension and practical life.

It is therefore important that on such occasions the potential convert is properly informed about what a personal decision is all about. Naturally, in all these cases, thorough aftercare in Christian congregations is indispensable, in such a way that they are not bothered with high-level dogmatic spiritual fare, but learn to continue to build on the new foundation in an orientation to their problems.

9) PERFORMANCE PRINCIPLE

A dogma that is very strongly performance-oriented also has the danger of being sickening. It is namely so that not all Christians should be performance-oriented. For example: a true Christian is only he who reads the Bible and prays for 15 minutes every day, etc. ... This is certainly not good if the person in question has to constantly violate his good intentions. The performance principle, which has brought success and prosperity in the Western industrial countries, can never be equated with the spiritual principle of grace. A Christian, who is guided with a targeted problem orientation, eventually develops a natural, healthy hunger for God's Word and searches for an individual way to receive the necessary Biblical information.

10) FREEDOM

Exposed from different angles, Christian preaching places more emphasis on the “yoke” of the servant than on his freedom. Scripture itself says: “To freedom you were called.” Freedom must never be a dogmatic guardianship in which the Christian is, as it were, immersed in the masses. On the other hand, Biblical freedom is not synonymous with absolute freedom, but it always points to the divine will for individual guidance in our faith. Where this freedom suppresses the freedom of thought and critical voices of community members, or where this is not allowed, those responsible in the community are guilty of using violence. In any case, freedom also means freedom of expression and dialogue, because many church members are influenced by the increasing

secularization, having little information and not being able to understand a lot, as many church leaders expect. That is why it is important to take such people seriously in their freedom and to continue with them where they really are in their faith.

11) INDIVIDUAL LEADERSHIP

The mentioned freedom also has many elements of difficult individual leadership. Paul already recognized that there is no uniformity in faith that can be established dogmatically. What is good for one person is no longer good for another. Something becomes a sin for me if I can acknowledge it. (Rom.7:7, 14:20-23) This of course does not apply to the fundamental confession of faith, but to the individual faith leadership in a growing sanctification process.

Individual leadership means being able to decide individually in difficult choices in accordance with the will of God. As it is meant here, it is also a piece of guidance in life in solitude. Precisely because the equipping preaching is often too theoretical and therefore offers too little practical help. This equipping through education should serve to ensure that one can solve daily problems armed and not be bothered again by fear of failure when things get difficult.

12) UNIFORMITY

A sickening effect through preaching and pastoral care also arises where one immediately arrives with clearly defined templates. God's word argues for the opposite. N.l. to be there with man in the position where he finds himself, willed by God; and this means; where he functions mentally, physically or psychologically. Slabs are often the result of a lack of time. She responds to the well-known tendency to use patent formulas and get everything under control. That would only be possible if people were uniform. If God already responds to us personally and knows our special problems, why should we not also do this in education and in pastoral care.

13) SILENCE, WITHHOLD

We have mentioned the one-sided doctrine before; special themes that are performed again and again, packaged. However, teachers often do not discuss important spiritual aspects because they go against local dogmas. Let us beware of limiting God's standards, where the Bible gives more space. Proverbs 14:30 says, “A meek heart is life to the flesh, but jealousy is devouring to the bones.” This gentleness leads us to liberation from a puritan interpretation of the Gospel, which has entered our churches in the current of New Pietism.

The author belongs to a Christian community, where it is taught that Jesus did not drink wine (fermented), but grape juice (unfermented). This also leads to grape juice being drunk instead of wine at dinner. Now grape juice does not, as a rule, make you cheerful or drunk, as the Scriptures declare, and probably unfermented grape juice can only be kept good for a few days in the heat of Palestine. For many church scholars, however, the dogma must correspond to their ideas, thus giving a one-sided view of the Bible. For example, the author has never heard a sermon, for example. about Ecclesiastes 9:7+9: “Go ahead, eat your

bread with joy and drink your wine with a merry heart, for if you do this, God has willed it this way for a long time...Enjoy life with the woman you love, all the days of the vain life that He gives you under the sun, all your idle days, for that is your portion."

With these texts we do not want to give room to loose morals and absolute freedom, only to point out with arguments that Scripture gives room in the sense of freedom, but at the same time points out that the goal of this enjoyment always lies within sensible limits. The theme of 'in the right measure' is given a lot of attention in the New Testament, because this aspect is repeatedly linked to our individual life situation and leadership. In this context, the Bible also clearly points out abuses that do not please God and do not honor Him. (1.Cor.11:20-22)

14) OWN WEAKNESS

Errare humanum est (lat.) means 'to err is human'. This means that every person can be wrong again and again. In any case, this maxim is anchored in the Word of God. If this maxim is never mentioned in the teaching of pastors, an incorrect projection usually results. The opinion can then quickly take hold that the other is never wrong; that everything he says and does is absolutely true and without error. The counselor then always remains the weak, needy one, the failure; the other, in his high spiritual position, then has (unspoken) an aura of absolute infallibility of a deeply spiritual character. Such an attitude is not only unloving, but also unmerciful, without heart.

Word preaching, pastoral care and therapy, if they are in the context of love and solidarity, must always include their own failures. In Acts 21:8-14 Luke reports on Paul's arrival and his departure to Caesarea. A prophet, on behalf of Agabus, came from Judea. He took Paul's girdle and, tying his hands, said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: The Jews in Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this girdle and will deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles."

Those present, together with the evangelist Philip, begged Paul not to go to Jerusalem. This warning contains a rational, human attitude. If the Holy Spirit says that Paul must suffer in Jerusalem, doesn't it make sense not to travel to Jerusalem? These counselors of Paul supposedly knew better than the Holy Spirit how Paul should act. Out of fear of suffering, they were willing to 'take a walk' with the Holy Spirit. Here it becomes clear that teachers, evangelists and elders also make mistakes or, in Biblical terminology, behave carnally. Errare humanun est!!

15) MONOKAUSALITY

Monocausal thinking (thinking that a single factor is the cause of something), also in spiritual issues, has a sickening effect. You often hear the argument: because you

you have done or failed to do that, now this or that is happening in your life. At first glance this sounds logical, but how much injustice and lack of love is caused by Christians. As a rule, things are much more complicated. Often God does not even reveal the ultimate reason. But it is often easier to make a simple and undifferentiated comparison or calculation and finally tell the other person the truth (subjectively). Many Christians are deeply hurt by such monocausal evidence for their failure, which they sometimes never overcome.

16) RESTRICTION OF FREEDOM OF CHOICE

Disdaining the ability and the freedom to choose often also has a sickening effect on people. The believing person must be led to maturity (manly maturity of Christ; see also Hebrews 5) and no longer always depend on brothers and sisters. (1.Cor.3:1-3, Heb.11-14) It is therefore extremely dangerous and harmful when people seek and/or acquire this assertiveness and perhaps also express critical thoughts (purely businesslike), highlight certain abuses in a Christian community, and then not take them seriously and sometimes even accuse them of sin. (quote from a letter: 'I think this is a shame....') Contempt for the freedom of choice of others has manipulative traits in it. Manipulated and indoctrinated people are generally no longer able to think for themselves. In emergency situations they always need support from these manipulators and generally cannot make their own choices and decisions.

17) OVERSPIRITUALITY

Escaping into over-spirituality has its own dynamics. It is dangerous if we do not recognize the motives behind over-spirituality. God is logical in every way. If piety is used as an escape mechanism, disappointment will sooner or later result. The fruit (blessing) is not forthcoming; everything that has to do with faith and church will be done away with,

that it did not help in a particular emergency situation. In this way, faith and piety work like any drug, and temporarily produces a certain state of mind (high), but afterwards comes the hangover, the deficiency syndrome. Therefore, the communal working up of spiritual feelings on Sunday is very problematic and frustrating for the rest of the week. (frustration as a cause of depressive attack)

18) CONFLICT OF CONSCIENCE

The common silence in sermons and Bible studies about feelings and conflicts of will (theme of Rom. 6, 7, 8) as something completely normal has harmful consequences for many people in their inner lives. If a person comes to faith in Christ and God, and wants to accept spiritual reality as reality and wants to organize his life according to the new spiritual standards, then a tremendous broadening of horizons takes place. The danger is then great that such a person is not made aware of the dilemma of earthly and spiritual reality. In such cases he will often quickly become confused and adopt an attitude of over-spirituality to solve the problem. As a rule, this works for a while, but this over-spirituality can only be maintained through inauthenticity. Sooner or later someone has to give up. Due to this over-spirituality, the entire environment is confronted with an intolerable feeling of superiority, which, due to an almost untouchable Phariseeism, can have very devastating effects on all those involved.

VIEWS OF THE HUMAN PERSON

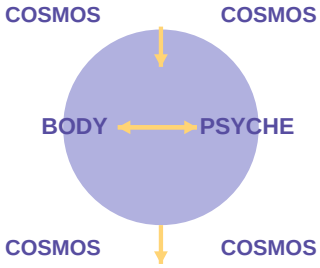
NON-BIBLICAL

VIRTUAL OR POSTMODERN

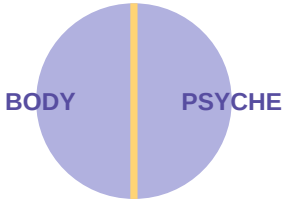
"You are what you perceive."



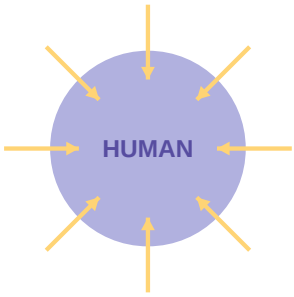
OCCULT / NEW AGE



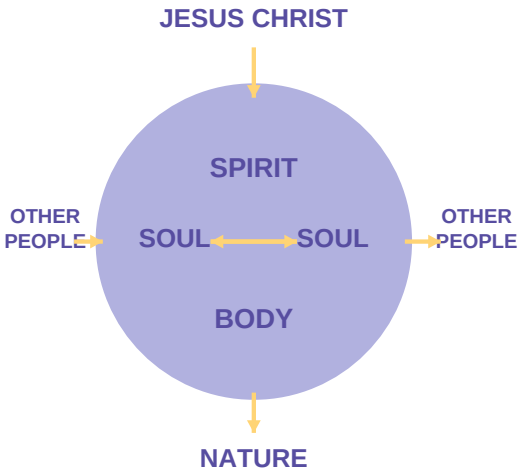
REDUCTIONIST



ANTHROPOCENTRIC



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VIEWS OF THE HUMAN PERSON IN HEALTHCARE

Every healing method or treatment method is based on a human view, a world view and a view of God, in which it defines and gives a place to illness or health. Presuppositions partly determine the diagnosis and therapeutic options. Regular healthcare and new age medicine have a different view of humanity and the world than what we find in the Bible. Until recently, mainstream thinking was still partly based on 'Cartesian thinking'. We can briefly represent these views of humanity schematically, realizing that this is a very simple reflection of the often complicated differences.

2.1 REDUCTIONISM

The French philosopher René Descartes has had a major influence on the development of Western thought. He is seen as the 'father' of rationalism; the view that thought (the mind, reason) is the primary source of knowledge. Descartes made a sharp contrast between the soul and the body, although he did not close his eyes to the interaction between the two 'worlds'. Thinking along the lines of Descartes is called Cartesian thinking. In this way of thinking, man is increasingly divided into small parts. Research has increasingly focused on sub-areas of humanity. Man is increasingly divided into small parts about which more and more knowledge has become available.

This development has also occurred in healthcare. There are more and more isolated, specialized areas of research, which are limited to an increasingly smaller area of human functioning. Gradually, with this development (deductical thinking), people are in danger of losing sight of the cohesion within humanity. In the practice of care, many experience these shortages on a daily basis. They feel watched like one watches a machine.

The patient's person remains out of the picture. 'High-tech' developments in particular contribute to this alienation. Nowadays one still finds many specialists and even 'super specialists' in hospitals. Of course, these developments have brought many blessings, but the shortcomings of such a view are also experienced by many people seeking help, who often do not recognize themselves in such a 'limited framework of thinking' and who often experience being sent 'from pillar to post'.

A lot also had to do with the 'tacit' agreements at that time, that medical science concerned itself with the body and theologians concerned with the spirit of man.

If you look at the shortages critically, you could say: there is a development in which people know more and more about an increasingly smaller area. If this development continues, it will lead to 'knowing everything about nothing'.

2.2 HOLISTIC NEW AGE THINKING

The holistic view of humanity in many new age therapies sees people more in relationships. It emphasizes the connection between the body and the psyche and even more strongly on the connection between man and the entire cosmos with all its forces. In this image, just like in the Bible, there is room for spiritual forces and their influence on human health. Man is central in this thinking (anthropocentric instead of a biblical theocentric worldview).

Supporters of this view of humanity magnify the shortcomings of the reductionist view of humanity and show that human health is not only a matter of body and psyche, but that humans also have a mind. (And that health too

must be seen in that sense.) This means that one must also arrive at a diagnosis of those spiritual relationships. In this respect, New Age thinking resembles a kind of biblical holism, but opening oneself to the spiritual world outside of Jesus Christ poses great dangers from a biblical perspective. This is because the Bible speaks of an evil, fallen and hostile spiritual world headed by Satan and a superior, powerful angelic world headed by the God of the Bible.

The new age movement aims to transform (change) thinking about health (care) from a Cartesian thinking model to a holistic model. This is a phased process. We are already seeing many forms of integration of these two thinking models. We see rapid developments in this area, especially in psychology, neurology, neuropsychology and (ortho)pedagogy. Healthcare is an important spearhead for bringing the 'new world', the new age, closer. This is because health is often the highest priority in human existence.

The health branch of the New Age movement is a melting pot of all kinds of naturopathic, meditative, esoteric and magical practices. Their main purpose is to influence people mentally (spiritually). The healing methods are often a mixture of Eastern spirituality in a magical worldview combined with modern 'scientific discoveries'. They respond to the shortcomings of Cartesian thinking but fill them in unbiblically.

One of the most important basic ideas of New Age thinking is 'holistic thinking' (Greek holos = whole). This view means that, in addition to all inner connections, man is influenced by all kinds of forces from the cosmos. At some level in our universe we are all connected. Space and matter are secondary factors. We are all 'energy' and everything in us and around us is composed of this 'energy' (fluid, prana, Chi). This spiritual energy is said to vibrate at different rates and properties. Thinking, for example, is a nice, light form of energy. In this theory, our body can be seen as an expression of our consciousness.

Everything that happens is part of a chain of action and reaction, and is influenced by natural and spiritual laws. In this view, God is degraded to a force or a person who is part of this play of forces and is also bound by these laws. There would be no supernatural God, and the 'divine' cosmic powers of healing are available to everyone, provided you are willing to 'open yourself' to them.

However, the basis of biblical thinking is not a 'primeval force' or evolution, or holism per se, but the almighty eternal God, who created everything, with the purpose that everything has its existence in Him and through Him and to Him. The New Age movement tries to reconcile opposites: good and evil; leven en dood; mens en God; geest en Heilige Geest. Truth and objectivity are outdated concepts and must be interpreted relationally and subjectively. We have to think much more in the perception of things than in the absolute truth. Sin is ignorance and does not need to be atoned for on the cross of Calvary. There is no difference between Creator and creation, no difference between self-redemption and redemption through Christ.

LEARN FROM THE MACRO AND MICROCOSM

The doctrine of the macro and microcosm partly determines the foundations of the New Age pathology. People think that everything that happens in the world is a projection, a reflection, of what happens in 'heaven'. The earth and man as part of the microcosm is a reflection of the heavenly, the macrocosm.

According to this theory, things such as constellations, the position of the stars and the seasons are very important. Moreover, every phenomenon in nature corresponds to a phenomenon in the body. Each element in nature corresponds to an organ or gland. Nutrition and diet instructions are often compiled according to astrological principles. The entire diagnosis can also be called astrological. Man is divided into seven energy centers that correspond to the starry sky (chakras).

Ultimately, astrology is applied to all facets of human life. Sometimes this idea is clear (medical astrology), sometimes it is 'hidden' in a healing method (e.g. reflex therapies such as acupuncture and iridology in diagnosis). In the Bible, astrological teaching is denounced as a great sin and idolatry (Deuteronomy 18).

Energetische leer

Man is also his spirit and is within a spiritual world. In holistic thinking this is often called 'energy'. You must come into 'balance' with the energies in your body and in the cosmos. Only then will you be stable and healthy. In practice you open yourself to all spiritual forces and powers that are in the universe. These theories assume the possibility that man can unite with these forces in himself (without God) and in himself, and through himself. This is often done through 'expansion of consciousness', through trance, drugs, exercise, music, yoga meditation, ecstasy, self-realization and self-salvation.

Biblically speaking, however, we are not 'one-size-fits-all' in the spiritual world. As people, we can only allow ourselves to be spiritually influenced in the right way by the Spirit of Christ, who wants to give people spiritual power and insight in a supernatural way, just like that, purely by grace. The means He uses for this are the Cross, the Gospel, prayers and the Bible (James 5: 16, I Thessalonians 1: 5, Romans 1: 16).

2.3 THE VIRTUAL VIEW OF HUMANITY

A new trend in healthcare is virtual or postmodern thinking. It is claimed that there is no true image of humanity. In the search for who he is, man can only arrive at a perception of things, but he should not claim that this gives him the only truthful image of humanity. It has many elements of Eastern mystical thinking in it. Hinduism also has the concept of 'maya', which means appearance, illusion.

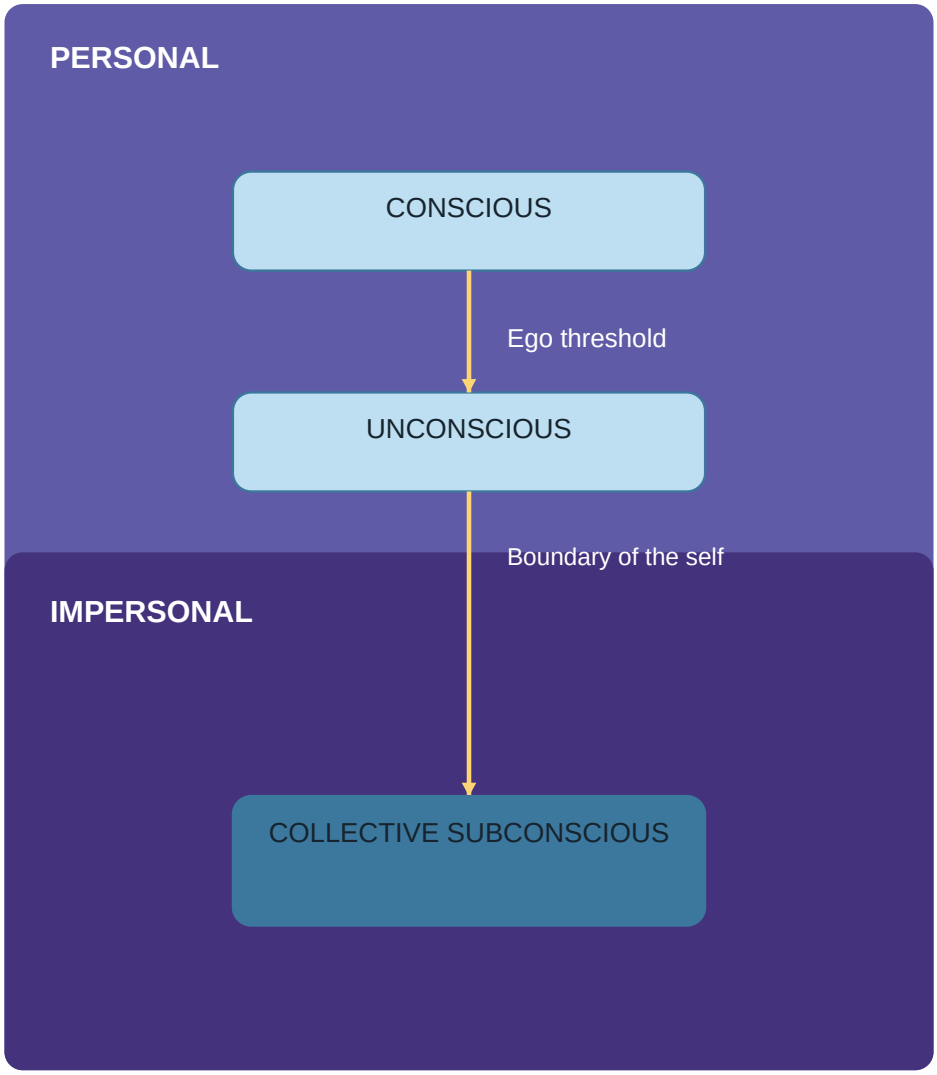
Postmodern thinking has penetrated virtually all areas of society (theology, pedagogy, psychology, literature, education, etc.). It also fits into our modern virtual culture. We have learned from modern information technology that we can create our own virtual world. Through contact via modern media (the Internet), we come into contact with all cultures and ways of thinking and it is now much more about the perception of things.

A non-Christian psychologist, for example, receives guidance from a Christian and uses Christian concepts and language (or metaphors) to guide a client. He uses words like God, love, freedom and so on without being able to give them a real biblical interpretation. He does not reject such concepts, as might happen in reductionist, Cartesian thinking, but 'goes along' with Christian terminology and speaks, for example, about the influence of spirits. The psychologist himself does not believe in ghosts, but he thinks he can help with the perception of things in the right way.

For example, you also see that contemporary trauma counseling no longer looks for the truth in the past, but that the most important thing is to change the perception (experience) of the client. So no longer have to come to terms with the things that really happened in a difficult, long-term way through Christian help with prayer and struggle. Or ultimately seek it through a difficult path of forgiveness or confession together with the Holy Spirit. But if consciousness has changed and a client (temporarily) experiences perception differently, then this seems to be a much faster and easier solution than the 'old-fashioned' way of seeking truth in your life. Many modern hypnosis techniques provide substance to this.

Hypnosis techniques can be very subtle and show all kinds of variations and gradations. Think of Silva Mind control (SMC), some neuro-linguistic programming techniques (NLP) such as 'timeline analysis' but also many forms of meditation (yoga-Tm) fantasy training; certain versions of Eye Movement Desensitation and Relaxation (EMDR);

DESCENDING INTO THE COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS



Hypnotic trance, trance induction, self-trance, metaphors, visualization, guided imagery, floating, transcendental meditation, EMDR, SMC, etc.

some forms of creative writing, autohypnosis and some sensory perception exercises.

In any case: the therapist's view of humanity and the world determines whether the interpretation is neutral or occult in nature. If the therapist does not respect the God of the Bible and ignores His laws and rules of life in his heart, the client being treated by him or her is walking on thin ice. As a Christian, it is wise to ask about this explicitly and tactfully in advance! Does the therapist recognize Christ as Lord or not? “For,” Jesus says in Matthew 12:30, “he who is not with Me is against Me. And whoever does not gather with Me scatters.”

It's about the mind as the driving force behind the treatment. Vigilance is required. And, what is also very important, there is a better alternative that focuses on the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, namely the LIFE Model (see chapter 9).

The methods are often steeped in the thinking of C.G. Jung, who claimed that through these types of techniques you could descend the boundary into the collective subconscious of man and thus tap into the tremendous potential of all humanity. In a Biblical view of man there is also a place for the subconscious, but the so-called collective subconscious and the way in which we should gain access to it through occult techniques cannot be justified in any way Biblically.

Thus, according to this virtual thinking, a modern businessman no longer makes decisions in the old-fashioned way by weighing the 'pros' and 'cons', but he has to put himself into a mild auto-hypnosis in order to make a decision intuitively in that state. Children must learn the perception model early in the fantasy journeys that are practiced at school. It is no longer a matter of healthy fantasy or imagination, but sometimes they are even taught to step outside their body so that the 'perfect' way of virtuality is experienced. There are also training courses where people learn to create things themselves. The visualization techniques are well-known, if you visualize things very clearly in all details you can bring them into existence yourself. Just like the so-called positive thinking. As long as you imagine things very strongly and keep expressing them, you will

ultimately experience them becoming reality. After all, aren't we all God and have divine qualities? When God speaks, He calls things into existence (Genesis). According to the followers of visualization and positive thinking, we can practice this more and more and ultimately master this divine ability down to the last detail. Of course, we are not talking about healthy imagination and visualization.

2.4 BIBLICAL VIEW OF HUMANITY

How can we compactly describe the biblical view of humanity and the world? According to the Bible, man's identity is determined by the fact that he is a creature of God. This is in contrast to humanistic thinking in which autonomy is the guiding principle of identity. This also means that God fundamentally determines man's identity, or (perhaps better said) the relationship in which he stands to God by virtue of the order of creation. The fact that we are creatures of God means: dependence on God, accountability to God, obedience to God, service to God, living according to His will and for His glory. Man's identity has from its origin been governed by the great privilege of knowing, loving and serving Him. After all, man was created in God's image. The identity of man created by God is originally a joyful identity (Zephaniah 3:17).

It begins in Genesis when God says, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Gen. 1:26a) and “And God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (verse 27). God, the Creator, is the reason for man's existence. Man's disobedience to Him, the Fall (Genesis 3), led to a rupture in the originally joyful relationship; guilt and shame began to weigh on humanity.

Man cannot restore the relationship with God himself, he can only say yes or no to God's offer to restore the relationship and thus the joy in existence in God's way. John 3:16 (NKJV) puts it this way: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son

has given, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

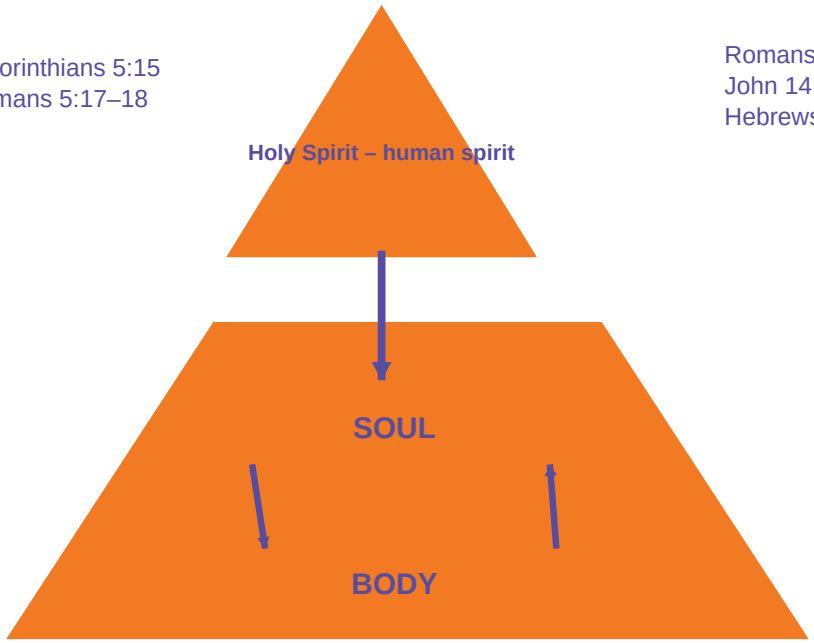
Only Jesus Christ is the Way (back to God), the truth and the life (John 14:6). Man can decide for himself whether he accepts this or not.

THE NEW PERSON IN CHRIST

Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 4:24

2 Corinthians 5:15
Romans 5:17–18

Romans 8:11
John 14:17
Hebrews 9:14



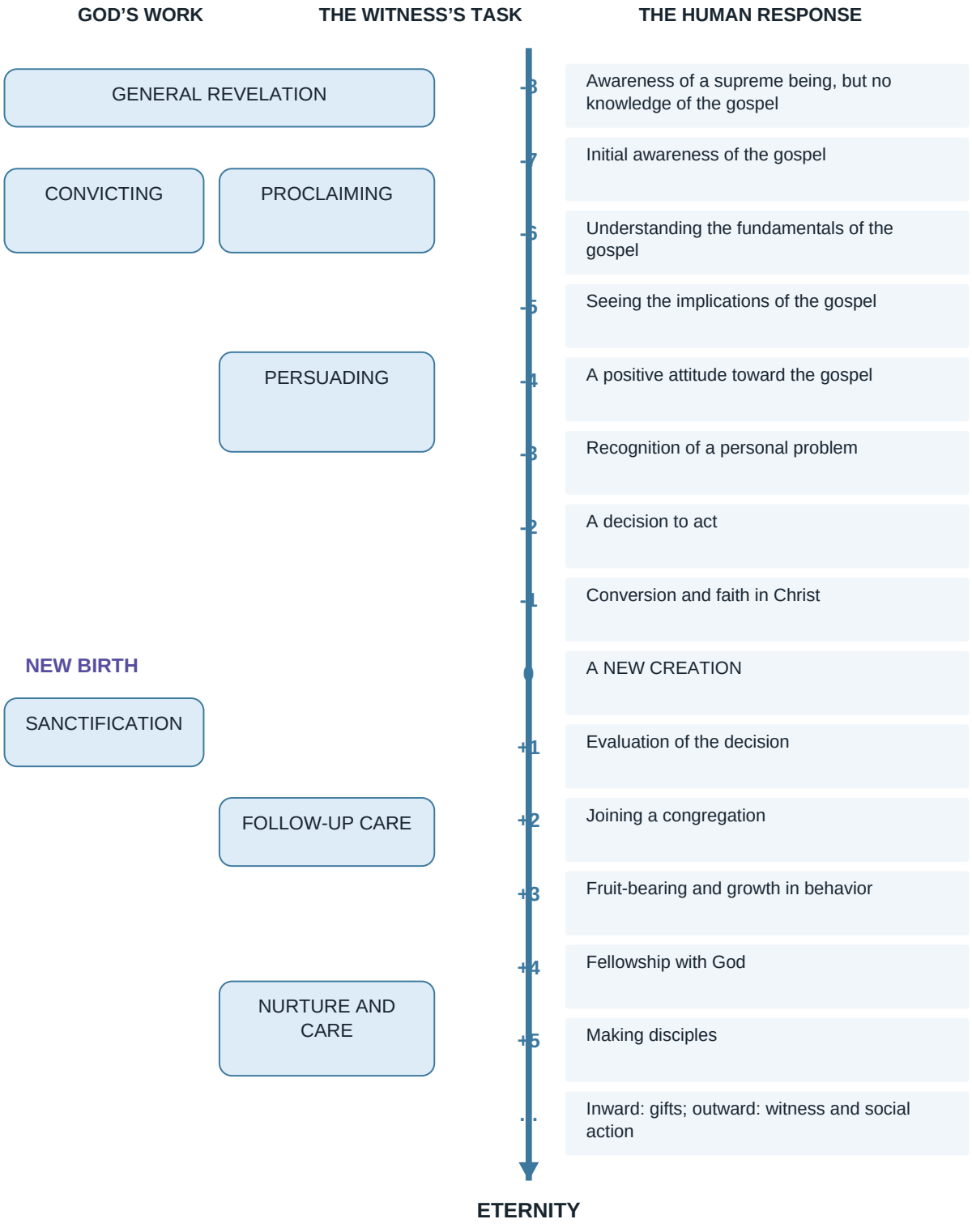
Mark 8:34–35
Romans 12:2
Hebrews 4:15
2 Corinthians 10:15

DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT

In general, a cautious process is required to arrive at a correct diagnosis based on the biblical view of man. Many symptoms or complaints are often assessed either only physically, only psychologically or only mentally. Someone with back problems who goes to a physiotherapist will notice that complaints are quickly viewed from a framework of the posture and movement system; a misalignment or imbalance will soon be found. If the same patient goes to a psychologist, the complaints are often assessed based on psychological factors. Other care providers may also see only demonic influences in the same complaints.

The longer I work as a psychosomatic therapist, the more I notice how complex a person is. I am also convinced that there are all kinds of connections between body and psyche or between mind and body. But beware of labeling people! Sometimes there appears to be no psychological or mental background to someone's physical complaints, but the complaints exist on the basis of a habitual gesture or biological reflex. Although spiritual life can certainly have a positive influence on physical health (Prov. 4:22 and Prov. 3:8), that does not mean that someone with poor physical health has a poor spiritual life. Just think of Joni Eareckson, who was paralyzed for life after diving into shallow water. While she remained severely physically disabled, she has built up an extremely healthy psychological and spiritual life, despite her complaints.

THE ENGEL SCALE

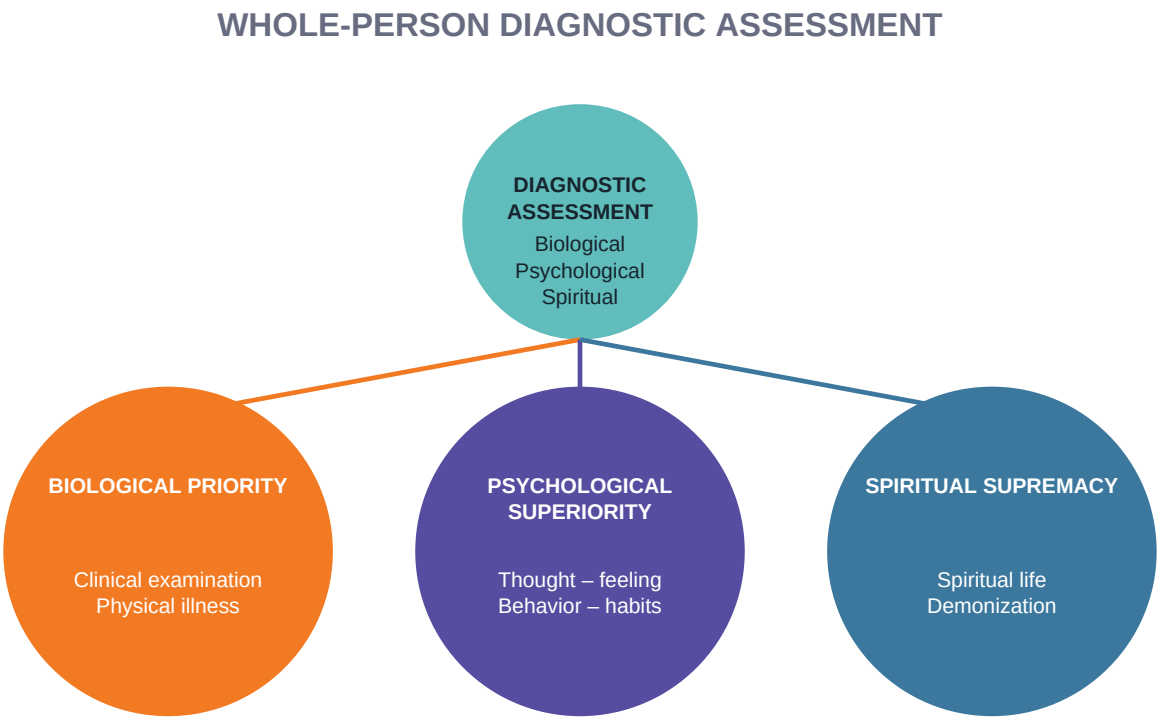


Source: J. Lucasse, God is bij machte ("God Is Able"), "The Engel Scale".

One will often discover that the main points of complaints or diseases lie in different areas of the view of the human person. Diagnosis often requires a careful approach, in which all aspects of body, soul and spirit must first be inventoried. Although a lot of knowledge of methods is needed, the therapist will ultimately have to be guided by the Holy Spirit in determining the correct diagnosis to touch exactly what is needed.

Often, even if a disease has been classified as mainly psychological, one will always have to leave open the possibility that a purely physical disease will reveal itself, for example, which was initially not so clear in the symptoms. That is why, after an initial diagnosis, it is advisable to continually attune to the client, guided by the Holy Spirit. As mentioned, a problem often needs to be tackled in all three areas. For example, someone with anxiety will have to learn to use physical resources (self-control, breathing, relaxation, possibly medication), psychological resources (thinking differently, distraction) and spiritual help (God is with me in my anxiety and will help me).

A proper diagnosis therefore requires an extensive inventory of physical, psychological and spiritual aspects of the complaints. It is therefore advisable to observe a certain order in the whole. Other care providers will sometimes also have to provide information about the client. For example, a doctor who can determine through examination that there is not a pathology but a functional disorder. We look at 3 areas of interest in the following order.



3.1 BIOLOGICAL PRIORITY

Is there a purely physical illness or problem? (For example, trauma, nutritional deficiency, hormonal problem etc.). Even if there are more psychological or spiritual leverage points, one will always have to be alert to a physical illness, or a purely physical illness that slowly reveals itself. Has a general practitioner or specialist ruled out a physical illness? Has clinical research been conducted? There is a difference between a functional disorder and pathology.

3.2 PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPERIORITY

Our brain activities, such as our thinking and feelings, play a major role in our physical functioning. Someone who is full of resentment and feelings of hatred will therefore develop physical complaints that cannot be remedied with medication or local remedies or therapy. There is usually a relationship between physical and psychological dysfunction. As an exception, people with a physical disability (such as Joni Eareckson) can sometimes perform exceptionally well psychologically. But in general, psychological factors are superior to (that is, more important than) physical aspects. This diagnosis also addresses psychosocial factors such as relationships with fellow human beings, behavior, thinking, wanting and feeling in various areas of life.

3.3 MENTAL SUPPLY

Only in the third instance do we inventory spiritual aspects. We should not immediately label someone with strange behavior as 'demonic'. A spirit cannot always be grasped by the mind, but a spirit must be spiritually discerned. In diagnostics in this area, a gift of discernment of spirits is of great importance. However, there must also be clear mental symptoms to indicate that there is a mental dysfunction, but this should certainly not be the final conclusion. Evaluation and testing by others is indispensable.

3.4 CLIENT PRESUMPTIONS

The way in which people seeking help view their own problems is of great importance, especially in the case of chronic complaints (lasting longer than three months). This provides an idea of how they see the priorities of the complex problem, what expectations they have with regard to help and how they value and approach the relationships within and outside themselves. Questions such as: “Do you know the name of your condition/disease, what causes it or how long it will last, what the consequences are and what your own role in recovery is?” cannot always be answered by the client, but the answers often indicate whether and how the complaints are viewed as a biological, psychological or spiritual problem or as a mix. A distorted image that is contrary to the care provider's diagnosis deserves extra attention. It is important for the therapeutic climate and the quality of the therapy that incorrect precognitions are unmasked.

3.5 EARTHLY AND SPIRITUAL REALITY

Here are some examples first. A lady with a feeling of oppression thought she was being mentally attacked. Upon further investigation of her spiritual life, the latter was not confirmed. The lady had hyperventilation complaints that had more of a biological-psychological background than a mental one. By continually 'fighting' against heavenly powers, also with the help of brothers and sisters, her fears increased and the complaints were maintained. This of course also made it a spiritual problem, but because of her wrong premise.

A man had turned his social life into a mess. He quarreled with everyone, in family, work and environment. He said, “You can see that we are living in the end times and there is much conflict among God's children.” In doing so he divested himself of any responsibility for the problem and adopted a passive attitude. Here too there is a clear imbalance in the balance of mind, soul and body. This man should not be prayed to

not for protection but for insight into the biological and psychosocial factors in his problems and his own role in them. It must become clear that God is involved in our lives, but also provides accountability in our daily relationships and activities.

A man denies the seriousness of a life-threatening illness because he believes his faith should be greater. The denial phase is often a step in the processing problem, but here it concerns someone who gets 'stuck' in it and has the wrong idea that healing only depends on his faith and must therefore be more or less 'forced'.

A woman feels guilty because she prayed to God five times and God did not heal her. She feels guilty because she has the wrong belief that illness always has a bad relationship with God as the cause.

A woman thinks she has committed the sin against the Holy Spirit because she no longer experiences the closeness of God. The fact that it bothers her immensely proves that she has not committed this sin, which has to do with constant and persistent unbelief. Furthermore, experiencing God is not proof of faith (think of depressed people, they are religious but have difficulty experiencing God). Dr. In his book Biblically dealing with stress part 2, Kurt Blatter indicates eighteen (!) ways how someone can become ill through faith (see chapter 1). Of course, what is meant is a misinterpretation of faith, because faith must be a health-making thing (2 Tim. 4:3).

Physical imbalance

There are often incorrect precognitions, such as about the connection between pain and movement. Here too are a number of examples. “If I were to get over the pain, exercise would make everything worse,” or: “The safest way to prevent pain is to exercise as little as possible.”

'If I do my breathing relaxation exercises or my jogging, sports or fitness properly, all psychological and mental problems will resolve themselves.' It can be a step in

are the right direction, but by only paying attention to the physical, psychological and/or spiritual problems are approached too simply.

Excessive attention to medications, additional nutritional supplements and minerals or diets can hinder a solution on a psychological and spiritual level.

Identity and health are often only measured by how one looks, by weight, or by the thickness of the muscle fibers.

Psychosocial imbalance

Psychosocial imbalance is often related to one or more of the following factors.

1. Unfavorable personal characteristics such as low personal effectiveness expectations, pessimism, neuroticism and narcissism.

2. Clear dysfunctional illness beliefs or behaviors that worsen the symptoms.

3. More than normal distrust or trust in a care provider.

4. Strong rationalization of emotional traumas.

5. Traumatizing events.

6. Addictions.

7. All mental perceptions are interpreted only as a perception of the brain

but not as a spiritual reality. For example, people do not take occult bonds and their consequences seriously and approach everything from the human psyche.

In the entire guidance process of healing the 'whole person', over-spiritualization, somatization (attention only to the physical complaints) and far-reaching psychologization or rationalization of the complaints are dangers that arise again and again. Someone can also 'overshoot' from one imbalance, for example somatization during guidance, to another imbalance such as over-spiritualization.

> *In the approach to the whole person, the care provider will need to have a broad knowledge of the 'overlap' of these processes and must also practice good observation of the consequences of the type of help for the client and the shifts this brings about in the entire care process and the client's experience.*

Although every person is of course different in terms of identity and character - one person will sometimes be more physically or psychosocially developed (in thinking or feeling), or more spiritually oriented, yet in the entire development and healing of the person, gradual balanced growth in terms of mind, soul and body must be taken into account. God has created us in such a way that we can develop in that unity and reflect His Image in Christ. Of course we realize that in a large number of cases this gradual development in healing is not feasible, such as Joni with her paralysis, from which, humanly speaking, physical recovery is no longer a realistic expectation.

A different balance: the earthly and spiritual reality

While many psychological and physical stress management methods are aimed at gaining self-control and overview in situations, spiritually speaking, surrender to God is an important tool. Of course you should not play the psychological and spiritual principles against each other, both are of great importance. There are many principles to learn in the Bible. The word in the Bible that most closely resembles stress is found in John 16:33:

> *"In the world you suffer tribulation (thlipsis = pressure, oppression, stress), but be of good courage, I, (Jesus) have overcome the world."*

The world then represents the cosmos, the spirit of this world, everything we can come into contact with at this time. One of the most important stressors for a human being is the fact that we live in two realities: The spiritual reality and the earthly reality. Spiritually speaking, we confess a lot: we no longer live for ourselves, but for Christ (Galatians 2:20). We walk in heaven with Christ. We are without wrinkle and clean, spiritually blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ (Eph. 1), and so on. In daily life in earthly reality it is sometimes difficult to integrate that spiritual reality. In the daily stress of work, relationships, imperfections, lack of money, sinful behavior, rejection, disappointments and so on, we experience the pressure of the cosmos (world).

> *Often the tension between what we profess and what we do not do leads to a flight to either only spiritual reality or a flight to only earthly reality.*

In the first case we become over-spiritual, speak 'the Canaan language' and walk alone with our heads in the clouds without having any contact with our earthly responsibilities in our family, work, city and society. This leads to 'stress schizophrenia' that can make people sick. The other escape route is that people completely jettison their spiritual life and insight and focus only on earthly reality. Or they feel so sinful because of the tension that there seems to be no grace in faith for them. No, the best stress management is to integrate spiritual reality into earthly reality. In the text quoted above, Jesus says: "In the world you are in tribulation, but be of good courage, I have overcome the world."

In addition to a realistic awareness of our own responsibilities, we must realize that the Biblical promises, despite visible appearances to the contrary, are valid.

> *God will not test us beyond our capacity, He is with us until the end of the world, He has everything in His hand, He is 'in control' both in the world and in our personal lives.*

We must look at things from above, from a different perspective, namely from the possibilities of God himself. In psychology this resembles problem-oriented cognitive coping, with the difference that here it is not just a perception of things but the objective reality itself.

Another important psychotechnique, emotion-oriented cognitive stress coping, is also found in the Bible where God calls us to pour out our hearts and bring our feelings to Him (Psalms 83 and 86). Many people tend to focus only on their problem (including illness) in their lives. They are, as it were, hypnotized by the problem and in their consciousness only cassette tapes with the problem are playing. The problem threatens to bury them.

The problem then is between them and God. God no longer seems reachable. The solution is to look at the problem 'from above', in the position of Christ, as high priest, shepherd and father. Is the problem no longer there? Yes, but you look at it from a different position, with different possibilities in Christ. That seems easy, but it isn't. You need confidence for that. Trust as an act of your will, namely turning your way to the Lord, radically (Psalm 37: 1-5). That trust is also an attitude (Psalm 125). Trust (faith) is based on the promises of the Word of God. By leaning more and more on this, by involving God in all facets of your problem, by integrating earthly and spiritual reality, you increasingly learn to walk 'the beaten path of your heart' (Psalm 84 6-8). Then through that community (communication) a fruit of the Holy Spirit arises.

The Statenvertaling says in the letter to Romans that we have become 'a plant' with Christ. In that society, if the path to God is always followed, a fruit of (faith) trust grows (Galatians 5: 20). Sometimes that is the higher goal

of God in a human life, not to protect him or her from all kinds of diseases, stress, or to satisfy Christians in all their (sometimes carnal) desires and needs, but to teach them to live by faith. The righteous will live by faith (Romans 1:17).

3.6 LIBERATION FROM TIES AND BIBLICAL EXAMINATION

In our time, in which Satan, the lawless one, is increasingly manifesting himself as a world ruler (2. Thes. 2:7,9; Eph. 6:12) we also see in Western countries an increasing demonization, an enchantment of people and society. Those who approach these developments with 'enlightened eyes of the heart' (Eph. 1: 18) and 'pierced ears' see the tremendous need and hear the urgent cry for liberation and healing of many who are in need: captive, bound, anesthetized, darkened, blinded and paralyzed.

The liberation, redemption and healing, announced by the Lord Jesus as the 'Pleasant year of the Lord' (Luke 4:19) is also a spiritual reality, which is unfortunately so rarely proclaimed. The Son of God was revealed to destroy the works of the devil (1. John 3:8). In this article we want to give a modest start in discovering some biblical aspects in the process of liberation from the chains of bondage to inner healing and wholeness in Christ (1. Thes. 5: 23),

SATAN, HIS PURPOSE AND (IMPOSSIBILITIES).

Everyone, believers and unbelievers alike, experiences the working of Christ's adversary in their lives. He exercises his dominion through sin and the fear of death (Heb.2:15). Not every sin is caused by him, but every sin gives him power over this person. “He who commits sin is the slave of sin” (Rom.6:6) and the devil sins from the beginning (1. John 3:8).

For a believer, sin means regaining a piece of power (1. Thes.3:5, Eph.4:27). Bringing disbelief towards God's Word and belief in Satan's lies

man to superstition, idolatry and occultism. This creates increasing spiritual blindness and an increasing dependence on 'the god of this world' (2. Cor. 4:4). Through deceptive spirits and false teachings, through false Christs and prophets, through deceptive signs and wonders under religious or scientific guise, people are initiated into a demonized world that waits and longs for the coming of the antichrist (2. Cor. 4: 3,4; 2. Thes. 2:8-12; 2. Cor. 11: 4, 13-15; Mat 24:5,11,24; Rev.2:20; Rev.13:13-18; Col.2:1-3;

Born again Christians have been saved from the power of darkness (Col.1:12-13; Eph.4:1-3). Yet every Christian has the command to remain standing and to take up the armor of God (Eph.6:10-20). The Holy Spirit dwells in the believer (1. Cor.3:16; 6:19). Satan tries to tempt the believer into sin in the battle of the flesh and spirit (Rom.6:1 - Rom.7:25). A Christian has no protection within himself against this. Submission, dedication (Rom. 12:1-2) and voluntarily placing yourself under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, taking shelter in the Refuge, the strong Fortress (Ps. 91:1) only offers real resistance to the devil (James 4:7), who then flees from us.

However, there are limits to Satan's power! He cannot cause a believer to perish (1. Cor. 5) or take him captive (Rom. 7:23) but cannot separate him from the love of Christ (Rom. 8:38-39). God allows things into the life of a believer (1. Cor. 10:13; Rev. 2:10) and (despite our failure) has control over everything from which we cannot be robbed (John 10:28; compare Job and Mat. 10:28).

The devil's influence can be that of demonization (Matt.4:24; Mark 1:32; Luke 8:31b). This influence can consist of varying degrees of being bound to the power of Satan, even indwelling. (dwelling is a better term than possession) Luke 7:39; John 7:20, 8:48, 10:20; Lev.20:7.

Believers can also have a demon living in them. (Luke 13:11-14; 2. Cor. 11:4) The degree of influence of the demonic powers depends on their number (Matt. 12:43-45; Mark 5:9), their power (Eph. 6:12) or their wickedness (Matt. 12:34). Furthermore, the strength of the believer's spiritual armor, that is

to what extent he or she places himself or herself under the authority of Christ and is obedient to the Word of God.

Loyal readers of Promise Magazine are already aware of the extensive range of occult methods in healthcare, with which believers can also come within the devil's sphere of influence. In short, we can distinguish two categories here, namely:

1. A direct influence by using demonic forces outside of humans. This

is the (passive) patient who allows external forces to be invoked over him and to have an effect on him through certain rituals. Here we speak of a tax by demons. (English: oppression). Biblical terminologies are: a) diagnosed - discussed, weighed; b) the one who has undergone therapy - bewitched and enchanted.

2. A direct influence through the use of forces within humans. This is the (active) practitioner (diagnostic or therapist), who has occult powers within himself and transfers them to others. So this is a question of an indwelling demon. (English: possession) The Biblical terminologies for this are a) diagnostic - fortune teller, soothsayer; b) therapist - sorcerer, enchanter. For example: Ez.21:21-23; Micah 3:11; Gen.44:5; Deut.13:1-5; Jer.23:25-31; Lev.19:26; 2. Kings 21:6; 2. Chron.33:6; Isa.2:6, 57:3; Jer.27:9; Micah 5:11; Isa.47:13; Deut.17:3;

2. Kings 17:16; Amos 5:26; Jer.10:2; Dan.1:20, 2:2; Gal.5:20,21 (pharmakia= venom); Acts 8:4-25; Mat.7:13-23; Acts 16:17-18; Rev.18:23.

The distinction between the two above-mentioned degrees of influence is important, especially for deliverance ministry.

SIGNS OF ATTRIBUTION AND RESIDENCE

The influence of the devil can affect all aspects of humanity. Due to bondage and/or indwelling of demons, there can be signs on a spiritual, psychological and physical level. There are also often para-psychic phenomena that manifest themselves. Of course, the following list is only a collection of people charged with the occult.

The occurrence of one or even more symptoms is certainly not always 'conclusive' proof of the presence of demonia. The real test will ultimately be the confrontation with the person of Christ (in the believer, for example the counselor).

POSSIBLE SPIRITUAL CONSEQUENCES

1. Violent resistance to Christ (Mark 1:24, 5:7; Matt. 8:29; Luke 4:34, 8:28; Isa. 8:21).

2. Resistance to fellowship with Christians (for example, the celebration of the Lord's Supper).

3. Resistance to the Holy Spirit (callousness, dullness, 2. Thes.2).

4. No resistance to sin (scorched conscience), inner cursing, blasphemous thoughts, mockery, spiritual pride, legalism, fanaticism, religious madness, hardness towards the judgments of God.

5. Having difficulty with prayer. No desire for prayer, inability to concentrate, sleepy mind while praying.

6. Resistance to faith. Stubborn unbelief, no growth in faith and disruptions in faith, no peace, joy, anger towards others who convert. Unrest when reading debunking literature about occultism.

7. Lack of discernment regarding spiritual movements of this time,

spiritual blindness, openness to all kinds of unbiblical ideologies, religions, heresies, mysticism, gnosticism and modernism (Ex.20:1-6;1. Cor.10:20-22).

8. Resistance to believers (mocking, running away, swearing at religious care providers).

9. Sometimes resistance occurs towards religious objects; bijvoorbeeld het kruis, de

Bijbel, gezangenboeken, etc.

MOGELIJKE LICHAMELIJKE SYMPTOMEN

Here too, a warning: one should certainly not conclude that bondage or occupancy is the same on the basis of a number of these symptoms alone. Pas als er vele symptomen

also reveal themselves in other areas plus the aforementioned criterion of the confrontation with (the life of) Christ, then the Holy Spirit can provide distinction on this point!

1. Remarkably strong physical strength (Mark 5:3ff; Acts 19:16).

2. Disturbances in organic functions, e.g. by mute or deaf spirits (Mark 9:17,25). Convulsions, hysterical spasms, nervous twitches (Luke 9:42; Matt. 10:1; Mark 1:23).

3. In families where there is a lot of superstition and occultism, many pastors often observe: frequent miscarriages, childlessness, deformed children, periodic accidents and deaths, hereditary burdens that doctors cannot explain, abnormal seizures of epilepsy, tightness around the heart area.

4. Veel aspecifieke, algemene malaisegevoelens.

5. Possible characteristics: heavy perspiration and a terrible smell, physical pollution and neglect, strong odor from the mouth, a changed look, different voice, speech, sentence structure, self-torture, tremors or tremors, provocative sexual exhibitionism.

POSSIBLE PSYCHIC CONSEQUENCES

1. Self-harm and suicide attempts (Mark 5:5, 9:22).

2. Aggressiveness toward others (Mark 1:23, 5:7, 9:18-20).

3. Fear (1. Sam.18:10-11, 19:9-10; Isa.8:19-21; 2. Tim.1:7).

4. Despair (Isa.8:20), wandering in isolation (Isa.8:21), darkness and obscurity (Isa.8:22), phobias, delusions, obsessive thoughts, nightmares, moon walking, great selfishness, madness, kleptomania, short temper.

5. Rebelliousness and unruliness (1. Sam. 15:23).

6. Wetteloosheid (2. Thes.2:3-12).

7. Sexual perversions, addictions, necromancy (Isa.8:19, Deut.18:11).

8. Depression, quarrelsome, belligerent in family.

9. Seeing demons, seeing light and lights, night visits of demons, hearing voices, abnormal closedness, lying spirit, desire for revenge etc.

POSSIBLE PARA-PSYCHIC SYMPTOMS

1. Speaking of another from the person who has an indwelling spirit (Mark 1:24, 34; 3:11,

5:7,9-12; Mat.8:29; Luke 4:34, 41; Luke 8:28; Acts 16:17, 19:15).

2. Clairvoyance; clear-feeling-knowing (Mark 5:7-8), interpreting omens (Deut.18:10).

3. Divination (Isa. 8:19; Deut. 18:10-11; Acts 16:16-18).

4. Toverij (Deut.18:10; Hand.13:6-10).

5. Bondage to one's ancestry, not as a punishment but as a legal claim in effect

(Ezekiel 18:17-20).

6. Mediums (Lev.3:31, 20:27; 1. Sam.28:3-25).

7. Afgoderij (Ex.20:1-6; 1. Kor.10:20-22).

8. Door het vuur gaan (Deut.18:10).

9. Dowsing and commuting (Deut.18:10).

10. Onjuiste profetieën (Deut.18:22).

Of course, it is important to distinguish between sorcery on the one hand and a gift of the Holy Spirit on the other in these supernatural gifts. De duivel is immers de grote imitator van God!

DE WEG TOT VOLKOMEN VERLOSSING IN CHRISTUS

Pastoral care in the occult field does not belong in the hands of young people or young believers. A thorough pastoral care can only be done by someone who is spiritually mature, experienced and called by God. Only he who wants to face the demons, with the holiness of God himself, who lives a godly and cleansed life, confesses every conscious sin (1. John 1:9), who draws near to God and submits to Him (Prov.18:10), who does not even give the devil a foot (Eph.4:27) and maintains an intimate relationship with God through prayer and fasting (Matt.17:21). There does not always have to be an 'official' care provider. The only one who can provide liberation is Jesus Christ, who can certainly do it without such a counselor.

However, it is advisable to work together as a team (for example in a local church) with other brothers and sisters who meet the above conditions, in which each other can also be assessed.

and every step to be taken. It is also advisable to have contacts with a Christian psychiatrist (who has insight into these matters), who can be consulted. Especially when it comes to the difference in psychiatric syndromes and demonia. Hallucination also occurs with frequent and heavy fasting, intense stress, torture, frostbite, being locked up in dark spaces for a long time, etc.

Not incantations or excorcation formulas have power to break bonds, but only the blood of the Lamb (Col.2:13-15). Demons are driven out or cast out by the Spirit of God (Matt. 12:28), faith (Matt. 17:20), prayer and fasting (Matt. 17:21), prayer (Mark 9:29), the finger of God (Luke 11:20, cf. Ex. 8:19), singing (1. Sam. 16:23), the name of Jesus Christ (Mark 16:17) and the power that Jesus gives (Luke 10:19-20).

If it appears that there is unconfessed idolatry, superstition and/or occultism in your life, and you recognize many of the symptomatology mentioned, first read 2. Cor.5:21; 1. Joh.3:8 en Kol.2:13-15. “If the Son has set you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:31,32,36).

STEPS

The way to complete salvation in Christ has a number of facets, or if you prefer: steps, which I will explain below.

1. The question: do you want to get healthy? This is what Jesus asked the man in Bethesda. God does not force anyone,

unlike Satan who forces and holds people. If bystanders only want a person to achieve liberation, that is usually not enough, ultimately this person will have to want to cleanse himself under the blood of the Lamb. Of course, the will of those in bondage is initially very weak and 'fluctuating', but every path begins with addressing the will through the Holy Spirit and the Word. Jesus says, "If you abide in My Word, you are My disciples truly, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. If the Son has set you free, you will be free indeed." See John. 8:31,32,36.

2. Biblical education. What Does the Bible Say About Occultism? What are contemporary forms of occultism, what religious and scientific manifestations are there?

3. person has come into contact with. Blindness and ignorance are sophisticated weapons of the

satan (Jer.8:7b; Hos.4:6) God's Word is the only standard, the only mirror, the only light for our way (Ps.119:105, 130; Read the Bible prayerfully, 1. Cor.15:34).

4. Rebirth as a condition. Conversion and rebirth are absolute conditions for liberation from demonic influences! Only in Christ have these powers been overcome. Those who are not in Christ cannot be set free. Sometimes this is very difficult to discern in deliverance ministry. Someone who desperately wants to be freed from demonic powers, but does not want to surrender his life to Christ, has no chance. After all, it is the indwelling Holy Spirit in a believer who can cleanse on the basis of the blood of Christ.

5. Self-examination. Forgetfulness in occult contacts in the past can be an occult symptom.

Prayer, in which the Holy Spirit is asked to bring everything to mind in that sense, is urgently needed. It is often better that a care provider with the above-mentioned qualities helps (John 11:44).

6. Repentance and confession. It is necessary that all occult contacts be mentioned and confessed one by one before God (1. John 1:9; James 5:16,19). A full confession of all contacts, even if they occurred in ignorance! This also includes communal guilt, for example due to hereditary bonds (Ex.20:5, 34:7; Num.14:18; Lamentation 5:7; Isa.65:6,7; Jer.2:8, 9:14, 16:10-23). Christ has redeemed us from inherited consequences and from unforgiven guilt of the ancestors (1. Peter 1:18,19). This also applies to collective guilt of a people or community, family (Neh.1:6, 9:16-37; Ezra 9; Dan.9:16).

7. Break up and get rid of. All contacts with occultists must be radically broken, too

objects and literature must be discarded or burned. (Acts 19:19; Jude 23; Deut.7:25, 13:12-18; Gen.35:2-4; 2. Kings 23:4, 20,24). Letters and talisman or amulets should also be discarded. Only in this way can one be converted from the devil and idols to the True God (Acts 14:15, 26:18; 1. Thes. 1:9). Proverbs 28:13: "He who covers his transgressions will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will find mercy."

8. Areas. Only if the bond still proves to be too strong after the previous steps can demons enter the room

name of Jesus Christ to go forth (Mark 9:25). This has nothing to do with charisma or apostolic signs.

9. Abjure. In some situations a pact or covenant has been entered into with Satan. Or one has

made certain vows and entered into alliances with occult persons. For example, promises upon the death of a family member.

10. Faith. Believe in the forgiveness and cleansing and finished work of Jesus Christ

(Heb. 2:14; Col. 2:13-15; 1. John 1:7-9, 2:2, 3:8; Luke 7:48-50). After previous steps, the

person also believes on the basis of God's Word that God will no longer remember this sin of occultism (Ps.103:3,12; Isa.1:8, 43; 43:25; 44:22; Jer.31:34; Micah 7:18ff).

11. Building the spiritual life. a) Satan will try to regain lost ground.

That is why it is necessary to pay attention to the recovery and healing of man in spirit, soul and body, both in his relationship to God and to fellow human beings. b) A returning spirit is a real danger Mat.12:43-45. Building up the spiritual life by taking on spiritual armor from Ephesians 6. Especially praying, reading the Bible, contact with fellow believers, community in a church. Let your body, soul and spirit be at the service of God; that is reasonable worship (Rom.12:1-2.) Serve the True God with zeal (1. Thes.1:9,10). Become a witness of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8; 1. Peter 2:9, 3:15; Rom. 10:10).

12. “And He, the God of Peace, sanctify you wholly, and may your whole spirit, soul, and body

the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ appears to have been kept blameless in every part” (1 Thess. 5:23).

TESTS OF BIBLICAL INTEGRITY

Biblical integrity must be tested in the approach.

1. It is about God's purposes and conditions and not primarily about the purposes of

client.

2. Be careful not to mentally manipulate the client yourself; especially the will continues to manipulate

coercion. This is original

3. from the devil (Isa.14; Eze.28:16, extensive trade = manipulations, Prov. 26:20,22). Magic is

an attempt to control people and make them do what you want using a spirit that is not the Holy Spirit. Witchcraft is a work of the flesh. Of course, the will of a demonized person is weak and bound, but be well aware of possible manipulations of your own, keep your motives pure. c) In the service of liberation it is advisable to work with two care providers (of different genders), preferably under the 'prayer cover' of the municipality or pastoral team. The care provider must have spiritual life, the gift of spiritual discernment and knowledge of care. d) There is a desire for intimacy, whereby the own identity of both must be protected. The first focus is on God and through God to others. Intimacy creates vulnerability, because walls disappear. Jesus also had different relationships with two groups of disciples; the '72' and the '12'. From that '12' there are three even more intimate: Peter, John and James. Among those three, there was one who threw himself on His breast John 21:20.e) Sometimes there is a compulsion to stop the guidance of a client as quickly as possible (for example one 'ritual' prayer session), which endangers the quality of the care. This can be due to time constraints (in professional care), emotional pressure from care provider, pressure from a municipality, pressure from money, pressure from client or family. Not only spiritual liberation may take place. Other areas, such as the construction of the soul, the relationship with God and social relationships, must also be included in the overall guidance, otherwise the client will remain weak and the return of demons is a real danger. f) On the other hand, the intensive guidance creates too much of a bond and subtle manipulation processes of the client can arise and a possible burnout of the counselor. The treatment should be according to a

plan expired, registered and terminated. God's help with the client continues, even though someone is not yet perfect.

Assessment of therapist and method

It is important to test the therapist and the method. The fact that someone calls themselves a Christian does not always guarantee a good treatment method.

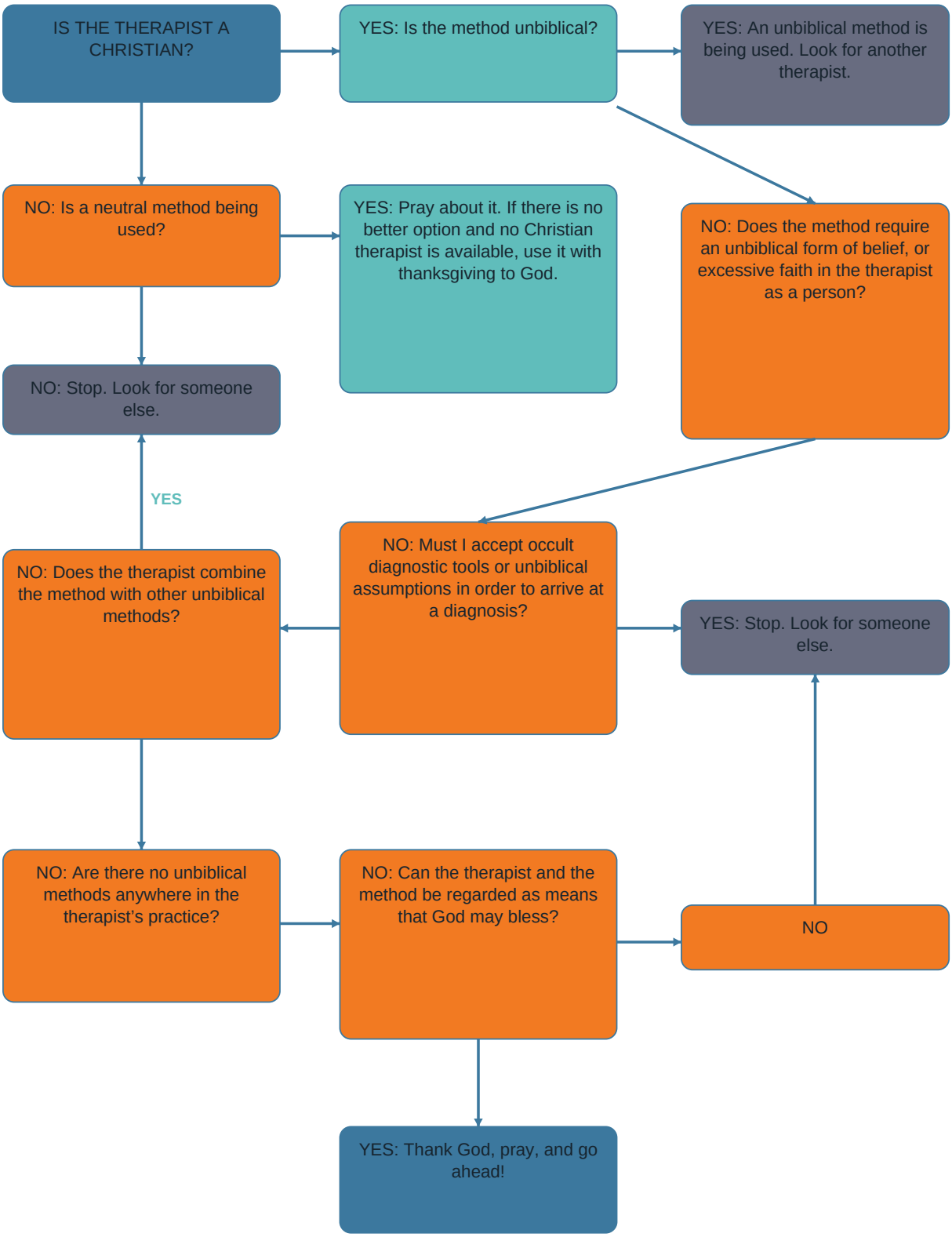
A touchstone for a method or therapy is: Is it necessary for a method to have unbiblical considerations in diagnosis and/or implementation? (For example, believing in a different view of God/world/humanity) Sometimes an occult explanation is an outdated explanation model, for example in massage, which used to be thought to be only effective in spiritual hands, while people now believe in biological and psychological explanations of massage. So it doesn't have to be occult. Do I have to believe in all kinds of means (clairvoyance, mediums, magical measuring instruments, iridology, etc.) to make a diagnosis?

A Christian may practice an occult method because he/she thinks it is not. It may also be that a non-Christian practices a non-occult method that can also be blessed by God. It is also possible that someone practices a relatively neutral method but has other occult remedies in his treatment package. The danger is that he/she will mix these without the client's knowledge or permission.

An excessive belief (beyond normal expertise) in the interests of a person and a growing dependence on that therapist or counselor is also a wrong signal. (This can, for example, arise from a haptonoma.)

Ultimately, the final test is: can this method and implementation of the therapist be a means that is or can be blessed by God? That is also a matter of personal conscience. (see the description of conscience in this book) Every method, therapist, medicine, advice for a Christian must be experienced as a God-given means and tested by it.

DECISION TREE: THERAPIST OR TREATMENT METHOD



BREATHING TECHNIQUES

Tension complaints in the body often manifest themselves through breathing techniques. Because breathing is one of the few organic functions of the body that is influenced by the conscious nervous system and the unconscious nervous system, it can ideally be influenced through physical exercises.

> *Breathing techniques can help you become more aware of tension signals in the body. Calm breathing can also 'de-stress' other important bodily functions.*

It is often thought that breathing is a strict process of gas exchange in the lungs. However, breathing, just like heart action, is a vital function of our lives. Breathing is an individually determined movement that says a lot about the psychophysical appearance that man is. Or put more simply: the breathing movement is a visible movement that expresses a lot about things about humans. His mental state and position, his feelings, psychological and/or sensory. The inhalation and exhalation movements are therefore not just technical matters of gas exchange, but expressive movements. Breathing is primarily an unconscious event, which, among other things, has to do with the psyche and/or spiritual feelings. The whole breath facial expression is important and so is the tempo



the depth of breathing says a lot about the expression of the entire person.

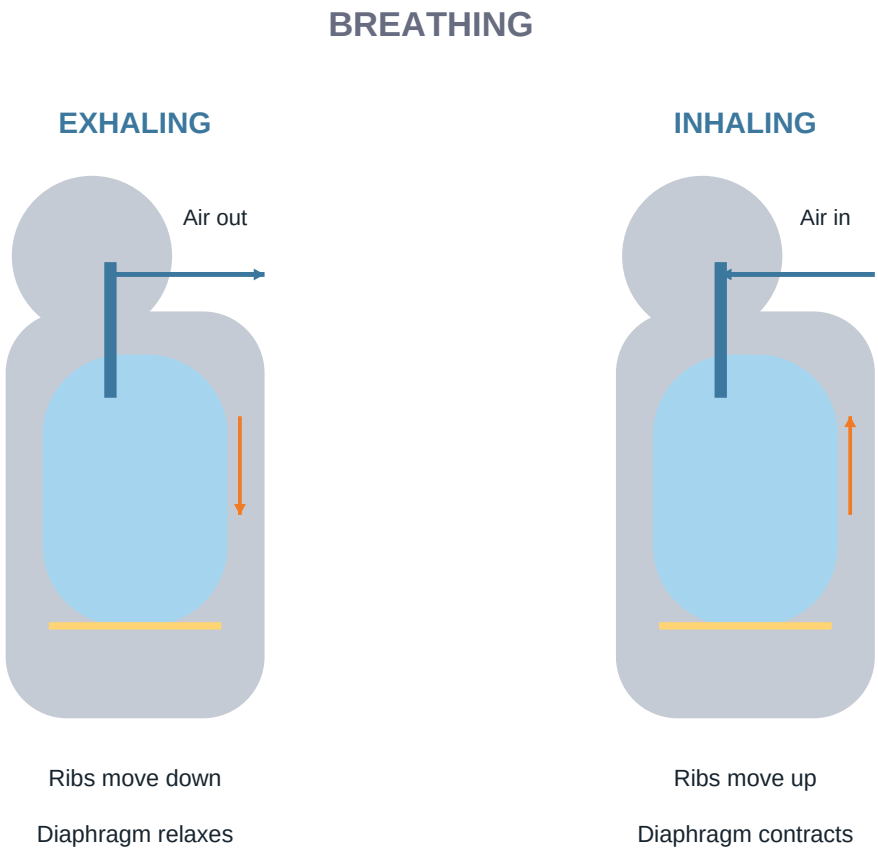
Even in subassertive and aggressive people, altered breathing often leads to all kinds of feelings of tension, making them increasingly insecure about themselves. Some people become 'locked' because of their physical tensions or fears, which are often the result of poor social skills or social fears. As a result, people feel that they have even less control over important (practice) moments, making them increasingly insecure. In addition to muscle relaxation exercises, breathing exercises are an excellent tool, also for sub-assertiveness or aggressiveness (exceeding oneself due to lack of control), to also practice psychological relaxation and self-confidence through physical relaxation, of course in addition to other skills, such as analysis of one's own actions, dealing with emotions, body language, etc.

4.1 THE FUNCTION OF BREATHING

We can divide the types of breathing in different ways, but we limit ourselves to 'tense breathing' and 'relaxed breathing'.

4.2 RELAXED BREATHING

The respiratory organs, the lungs, are attached to the chest. Below the lower ribs there is a large muscle: the diaphragm. This dome-shaped muscle flattens at the start of inhalation. This causes the chest to be pressed down and displaced. The space in the chest increases also because the ribs start to spread. The lungs, attached to the chest, are stretched, increasing the volume in the lung and therefore lowering the pressure. The pressure outside the body remains the same and so a pressure difference is created. As a result, air flows from outside into the lungs, which is used in the end branches for gas exchange, the so-called internal respiration.



The diaphragm moves the chest downward until it rests on the internal organs. The result is that the space (volume) in the abdominal cavity becomes smaller and the pressure in the abdomen increases. This pressure causes the abdominal cover to arch slightly.

This can be seen from the outside by the rising of the abdomen when inhaling. That is why it is called abdominal breathing. Of course, this is not real abdominal breathing. When exhaling, the diaphragm relaxes, becomes dome-shaped again and, partly due to the elasticity of the ribs and the chest, the whole springs back to its previous position. This increases the pressure in the lungs, which promotes the exhalation of air. The pressure in the abdomen decreases again and, partly due to the elasticity of the abdominal wall (abdominal muscles), the abdomen returns to its old position. Since only the diaphragm is active during this breathing (and also the small intercostal muscles) and the entire inhalation and

exhalation is a process of pressure difference, it is a very relaxed breathing. We can also compare this principle of abdominal breathing with a piston in a cylinder (pump). The piston is the diaphragm that moves downwards when inhaling, thereby increasing the pressure in the abdomen. When you exhale, the piston in the cylinder rises again and reduces the pressure in the abdomen.

You can see in the image that with good relaxed breathing, the lower lung parts (lung tops) are well ventilated, in contrast to tense breathing.

If there are disease processes in the lung, they are often located in the lower parts of the lung, for example inflammation and cancer.

4.3 THE STRESSED BREATHING

> *During tense breathing, a significant upward displacement of the chest occurs, using numerous muscles that run from the top of the chest to the neck and shoulders.*

These muscles shorten when you inhale and 'hoist' the chest upwards, as it were. This causes the lung volume to increase again and air flows in from the outside. There are now no pressure differences in the abdomen and the abdomen does not rise when inhaling. Furthermore, the chest does not expand as with abdominal breathing and is therefore more superficial and not complete.

You will understand that due to the wrong, chronically learned tensions during stress and sub-assertiveness, you can experience many muscle tension complaints and shortness of breath, muscle pain, pressure on the chest, tendonitis of the shoulder, problems with the digestive organs or loss of fitness. Psychological problems such as subassertiveness should also be mentioned.

The aim of practicing perfect breathing is, in addition to the relaxing effect, to achieve optimal use of the inhaled air. Someone with a diseased lung or even someone who is missing part of the lung can get much more 'air' through a lot of practice in technique and relaxation. This principle of course also applies to healthy people.

4.4 EXERCISE TO PROMOTE ABDOMINAL BREATHING

Starting position: Lie on your back with your knees drawn up.

1. Hold two hands loosely on the abdomen. While inhaling, try to move your abdomen towards the stomach

hands, to raise up. Above all, try to keep your shoulders and neck relaxed. Don't breathe in too deeply and too quickly. Otherwise you will take in too much oxygen and you will hyperventilate slightly. This may cause tingling in the fingers, light-headedness, pain in the chest, etc. Spread the lips slightly and feel the air flow out past the lips. Feel the abdominal movement, make the breathing softly audible. Feel the difference between nose and mouth breathing. Breathing through the mouth makes air passage easier, causing the diaphragm to move more. So breathe at your own pace and rhythm.

2. If you cannot feel this well, use a long towel and wrap it around the lower back.

Keep both ends crossed in front of you. At the end of the exhalation, lightly tighten both ends of the towel crosswise. When you start inhaling, slowly let go of the cusps so that you feel better where you should move your stomach (this is a so-called 'tactile stimulus').

3. Try using the above without hands or towel. Pay attention to the relaxation

of the shoulders.

4. Possibly with help: place the hands on the flanks (in the side) and try to extend them sideways while inhaling. Possibly also with a towel. Please note: at the start of a good one

breathing, you may first feel pressure on the stomach, if you are not used to it. After a short time this feeling disappears. The heart starts beating stronger and more noticeably, although it does not go faster, but rather slower.

5. Also try the above exercises in sitting and standing. Then also with walking or all kinds of daily activities.

6. While lying on your back, make all kinds of movements such as 'cycling' with the legs, making circles with the legs

or poor. Now breathing is strained and mistakes will become more apparent. Try to emphasize abdominal breathing during or after exercise.

7. Then increase the load further (resulting in more fatigue).

4.5 EXERCISE TO IMPROVE EXHALATION

1. Breathe in deeply and exhale slowly, but without interruption. Audible which means:

> *"Oooooooo.." or "Mmmmmmmm..." or some other letter. Take your time and see if you can exhale longer with practice. Notice the abdominal muscles slowly relaxing. If there is tension in the abdomen during exhalation, the pressure difference during exhalation will be resolved more quickly, resulting in an earlier exhalation. Keep the shoulders relaxed while practicing, letting everything go gradually without jerking.*

2. pen. The point is that you can do the exercise from a relaxed chest.

3. After one letter, try two or more letters. For example: first: "Zzzzzzz...", then "Zzzzzzz...

oooo...", then "Zzzzz...ooooo...nnnnn..." These exercises are then performed in different starting positions: side lying, sitting, standing, walking.

4. While walking you can do the following exercise: inhale during 4 steps, then 4

hold the steps and exhale slowly in the next 4 steps. You can make this more difficult by increasing the number of steps to 5, 7, 9, 11, etc. This way you can practice while walking.

5. Read aloud a passage from a book, for example. Record how many times you can read in an inhale and exhale at a normal pace. Try to improve this by practicing by being able to read more words. You can also record the number of seconds that you can continue reading.

6. After taking a deep breath, hold the air, do not exhale. Time it until you have to return

inhale. See if you can last longer with practice. Remember that you have to get used to the varying tensions in the blood.

7. When exhaling slowly, make sure that the chest and abdomen relax at the same time. So

not that you have already exhaled, after which the chest still has to descend. This would mean that the chest is still held up by the muscles of the shoulder girdle and neck. Proper breathing is only regulated by pressure differences and not by the muscles.

8. A good exercise to lengthen exhalation is playing wind instruments, such as a flute. Singing is also a great exercise.

4.6 COORDINATION OF BREATHING

Until now, we have mainly talked about abdominal breathing. With practice you will have noticed that this abdominal breathing cannot always be maintained under all circumstances. There is also flank breathing or side breathing.

The diaphragm or respiratory muscle consists of three parts, namely: the middle part and two outer parts. When you inhale correctly, the middle part contracts first, causing the chest to lower and the pressure in the abdomen to increase. When you inhale even more deeply, after the middle part, the outer (sideways) parts also tighten. This compresses the space more laterally in the abdomen, creating more pressure laterally in the abdomen and causing the side or flanks to expand slightly. This is also called flank breathing. This expansion is not as great as abdominal breathing. It can be clearly seen, but above all you can feel it. It is, as it were, breathing from below, so that the lower lung parts are well ventilated. With even deeper breathing from below, we see a widening of the chest, partly due to the spreading of the ribs, this is called chest breathing. So there is no increased muscle tension of the shoulder/neck muscles.

The correct order of inhalation is as follows:

ABDOMEN - FLANK - CHEST BREATHING

These partial breaths should flow smoothly into each other. When abdominal and flank breathing takes place, the abdomen should remain in the same place or height. If he were to collapse during inhalation, this would mean a loss of pressure in the abdomen and therefore a partial exhalation.

Common inhalation technique errors include:

1. No smooth transition between the different parts of breathing.

2. Often the entire abdomen does not rise, but there are still parts that are held in a fixed position

become.

3. While inhaling, small breaths always take place, like tops on the ones started

inhalation.

RELAXATION AND RELAXATION EXERCISES

Absenteeism due to stress has increased explosively in recent years. According to ArboNed, the costs for businesses are almost 2 billion euros annually. Many diseases are also stress related. It is clear to everyone that psychological stress is also translated physically and can lead to absenteeism due to illness. Here I do not want to discuss all kinds of causes and consequences of stress, but rather focus on a means that is generally recommended to de-stress, namely breathing and relaxation exercises. The most common relaxation exercises that are practiced are: muscle relaxation exercises or progressive relaxation, suggestive relaxation exercises, autogenic training, mindfulness or 'mindfulness based cognitive therapy' (MBCT), breathing exercises and various yoga techniques. In addition, there are many different types of mixes. I will discuss the pros and cons of the most important relaxation exercises.

Context

Every physical exercise only gains meaning through the context in which the exercise is offered. Take, for example, the following exercise: place the palms together and bend the fingers of both hands backwards and bring the elbows



up. For example, you can explain the usefulness of this exercise (the context) in two ways:

This is a stretching exercise for the flexors of the hands, and as you stretch these muscles, you will in response gain more muscle length and relaxation of the flexors, partly due to the improved blood flow in the muscles.

This is an energy exercise: you can visualize your energy in both halves of your body, and if you visualize this energy through your legs and torso, you can send it to the arms and send it through the hands to your environment.

The physical execution of the exercise is completely the same in both cases, yet the impact is completely different.

> *What many people do not realize is that exercises gain meaning not only from the action or movement itself, but especially from the meaning that is implicitly or explicitly given to the exercise.*

That meaning and experience has everything to do with the image of humanity that one uses. In psychosomatics, the lens through which one views the complaints indeed largely determines how one feels and behaves.

5.1 NON-BIBLICAL METHODOLOGIES

5.1.1. Breathing exercises and mindfulness

Mindfulness is an attention training developed by Kabat-Zinn, a molecular biologist from Massachusetts. Mindfulness is seen in the West as a 'neutral' practice method. In addition to meditation techniques, the attention training places a lot of emphasis on breathing exercises. Observation plays a major role in this. Although Kabat-Zinn extensively describes physiological diaphragmatic breathing in his book Full Catastrophe Living (Handbook for meditative relaxation), nothing is done here with the actual practice. On the contrary,

The breathing techniques use the age-old yoga techniques of prana breathing. On page 75 of the above-mentioned book you can read:

> *“It is possible to direct your breath with great precision to different parts of your body in such a way that it will penetrate and soothe areas that are injured or painful, while at the same time calming and balancing the mind.”*

This idea is based on the Hindu and Buddhist idea that the cosmos surrounding us consists of energy (prana, or in Taoist thinking: chi), which we could inhale through our breathing and thus send through our body, with the intention of strengthening, deifying ourselves or healing the spiritual energy stations via the chakras. Also on page 96, Kabat-Zinn has his students breathe through an 'imaginary hole' in the crown. Here the prana breathing, which must be controlled via the chakras (upper crown chakra), clearly comes to the fore again. You must learn to direct and direct your 'energies' in such a way that your inner growth and healing will be most effectively influenced. The seven attitude factors that need to be worked on in the eight-week anti-stress course are: non-judgment, patience, endless starting, trust, non-striving, acceptance and letting go. According to Jon Kabat-Zinn, the seven above-mentioned intentions when meditating are not separate from each other. They overlap, influence and complement each other. However, this also applies to the criticism you can have of these seven types of influencing factors. Each element contains an exercise aspect that can be useful in a different context in which the exercise is offered (see context in the introduction), but which becomes an 'explosive mixture' in the mix of the other influencing factors. In this mixture of altered consciousness, one is increasingly exposed to the influences of the fallen spirit world, even if not explicitly presented as such.

Viewed from the Buddhist background of Kabat-Zinn, the senses must be eliminated through observation, distancing, so that our being can be reflected in a smooth mirror. The first thing one does in Buddhism

also teaches 'steering the mind 'into still water', so that reflection becomes possible.

The aim of this meditation in Eastern mysticism is the absorption of the individual into the 'all', the world spirit. As mentioned, as the intention of this exercise increases, you enter a sliding scale of passivity. Loss of physical consciousness leads to irreality. The aim here is relaxation: meditation.

This meditation is about yourself, anyone who imitates someone else is on the wrong path, according to Kabat-Zinn. Therein lies the big difference with Christian 'meditation'.

Christians do not focus entirely on themselves, but are primarily focused on the presence and Spirit of Jesus Christ, who is omnipresent but also dwells in us (Rom. 8:9-11, John 14:26).

In the Bible, we are encouraged by the power of the Holy Spirit to follow the example of Christ and the apostles (1 Pet. 2:21; 2 Tim. 1:13; 1 Tim. 1:16). Our basic trust and intuition do not lie with ourselves, but are based on Jesus Christ. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Kabat-Zinn sympathizes much more with the concepts of 'tao' (Chinese mysticism) and 'dharma' (Hindu mysticism), which are expressions for a conscious spiritual attitude to life and practice.

However, there is a much better alternative that I want to discuss at the end of this chapter.

5.1.2 Autogenic training (A.T.)

A.T. is a method of self-hypnosis that is developed through systematic practice from the self (autogenous). It is a method of practicing gradual self-relaxation through concentrated self-hypnosis and specific formulas. A.T. was founded approximately in 1910 by Prof. J.H.

Schultz developed in Berlin. He founded the method on a number of Eastern mystical roots, namely yoga from Hinduism and the transcendental

meditation as well as Buddhist Zen, these are also called the borderlands of the A.T.

The autogenous training consists of two levels of training, namely the lower level, which is intended for beginners, and the upper level, which usually starts six months later for advanced students. The method consists of exercises that consist of pronouncing self-hypnotic formulas to achieve relaxation. For example: “I open the blood vessels in my leg.” If you say this often enough, it will happen, according to Prof. Schultz. It works like a kind of mantra formula like yoga. However, it is impossible because we have no direct will and control over the opening and closing of our blood vessels because it is regulated by the unconscious, vegetative nervous system. Later, Schulz's successors added some formulas and statements.

Much more than with other courses, the following is important: every student must be prepared in advance to have an open and positive attitude towards the trainer. The participation of a moderately interested party will be disabled in advance. Any doubt about themselves, about the method, but also about the course leader makes the training difficult. External influences should be avoided as much as possible. The student must adapt to a formula that puts him/her in the right mood. The formulas should be short, melodious, positive, rhythmic, rhyming and practical so that the student can memorize them well. Dr. K. Thomas, Schultz's successor, has the formula repeated 3 to 5 times. The basic exercise consists of making 6 parts of the body 'heavy' and 'warm'. It is an evocative and autohypnotic exercise, in which a feeling is suggested rather than actually felt. They are comparable to a first step towards the mantra formulas from transcendental meditation.

Self-suggestion and autohypnosis produce vegetative, uncontrolled physiological responses.

After a session, the course leader must break the hypnosis by making counter-suggestions or counter-assignments

can also be done by pronouncing formulas. If this does not happen, the consequences are often incalculable. The heterohypnosis of the trainer towards the student must be taken back and converted into autohypnosis. After repeated exercises, the student is able to control this self-hypnosis to some extent.

The A.T. follow-up course goes even further. This upper level begins approximately 2 to 3 months after mastering the basic exercises. An important exercise is the so-called 'Verzenkung', a deep autohypnosis. One randomly turns the eyeballs inwards and upwards, glancing at the center of the forehead. This exercise is taken straight from transcendental meditation and advanced yoga. Students achieve 'numbness', 'seeing' colors, and 'seeing' abstract concepts and clairvoyance. Sometimes voices are heard and the student can

ask questions from the so-called subconscious. We see clear parallels between this so-called superstructure and spiritualism.

A.T. is in fact a meditation practice, but given a scientific guise.

It is not neutral and cannot be separated from its humanistic, oriental, mystical roots.

It strengthens man's belief in his own hidden powers in a self-redemption technique, which is very similar to yoga and T.M. The second part of the training in particular can have an adverse effect on conscience and ethical feelings. It goes beyond simple relaxation. There is a disconnection of one's own mind and leads to obsessive thoughts and obsessive images. It leads to passivity of will and behavior. It means opening up to the forces of darkness as a result of lowering the level of consciousness, similar to meditative yoga. And certainly not least, this harms the spiritual life of a born-again Christian. And it opens the door to the adversary and it closes the door to inner community experience with the

Holy Spirit. The prayer life, Bible reading and seeking fellowship with other believers is reduced.

5.1.3 The attitude of an AT practitioner

Guided fantasy is often used in psychiatry as a method by which the patient is led into an imaginary world in which stress can be processed and/or the human ego can be strengthened.

Guided fantasy seems like an innocent-sounding name for anything but innocent hypnosis techniques.

A cursory glance at the hypnosis literature shows that 'fantasy journeys' are a scientifically recognized introduction to hypnosis. They are used by hypnotherapists when they want to put their patients into a trance state. Patients should relax and imagine being in a different place (meadow, beach, mountain) than where their body is currently located. It is said that if you leave your body in such a way, you experience less of the intensity of the traumatic physical reactions.

What happens, however, is that the creative order of the unity of spirit, soul and body is broken and in that sense you also become an easy prey for the fallen spiritual world. Because it involves wanting to break what God has bound together, guided fantasy can also be considered sorcery from a biblical perspective! Guided fantasy is also offered as a learning method in education. With the help of 'fantasy travel', ignorant and defenseless children and young people become

hypnotized or put into a state of trance during their lessons at school, without being told this and without their parents and educators being aware of it!

But fantasy journeys are much more: they are techniques of astral projection, that is to say: they give rise to journeys of the soul outside the body (out-of-body experiences) and even to astral journeys. The aim is that one leaves one's own body to fly and travel to another world or time. Who knowledge

If you take a look at the relevant literature of esotericism (the inward-looking reality), you will have to agree without any doubt: 'fantasy journeys' are in reality astral journeys, that is to say: journeys that take place outside the body. This is also evident from the appropriate formulations of the authors. When it comes to the 'return journey', one must return 'here', 'into this space', 'into the group', and nowadays one does not hesitate to speak of 'returning to one's body'. After all, that is only possible if you have left it first! There is a lot of similarity between guided fantasy and magic and witchcraft, but also with shamanism. In witch literature, deep physical relaxation, a calmed mind and the desire to travel are factors that are at the forefront of many successful projections. The art of leaving the body is generally attributed to witches, sorcerers and shamans. Indeed, the phenomenon of traveling outside the body is discussed again and again in the literature on witches, magicians and shamans. It also tells what someone should do who wants to undertake a journey outside the body.

5.1.4 Yoga

Yoga literally means yoke, connection. The goal of the yoga teacher is to connect with the 'gods' in the cosmos through exercises and meditation. The mental dangers that we mentioned in mindfulness and autogenic training are also very present here.

There are many forms of yoga. Sometimes the exercises are called yoga exercises, even though they have nothing to do with yoga.

There are many differences between one yoga exercise and another. That mostly depends on the yoga teacher. There are many yoga teachers who do not even know exactly where yoga originally comes from and what the real yoga postures are and with what objectives they are put into practice. These are yoga teachers who simply teach some harmless physical exercises under the name of yoga. However, the question here is whether these are sufficient to remove mental tensions and complaints

take. But make no mistake, sometimes the exercises have an implicit meaning.

> *By applying asanas or yoga postures, one identifies with the spiritual world behind it.*

The type of yoga we are mainly talking about here is based on a yoga teacher who is well aware of the objectives behind the technique of yoga. So where yoga is really yoga. Not just innocent exercises, but a technique accompanied by a philosophy that influences the way and purpose of life. And then we are talking about Hinduism, because that is the religion from which yoga originates. It is about the good works (karma) that man must do in order to connect his own self (atman) with the universe (brahmin) and thus merge into the infinite universe, in nothing, in everything (nirvana). Hinduism does not believe in creation, as we read in the Bible.

> *Hinduism does not believe in a personal God, in salvation by grace through Jesus Christ, nor in life after death in heaven, the abode of God.*

That is why yoga is also based on very different principles. It does not stop at harmless exercises, but yoga is one of the means that Hindus use to meditate better. Meditation that should lead to better self-knowledge and to the discovery of the divine within oneself. That's what yoga postures are used for. For many of these postures are postures through which Hindus or yoga practitioners identify with their deities. For Christians who do not serve other gods, this is a 'no go area'.

In addition, from an exercise therapeutic point of view, the so-called yoga exercises are also not recommended. The exercises

are too static and the musculoskeletal system is often overloaded. Static means that bone and muscle systems are unilaterally and continuously overloaded. The breathing exercises are also not aimed at natural, physiological breathing. So if doctors refer people with mental complaints to yoga teachers, and these people end up with a 'real' yoga teacher, the question is whether they are actually helped, because the goals of the yoga teacher are very different. The practitioner is introduced to the principles of Hinduism. That is why it is important to get to know the background of yoga from a biblical perspective.

Some exercise-therapeutic objections to yoga

The main objection is that the breathing exercises are not physiologically correct.

1. It is said that breathing is not limited to the lungs, but that the breath (energy) continues

various organs and limbs would flow. That's suggestion.

2. During breathing exercises, mainly 'belly breathing' (diaphragmatic middle part) is emphasized, there is no physiological blending of belly-flank-chest breathing.

3. The breathing pauses are held for an unnaturally long time, not taking into account the breathing needs that are individual and dependent on the need.

4. The exercises are only taught statically, this is not functional.

5. The aim is not to increase the vital capacity of the lungs, but to dampen the vegetative nervous system, which places the practitioner in an unstable equilibrium (parasympathetic-sympathetic), with all its consequences.

6. The practitioner does not have a good sense of awareness of the content and flow of breathing, and

will therefore have no practical (daily) benefit from it. It becomes an art exercise, not a daily exercise in work and activities.

7. The starting positions (static) are also not intended to improve respiratory function,

but have their function in astrological considerations. The goal is vegetative influence.

8. Finally, these breathing techniques can even be called dangerous in many lung diseases,

organic complaints, partly as a result of the frequent compressed breathing during the exercises. A vegetative collapse can also occur.

Asanas/body exercises

The main objection to asanas, physical exercises in the form of series of postures and exercises, is that they are not physiologically constructed correctly. And here too, astrological considerations play a major role. The asanas, the postures, are static (isometric tension), which overloads the posture and musculoskeletal system, partly due to the long duration.

Capsular and ligament lesions in particular can occur in non-advanced practitioners. In the long term, unilateral loading even increases the risk of osteoarthritis and chondropathies (painful disorders of the cartilage). Various parts of the physiological movement/posture, such as mobility and muscle strength, are not practiced in a coordinated manner. Individual muscle balances or possible posture and movement problems are not taken into account. The aim of the exercises is to bring the body into a 'meditation posture'. The static, long-lasting, isometric exercises often lead to an overload of the circulatory system. As a physiotherapist, I often came into contact with the complaints that yoga practitioners get due to the wrong exercises!

Pressure breathing with increased blood pressure occurs, but sometimes also collapse due to a vagus shift (lability and instability of the nervous system). The 'head position' in particular is infamous. This is practiced by untrained people. People with (dormant) complaints of their posture/musculoskeletal system will suffer injuries from unilateral exercise (without correction). The dangers described above apply to 'real' yoga exercises.

5.2 SAFE ALTERNATIVES

> *The context of the relaxation exercises must always be interpreted from the perspective of stress physiology: the study of how tensions work physically and mentally. This is the only measurable objective reality to which feelings of tension can be related.*

It is not a philosophy or virtual reality in which one has to flee, in which one has to feel like floating on a bed in the Mediterranean Sea, but such exercises can be useful with full consciousness and especially during our daily activities.

It is better to function as economically as possible during the day in terms of muscle tension, posture, movement and breathing, than, for example, to function incorrectly, i.e. too tense, all day long and try to do something about it through exercises in the evening. That is essentially putting the cart before the horse.

Of course, good sleeping habits and practice are also important. The problem is that many people are completely alienated from their bodies and body feelings. They are anxious about every tension signal from the body or they have become completely numb to tension signals and then go far beyond the limits of tension indicated by the body. As a result, they can develop complaints and even diseases.

Every breathing and relaxation exercise must therefore first be given meaning from the physiology. This will have to be explained at different levels, because the explanation for a child is different than for an adult and every adult is of course different. A therapist will have to be trained to explain the meaning simply or in more detail in different ways and to adapt to his client. The correct use of words and the state of mind are important. The quality, it

The outcome of the exercise largely depends on this. So don't just teach the exercise, but also explain the context. A second important factor is that learning an exercise initially requires guidance and correction, so that one can eventually practice independently. This too must be adjusted and, above all, dosed. People with increased tension in particular are inclined to perform the exercises incorrectly, for example not properly dosed with all kinds of compensations and little attention to the correct subtle feelings of tension (the increased residual value of muscle tension).

So it is very important to recognize and influence the various tension signals, rather than ignoring them and fleeing into another reality.

Observation

Before practicing muscle relaxation or breathing techniques, observation is first important. How do I breathe, what happens in terms of movement, sequence, frequency and depth? That is indeed an attention exercise, not aimed outside the body but precisely on the signals that the body gives (if you understand that by 'mindful', that is fine). The muscle tension of the muscles that can be consciously influenced can also be observed. There are also exercises that a therapist can use to make people aware of the different levels of tension. Also, for example, with pairs in a group. If you call this a body scan, that is fine, as long as the feelings are interpreted implicitly or explicitly from stress physiology.

5.2.1 RELAXATION OF THE FACIAL MUSCLES

There are numerous small muscles in the face, including the facial muscles, which can be increased in tension. Normal tension in the facial muscles is functional, because a lot of our inner self can be read from our face. For example, we can quickly tell from the tension of someone sitting 15 meters away from us

see how someone feels inside. Many have also adopted certain habits to keep recharging and maintaining tension. For example, there are people who have the habit of looking 'always angry', even though they do not always feel angry. But it has become a stress habit.

There are also people who always have to work on their facial motor skills: people who are always chewing gum, pulling their eyelids, blinking, looking cross-eyed, etc., because their residual tension in those small muscles is so high and they can go above the 'movement threshold' at any moment. With every unexpected stimulus - sound, thought or feeling - a more or less involuntary movement arises.

This can be annoying, especially when communicating with others. For example, I have met people who always kept one eye closed or opened one eye when talking to others. Or had to constantly make an involuntary movement of a number of muscles in the face, or make shaking or vibrating movements with

their entire head. Others had a completely asymmetrical face because the tension of some muscles on the left half of the face was different than on the right.

With all these symptoms, we should be aware that these symptoms can also occur with (neurological) diseases. So one should not mistake someone for a tense individual simply because of the appearance of a symptom!

A completely 'deadpan', emotionless face is not necessarily relaxed. There must of course be a certain degree of tension in the facial expression, which in a normal way makes something of our inner self clear, for example happiness, joy, sadness, surprise and so on. However, this must be functional; that is, we should look in wonder when we are amazed, but not as a conditioned tension reflex. There are people who have an expressionless face and there are people who have a pristine appearance and where the tension of their facial musculature is a true reflection of their emotional interior. The tension and relaxation of facial muscles can be practiced.

Other things, such as mental and emotional factors, of course also play a role. As with all muscle tension exercises, it is possible that certain complaints such as muscle pain and headache may occur initially after exercising! This is temporary. It is because practicing creates tension that cannot yet be completely released, especially in the small (facial muscles) which are even more difficult to feel than the large postural muscles, so that when practicing you initially have a tendency to tense too much and do not yet have the ability to relax everything properly.

It is important to perform the exercises slowly and then wait some time in order to further reduce the increased residual tension.

1. First try to relax the neck muscles and muscles at the front of the neck. So that the

front neck muscles (two cables) are completely gone.

2. Wrinkle the forehead as much as possible, gradually, then slowly release and wait

until all tension sensations in the forehead are completely gone. If necessary, look at the wrinkles in the forehead in a mirror, or feel the wrinkles on the forehead with your fingertips.

3. Furrow the eyebrows (look angry) and try not to wrinkle the forehead. Feel the expansion tension around the eyes to the ears or even to the scalp.

4. Smile broadly. Feel carefully where the tension occurs, then slowly release it and

wait. Perform these exercises with your mouth closed and open.

5. Lips in position 0. Feel carefully where the tension is, then release it.

6. Movements of the tongue: protruding and retracting as far as possible.

7. Open the jaws as far as possible, close them and release them again. These are often symptoms of tension

here the so-called grinding of teeth. Sometimes dislocations and wear even occur as a result of the chronic tensions. Sometimes you see one-sided abrasion of molars in tense people because they habitually keep their molars together.

8. Swallowing. Try to get a good feel for which tension is generated where.

9. Count from 1 to 10. First hard, then softer. Try to feel which muscles participate in this

floor of mouth and neck area. Also to what extent from hard to soft. You can now feel (palpate) the muscles with your fingertips again. Try to dilate (make larger) the nostrils.

10. This increased tension often occurs with incorrect breathing.

11. If possible, try to do all the previous exercises asymmetrically, i.e.:

on one side. For example: raising one eyebrow or frowning on one side. Raising the corner of the mouth or nostril. Try to feel differences between left and right in control ability.

5.2.2 Exercises to relax the eye

1. Slowly close your eyes, hold the tension for a moment and then slowly release it. Please note the

effect, especially to ears and forehead.

2. Close your eyes lightly and wait until all the color shades have disappeared. Also all the stripes, lines

and asterisks. Tension of the muscles around the eyes stimulates the light cones in the eye, causing these light sensations to be seen with closed eyes, such as seeing stars when hitting the eyes. If one 'sees' a uniform color of black with closed eyes, this means that the eye muscles are relaxed.

3. Close the eyes slightly and wait until the blinking or twitching of the eyelids disappears. Sometimes

you have to wait a few minutes.

4. The eyes are slightly closed again. Now 'look' at the far right, without moving your head. Try to feel the muscle tension and then release it. Other movement options are: to

left, diagonally left, diagonally right, up, down or intermediate movements. You should not do this exercise too much or for too long in a row, otherwise there is a risk of headaches. If you feel the muscles well and you normally experience pain

5. If you have a headache that starts behind the eyes, you will experience muscle tension in the eye muscles

recognize as such.

6. If your muscles feel good after the above exercises, you will notice tension around the eye more often during the day. You will also notice that increased tension can arise when talking and even when proposing certain things.

Training

You can train this by trying to feel the eye strain when imagining the following topics:

you are standing along a road where a car passes.

you are standing under a high tower that you are looking at. (Do not turn your head).

a ball rolling on the ground or a bird flying.

also abstract things, such as geometric figures: a circle, a square or triangle.

exercise with help. Someone stands about 1.5 meters away from you and holds their two index fingers horizontally about one meter apart. Look from one finger to the other without moving your head. Try to feel and control the muscle tension of the eye muscles.

You can also do the same exercise with a smaller distance between the fingers. For example: 80 cm, 50 cm or 10 cm. An increasing demand is placed on the muscle feeling in order to still feel the tension. You can also vary the distance from the fingers to the eyes. The closer, the more tension of the eye muscles.

5.2.3 Relaxation exercises of conscious posture and movement muscles

Muscle tension is a normal and necessary phenomenon in the body. Objectively speaking, total muscle relaxation cannot be achieved. It is much more about the increased residual tension that arises in muscles during chronic stress.

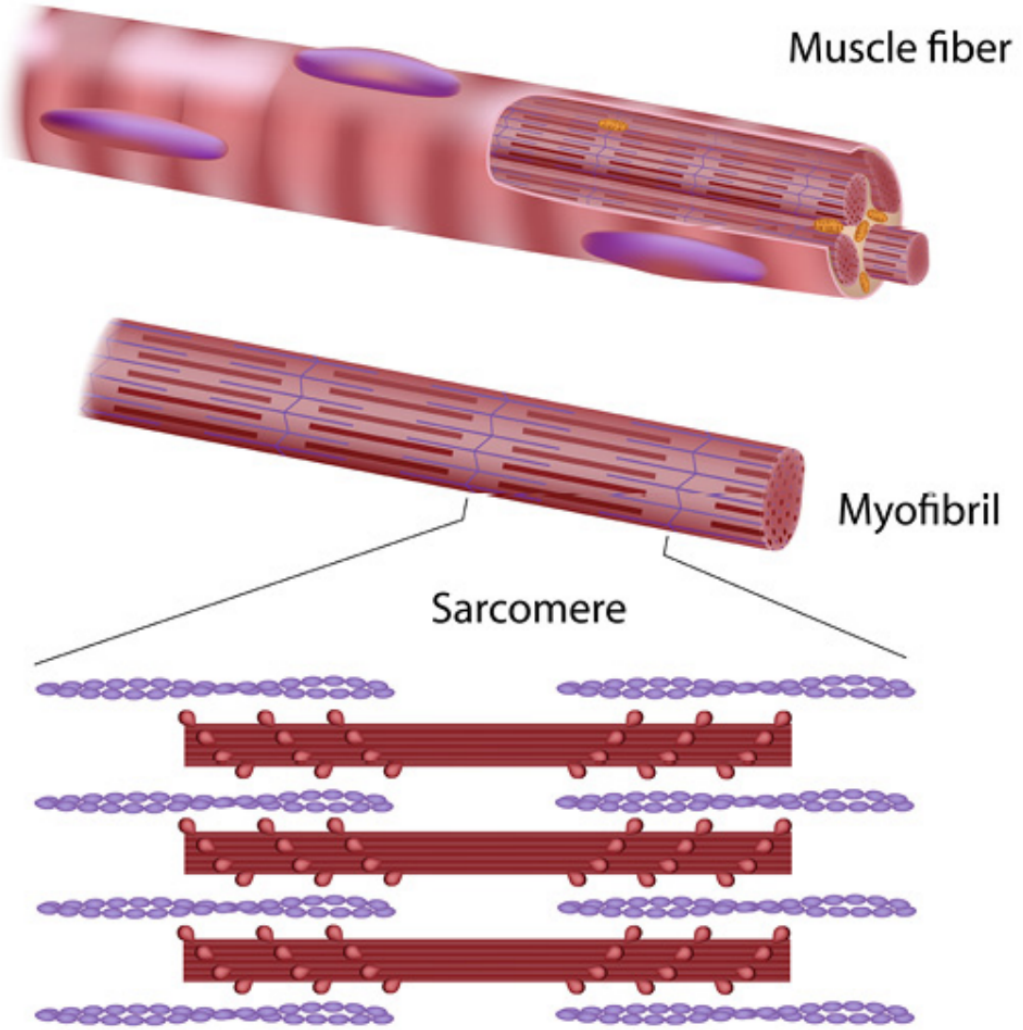
> *When practicing, we must distinguish between muscles that we can directly influence with our will (the 'striated' muscles, mainly posture and movement muscles) and the muscles that cannot be directly influenced (the 'smooth' muscles, for example in organs and blood vessel walls).*

The point of action of the smooth muscles is mainly found in non-biblical techniques such as autogenic training and yoga. The principle that causes the most fatigue, muscle pain, cramps, acidification, etc. during stress is the chronically increased residual tension of the muscle. The problem

is that most people with chronic stress no longer feel that (subtly) increased tension, because they have become accustomed to high muscle tension. Precisely for this purpose, relaxation exercises are necessary to regain the feeling of muscle tension through the exercises, so that one can deal with daily activities as economically and relaxed as possible throughout the day. One also relaxes more quickly after exertion if one has such an improved feeling of muscle tension. Muscle relaxation is a powerful tool that ultimately has a positive influence on the entire body and the functioning of organs, as I have described in my book 'Biblically dealing with stress'.

Physiology of the muscle

Muscles will shorten under the influence of tension. This shortening does not take place simultaneously in the entire muscle. It proceeds, as it were, as a shortening wave in the muscle (fiber). This process is initiated by protein changes under the influence of enzymes. These protein filaments are actin and myosin, which are often linked to vitamins that initiate or accelerate chemical processes. An energy change is taking place. 'Waste products' are released, including lactic acid. Heat is also released, including frictional heat from muscle parts. This is the so-called sliding filament theory of the Huxley brothers.



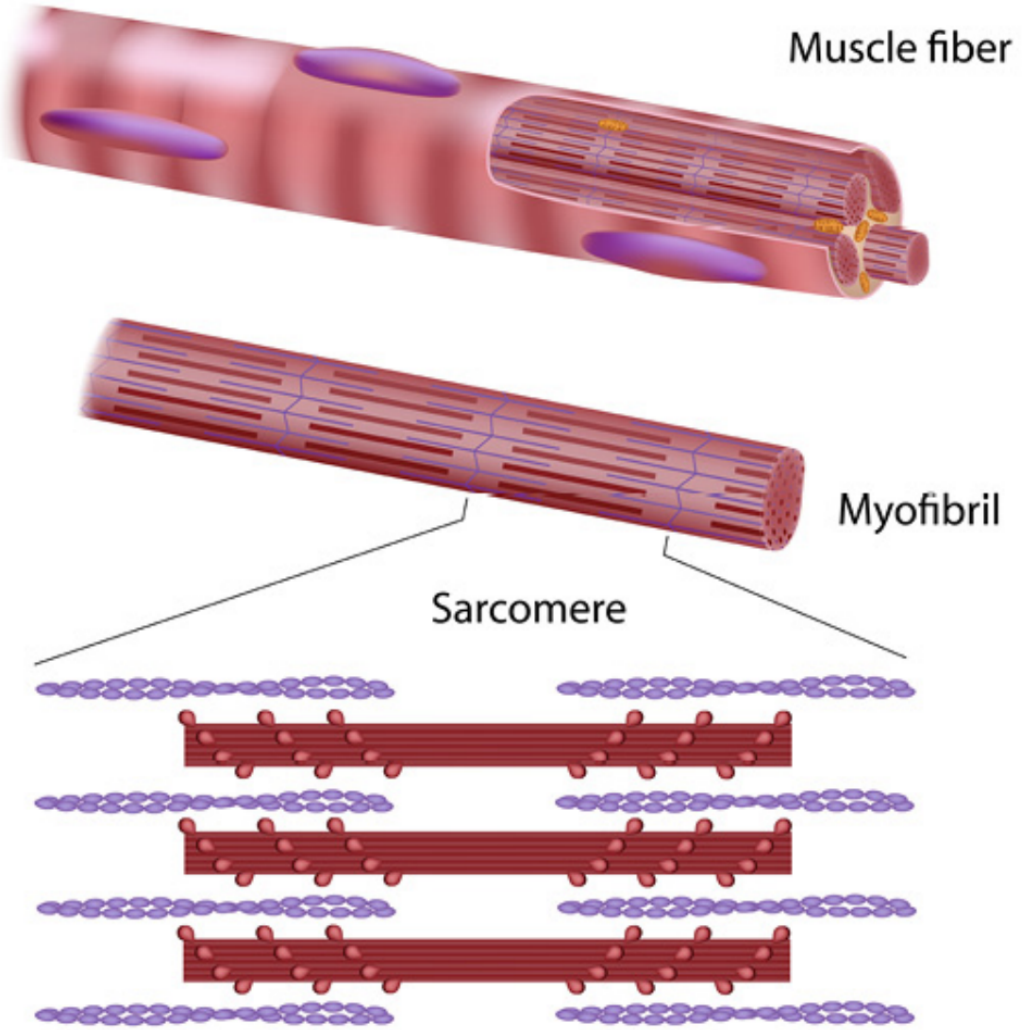
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By successively sliding muscle parts together, a pull is created on both ends of the muscle (usually the tendons). The figure below shows an example of a sarcomere where the “thin filaments and thick filaments” slide towards each other. The pieces of muscle tissue “shrink”. Depending on the nerve impulse in the muscle, millions of sarcomeres will shorten. When this pull is strong enough, a movement is created. Usually there is a fixed point, a joint or other muscle, that holds one side of the muscle. After which the muscle continues to shorten (tighten) and, for example, a body part, the 'loose' attachment point, takes with it, you get a muscle movement. When the muscle relaxes, there is often an increased residual tension. Although not so much that movement occurs, the tension can still be considerable. This voltage is called: RESIDUE VOLTAGE.



5.2.4 Technique of practice

To regain the lost feeling of muscle tension, the exercises must be practiced according to the correct technique and discipline. The emphasis should not be on performing an exercise as much as possible, but the quality of the exercise is of great importance. That quality lies mainly in learning to feel the different tension situations of a muscle. This is very difficult, especially for someone with increased stress, because you are also confronted with the real tension that exists, and which you cannot immediately control in its subtleties.

Practicing the muscle feeling of a muscle or muscle group consists of 3 levels of practice:

1. First tighten a muscle as much as possible and then try to increase the muscle tension in ten seconds

you will feel yourself gradually letting go. As mentioned, the emphasis of practice is mainly on slowly releasing muscle tension.

2. If all goes well, try the second exercise using only half the muscle tension level of the first exercise and then gradually release it over ten counts. YOU

You will notice that it is quite difficult at first to gradually relax the muscle in ten seconds. Even if you don't succeed right away, you are already training your muscle control sensation.

3. If exercise 2 is successful, you can try to tighten a muscle minimally so that you can stretch the muscle

you cannot even see it moving (you are then below the so-called stimulus threshold for a muscle movement). Then release in five seconds. If you master this exercise after a number of times, you will be able to reduce the increased residual tension at any desired level or perform a posture or movement in a less stressful manner. Then it is a matter of observing yourself several times a day and reducing the residual tension where necessary (for example, tightening your shoulder muscles just a little too much).

The most important muscle exercises are (alternately left and right)

1. bend arms (elbows) (biceps).

2. Move shoulders straight up in a sitting position (monk's hood muscle).

3. Move shoulders straight forward in sitting position (pectoral muscle).

4. Press head down in supine position (neck muscles).

5. Contract and 'release' the abdominal muscles in a sitting position or supine position.

6. Tighten the thigh muscles (stretching the knee) (quadriceps).

The quality of the exercise lies mainly in learning to feel the chronically increased residual tension in order to reduce it in our daily functioning.

5.3 EXERCISES FOCUSED ON THE 4+ MODEL

Of course, the exercises must be presented, corrected and practiced properly, with attention to psychosomatic and sensorimetric influences. To give you an idea of what they consist of, I will give some examples from the so-called '4+ model by Jim Wilder'. Practicing is not done individually, but with two people.

exercises right brain versus right brain

1. Name the four basic emotions: fear, happiness, sadness, angry, looking closely at the photo, then

read and verbalize all characteristics well.

2. Pairs exercise: guessing facial expressions.

3. Ditto guess facial expression and gesture.

4. Ditto guess facial expressions, gesture and intonation.

5. Ditto guess facial expressions, gesture, intonation, posture and movement.

6. Same with music.

Repeat the same exercises, with different emotions.

Rhythmic exercises

1. Alternating between looking angry and happy.

2. Expressing a negative emotion (also with gesture, intonation and then a positive one, also in a group.

3. Try to shorten the time and still maintain the quality.

4. Possibly with music. Or rhythm.

Exercises to prevent dissociation

1. Balance exercises with a practice top (only under supervision).

2. Balance exercises with postural resistance.

3. Exercises to reduce anxiety.

4. Sensory exercises.

5. Exercises in space.

Exercises to calm yourself physically

1. Breathing exercises.

2. Relaxation exercises.

3. Posture exercises.

4. Feeling word exercises.

Mirror exercises

Practicing body diagrams by copying movements or practicing in front of a mirror.

Massage

1. Contact has a direct influence on the brain. Note: Every touch has a spirit of it touch!

2. Contact with animals, especially dogs and horses. Cuddling, non-verbal contact.

Other forms of therapy

Other forms of therapy can also be used safely, such as drama and creative therapy, music and movement. Dancing (simple) in a group.

Feeling-talk exercises; intonation is the most important part of non-verbal communication. It indicates our emotional timbre and boundaries.

Practice with emotional words

1. Take one of the many emotional words in mind and try this through facial expressions and/or gestures and/or intonation to be made known to the other person (not verbally).

2. Try to find as many feeling words as possible from the above categories of words invent.

3. Association test: try to respond immediately to an emotional word with another word.

4. Complete short sentences with emotional words as quickly as possible, for example: I am angry when..., it irritates me..., people who are cynical..., I am disappointed when..., I feel connected to... etc.

5. Respond non-verbally to the other person's feelings and emotions in the other person's story tells.

6. Reflect on another person's feelings in a conversation. For example: I understand that correctly you felt insecure? Or: You were probably angry then?

7. Use the emotional word game with pleasant and unpleasant feelings and areas of life. Leg first address the areas of life and ask to intuitively place the cards with pleasant and unpleasant feelings next to an area of life as quickly as possible. There are then many opportunities to discuss feelings in different areas of life. You can refine this by present, past and future to make a difference.

8. You can also do the first five exercises on this page with the feeling cards.

9. Clients can make their own emotional cards, laminate them and put them in their pockets to look at during the day to help them.

5.4 Meditation: alone with Jesus

Modern man is rushed by the hyperspeed of change in high-tech society. One has become a slave to pleasure and possessions, is filled with a fair amount of striving for prestige and power and in the deepest essence is completely focused on oneself. Due to these serious contact disorders, people have often lost the ability to have respect for anything at all. The materialistic worldview produces a lot of fear. Fear of the enemy, of war, of losses, of illness, of death and especially of inner emptiness and silence. There is a mass flight into the pseudo tranquility and peace of New Age thinking or other spiritualities.

Christians also have difficulty experiencing peace and quiet in their lives. Many are trapped in a formalistic thinking about prayer and meditation. They are not used to being alone with the Lord Jesus. Praying is difficult. It requires an attitude in which you allow the Other to enter the center of your person. Let Him speak there and undertake the journey through the winding corridors and recesses of your heart and character under His guidance. It's shocking how ignorant we are about ourselves. Indeed, how many of us have learned to courageously look within?

> *We must let go of the idea that we understand ourselves, the only one who fully understands our being is the Lord Jesus. He cannot explain anything to us until we put all the fuss out of our minds and are alone with Him.*

Here I would like to highlight some aspects of meditative prayer and, in particular, explore how our minds should relate to the Holy Spirit so that He can guide us to touch those sensitive places that we as human beings prefer to touch.

leave it dark. Do we want that? Are we really looking for silence, reflection, faith, freedom, security and trust in Jesus Christ?

Mark 4:33: “And in many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they could hear them: and without a parable spake he not unto them: but unto his disciples individually he explained all things.”

“LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY!” (LUKE 11:1)

When someone is born again, the life of the Son of God is born and revealed in him or her. This life is not nourished by food but by prayer. You can starve that life or feed it.

Prayer is not primarily intended to get things, but to get to know God.

We realize that the Holy Spirit gives us power to pray. We often know what it means to pray in the spirit, but we are often unaware that the Holy Spirit Himself prays in us prayers that we cannot express (Rom. 8:26,27). “He, this is the Spirit within you, intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. God does not search your heart primarily to know what your conscious prayers are, but to know what the prayer of the Holy Spirit is.” God's Spirit needs the believer's heart as a temple in which He can offer His intercession. “Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit” (1Cor.6:19). When Jesus cleansed the temple, He did not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple (Mark 11:16). God's Spirit will not allow you to use your body for your own pleasure. “Is it not written, 'My house shall be called the house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves' (v. 17).

Have you also come to recognize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit? There is only one thing God expects from us and that is total unconditional surrender (1Cor.6:19). God doesn't care what we give Him first. When we are born again, God's Spirit begins His new creation

to work out within us and the time will come when there will be nothing left of the old. The old pride disappears.

How can we have a life that has no desire, no self-interest, no long toes, the love that does not seek itself, that devises no evil, that is always good? We must learn to place perfect trust in God, not primarily in His blessings, but in Himself. Have you reached the point where God can withhold His blessings without your faith in Him being damaged? (2 Cor.5: 16,17) Do not collapse at the first twinge of pain. We often ignore God's purpose and languish in self-pity. In addition, all “Christian

sympathy” for this will lead us even further away from God. But God does not want that: He comes with the pierced hand of His Son and says: 'Come into fellowship with Me; arise and be enlightened." (Isa.60)

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE SPIRIT OF PEOPLE

As we have seen, the Holy Spirit lives in us and the Bible compares that to a temple (1Cor.3:16). Paul refers to the temple in the Old Testament and says that the Spirit of God dwells with us just as he does in the temple. In particular, His presence is associated with the Most Holy Place. In the sanctuary and the courts, religion took place and this with the consent of the will of God in the most holy place. The home must be suitable for the Resident. Only man's regenerate spirit, not his mind, feelings, will or body, can be God's dwelling place (1 Cor. 2: 13,14). The Spirit cultivates and dwells at the same time. He cannot dwell where He has not cultivated.

The holy anointing oil as an image of the Holy Spirit was not allowed to be poured over the sacrificial meat. Thus the Spirit cannot dwell in an unregenerate spirit. The only connection the Holy Spirit has with the flesh is that He wars against it (Gal.5:17). If a child of God does not understand that the Holy Spirit lives in our heart (spirit) deeper than our reason and feelings, then there is a great danger that he will not be guided by the Holy Spirit but by his soul (psyché). We are seduced by what comes from outside to our insides. The Holy Spirit dwells within

are the most hidden corner of us and only from there can we expect His works and hope for His guidance. Our prayers focus on our Father, who lives in heaven, but the Lord Jesus leads us from within (Rom. 10: 6-8). If our Counselor, Advocate, Intercessor lives in our spirit, then His guidance must also come from within. We are often deceived when we seek dreams, visions, voices, or experiences instead of listening to Him who lives within us.

Many Christians listen to their souls in prayer. This can cause great harm and has nothing to do with faith. They no longer see Jesus but themselves. However, there is also an inward turning that distinguishes this. That is the greatest act of faith. This is about seeking the Holy Spirit who lives in the spirit of man. And even if we do not always understand that inner voice, we can also believe in the darkest times that He is inextricably connected to us. As wonderful as spiritual (psychic) experiences may be, they should not be mischaracterized spiritually. Only what comes into the spirit of man through the works of the Holy Spirit can count as a spiritual experience. Rom. 8:16 'The Spirit testifies with (in) our spirit that we are the children of God.' (See also 1 Cor. 2: 10)

PRAYER AND SILENCE

God speaks to us now just as He speaks to His friend Moses (Ex. 3:5) “Release your feet from the commonplace.” Put aside the habit that keeps your feet encircled and you will see that the place on which you stand is holy ground. In all existence, everywhere and at all times, you can find the glory of God. For many people, silence is something threatening. Many feel like a fish out of water when they don't hear cars speeding, trains rumbling or radios playing. We are alienated from silence.

Being quiet with yourself is completely different from sleeping. Biblical prayerful meditation is not about falling asleep or going into a trance or cutting yourself off from reality and escaping into another world. Biblical meditation is precisely keeping the mind alert and attentive, allowing us to follow with great attentiveness the movements of our own existence. So no sleepy, sedated state of (self) hypnosis

but rather a state of heightened awareness of alertness, with which we can follow our own existence from within.

> *More difficult than banishing the noise of the world is achieving an inner silence, which every person longs for.*

When the external noise is silenced, a new noise arises from misunderstood feelings and confused urges. A person who enters a quiet room does not yet experience inner silence. Mat.6:6-8 “When you pray, go into your closet and…pray to your Father who is in secret.”

Prayer is an effort of the will. We must discipline our disturbed thoughts and turn to the Lord Jesus. When you pray, do not use words. The Lord prayed the same prayer 3 times in the Garden of Gethsemane with the same words. He also left a prayer that He knew would be repeated throughout the ages. He did not merely oppose repetition or a particular form of prayer. Prayer often means interrupting our personal ambitions. No busy person has time to pray. This damages the life of God in us. How shameful it is that Jesus STILL has to say, “Come to Me.” (Matt.11:28)

The cares of the world, Jesus says, choke God's Word (Matt.6:25ff). Consider what there is that doesn't make you want to go to Jesus. In proportion as our faith becomes less genuine, we would rather argue than come, would rather make excuses than come, would rather grieve than come, would rather do other "spiritual works" than come, would rather indulge our spiritual insolence than say, "As I am, so come I, Lord."

> *The Holy Spirit will lay the ax to the root of whatever is keeping you from coming within. The Lord Jesus is always ready with outstretched hands and with an invincible, untiring patience: “Come to Me, all of you.”*

Prayer doesn't usually change circumstances, but prayer changes me, and I change things. God has arranged it in such a way that prayer, based on the redemption and resurrection life of Christ, teaches people to see things in a different way. Not primarily the external things, but prayer produces miracles in the inner condition of man. People who pray have the courage to reach out to God and let Him guide them. John 21:18 When you were young, you put on your own belt and went where you wanted to go, but when you are old, stretch out your hands, and someone else will gird you and take you where you do not want to go.

PRAYING WITH THE MIND AND/OR SPIRIT

We have already seen that prayer and meditation require primarily an activity of the mind of man. “God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). This requires much practice in surrendering and opening our minds to receive what is given by God, which is then expressed and preserved with our mind. We perceive a certain need. According to the spiritual knowledge we have received from God, we must pray about this matter. Instead of just waiting for the movements of the spirit, we must pray with the mind. Often the inner man (spirit) is so disturbed by Satan or our natural life that we hardly notice this. Man's mind has sunk so deeply that he has apparently lost consciousness. We still feel the presence of the psyche and physical needs, but the mind is not active. In such a case, if we wait for the spirit to move us to prayer, it may never happen. Therefore we must pray as our reason deems right and fair, in this prayer we resist the powers of darkness. This intellectual action will also call the mind to action. 1Cor.14:5 'What is the situation then? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind. I will sing praises with my spirit but also pray with my mind.”

> *“Intellectual prayer” can mobilize the mind. Sometimes it seems at first that our prayer consists of only empty words*

exists, but if we do not cease from praying and conquer in prayer, our spirit will soon be lifted up. Then spirit and mind will work together again. If this spiritual law is neglected, the believer will wait for God's burden of prayer instead of, for example, fighting the enemy. Even if the Holy Spirit has previously given us a burden of prayer in our spirit, our mind must retain it and express it again later. We must prayerfully ponder the truths of God.

On the other hand, we should not value the function of the mind too highly. The help that the mind gives the mind is compared by Watchman Nee to a hand-operated water pump. There are pumps into which you must first pour water, so that a suction effect is created by the pump. The relationship between mind and spirit resembles this. If the water is not added first, the pump will not be able to release water from the source. For example, our spirit often does not rise if we do not first pray with our mind. If we do not add “water” first, we are like the man who wants to pump but after some time concludes that there is no water because the well has dried out, while this is not the case. How different are the works of the spirit. Sometimes it has the strength of a lion and sometimes of an infant. The mind is never a replacement for the mind, but, as mentioned, helps to activate the mind. A spiritual mind under the obedience of Christ provides a good balance: a thoughtful meditative prayer.

If we use our mind too much, it can become an overwrought bow in prayer and lose its usefulness. The enemy of God well knows that we need our minds to walk in the spirit. That is why he wants our mind to be overburdened, so that it is unable to receive the light of God (Eph. 4: 18). Being intellectually concerned with a matter for too long and thinking too intensively about the will of God often leads to over-anxiety.

THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE (WATCHMAN NO)

Often mistakes of the mind are responsible for our failing actions. Whoever has the desire in the spirit to

walking must always test his behavior vigilantly. Just as the mind can err or become proud, withdraw or hide, so it is possible for the spirit.

If our minds are not under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it will show up in our behavior.

If the inner man (spirit of man) is strong, it can control the soul and the body. However, if he is weak, the soul or body will subdue the spirit, resulting in many spiritual defeats for the believer. God is primarily interested in our spirit. For there is the seat of the new life, there the Holy Spirit works through our spirit, we have fellowship with God, we recognize His will and receive revelations from the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, we are taught in our spirit, mature spiritually and resist the attacks of Satan, we receive in spirit powers for battle, victory and power for service. Through the resurrection life in our spirit, our body will also ultimately be changed into a resurrection body.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD

Our spiritual life is always a consequence of the condition of our mind.

That is why it is so important that our mind stays in the right condition. However highly developed the soul of man may be, what matters is the condition of the spirit. The Bible has much to say about the condition of our minds. Therefore, finally, some characteristics of our spirit so that we may truly understand how by grace we may understand the words of the Holy Spirit within us.

A penitent spirit (humble, defeated)

Ps.34:19 The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and saves those who are crushed in spirit. Yes. 57:15 For thus says the High and Exalted One, who sits enthroned forever, whose name is Holy. In the high and holy places I dwell with the contrite and the lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and the heart of the contrite."

Strangely enough, many believers think that a contrite, penitent spirit is only necessary at the time of penance and conversion or when they have fallen into sins, but God always expects a penitent spirit from us, because our flesh is still present and can become active again at any moment. A penitent spirit makes us alert and also delights in the presence of

God. God does not want us to continually do penance. Rather, he wants us to be penitent with constant surrender. Only then can we respond to the Holy Spirit in all circumstances, and our behavior will be properly guided.

The mind can also be mistaken. Isa.29:24 "Even those who err in spirit will understand, and those who grumble will receive instruction." Even if the mind is not mistaken, the mind may be so confused that it cannot carry out the thoughts of the mind. God only saves those who have a contrite spirit. He cannot save others, for only a penitent spirit can recognize the purpose of God. With such a mind, sensitive to correction, we can experience the Lord's salvation daily.

A broken spirit

Ps.51:19 'The sacrifices of God are a contrite spirit, a broken and contrite heart; despise thou not, O God'. A broken spirit trembles before God. There are Christians who were never under inner pressure when they sinned. A sound mind, such as David had, will be broken before God in such a case of sin. It is not difficult for God to raise up such a broken spirit.

A sorrowful spirit (awe of God)

Isa.66:2 "On such do I consider, the afflicted, the one of a contrite spirit, and the one who trembles at my word." God looks with joy on a sorrowful spirit that is in awe of Him. All false self-confidence and imagination must be gone, the believer must be filled with holy awe, ready to obey. As a result, he does not trust himself, if our spirit does not respect God's Spirit, this is equivalent to a declaration of independence. A mind in deep fear of God is a safeguard against defeat in the spiritual life.

A humble, humble spirit

Prov.16:19 “It is better to be humble in spirit with the poor, than to divide the spoil with the proud.” Prov.29:23 “A man's pride brings him low, but an humble spirit will receive honor.” Isa.57:15 “For thus says the…I dwell with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit.”

Humility means no longer looking at yourself at all. When a believer's mind is proud, he can easily make mistakes. Humility focuses not only on God but also on people. In spiritual humility God's presence and glory are revealed. A humble person opens himself to the teaching of God. Arrogant people can teach others but learn nothing themselves. Only humble people can bear and endure. If there is even the slightest hardness in us it can hinder communion with God.

Poor in spirit

Mat.5:3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” The poor in spirit know that they have nothing. The danger of a believer is that he sees himself as spiritually rich. Only the poor in spirit can be truly humble. How often a Christian's spiritual experiences, growth and progress become so important that they lose their humility. It can be very dangerous for a believer to follow

start thinking about what he has achieved. Sometimes this happens unconsciously. When we continually brag about our profound spiritual experiences (under the guise of glorifying God) this is often relegated to “spiritual truth.”

With a poor mind we can lose ourselves to God, a rich mind remains focused on itself. Complete redemption frees the believer from himself and unites him with God.

A gentle spirit

Gal. 6:1 “Adjust him in a spirit of gentleness, looking to yourselves, when you also may be tempted.” Gentleness is a quality of the inner man that must be trained. One with a gentle spirit can stop in a blessed work and immediately hear God's voice. Philip who went from Samaria into the wilderness is an example of this (Acts 8:26). A gentle spirit allows itself to be led by the hand of God without resistance. It is a handed down, available spirit. It is the spirit of 'a lamb', the spirit of 'the cross', the spirit that did not reprimand when he suffered and did not threaten (1 Peter 2:23). Such a mind is willing to suffer even if it has the ability to strike back. Such a spirit invites justice from others and is full of love and mercy.

A fiery spirit

Rom.12:11 'In diligent zeal, fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.' The flesh can also develop a burning zeal, but as this is often only an emotional zeal, it usually does not last long. The flesh only does what it thinks is good and cannot really serve God; fervent in spirit, on the other hand, is a long-lasting condition. We must allow the Holy Spirit to fill our minds with burning zeal. Then our mind will not freeze, even when our emotions are not there. If we have a fervent spirit, the work of the Lord will not fail. Paul commands us, we must decide with our will to have a fervent spirit and not be paralyzed by cold, apathetic feelings.

A thoughtful mind

Prov.17:27 “The wise man restrains his words, but the man of understanding is prudent.” We need both an ardent spirit and a thoughtful spirit. Besides fire, we need cool deliberation. The peace of Christ is ours when we are completely filled with the Holy Spirit. The peace that all reason

is like the ocean. Although on the surface the waves go back and forth, in the depths of the sea there is perfect tranquility. A person who is not guided by his soul, but by the Spirit of God, will be unshakable under difficult circumstances. Our will plays a key role in this. We must, on the one hand, have an ardent spirit for the work of the Lord, and on the other hand be thoughtful in the execution of the work.

A joyful spirit

Luke 1:47 “My spirit rejoices in God my Savior.” A Christian should have a contrite spirit towards himself (Ps. 51: 17-19), but towards God he should rejoice. He rejoices primarily not in his own experiences or work, a blessing or a particular circumstance, but in the presence of God himself. When faced with worries and difficult circumstances for a long time, the human spirit often leaves its rightful position, eventually losing all strength and not seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The spirit loses its radiance and sometimes spiritual life can suffer greatly. Only one thing can help: The joy of the Lord. A child of God should never lose this basic attitude.

A spirit of strength

2 Tim.1:7 “God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind.” Timidity should not be confused with humility. Humility is a complete renunciation of oneself, it forgets one's own weaknesses but also one's own strengths. Timidity has more to do with the weakness of the old man. God does not delight in our cowardice and retreat. He wants us on the one hand to fear Him and on the other hand to continue courageously in His strength. He expects from us a testimony without fear, that for His sake we courageously endure shame and trouble and rely on His wisdom, strength and faithfulness. We need a spirit of strength toward the enemy, a spirit of love toward others, and a spirit of discretion and self-control toward ourselves.

A gentle, quiet spirit

1 Peter 3:3-4 'Your glory is not external; the braiding of hair, or the adorning of gold, or the wearing of robes, but the hidden man of your heart, with the imperishable adornment of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.” Although Peter focuses primarily on sisters here, it certainly applies to brothers as well.

1Thes.4:11 “But we exhort you, brethren, to do much more, taking pride in keeping quiet and minding your own business.”

Modern Christians talk too much. Due to confused thoughts and endless talking, the mind loses control over the will.

A noisy spirit quickly leads the believer into a carnal mind. It becomes more difficult not to sin when the mind starts to lose control. If we do not want to talk, first of all we must have a silent mind. Even in times of great confusion, our inner being must be sustained by an independent silence. When our minds are still, we hear more clearly the gentle inner voice of the Holy Spirit. Such a spirit is an ornament of a believer that also becomes visible to the outside world.

The new state of mind

Romans 7:6 “But now we have been released from the law, dead to her who held us captive, so that we may serve in the new state of the Spirit.” An old mind can only produce and transmit old thoughts. Perhaps through such a mind words, teachings and thoughts are produced, but they do not reach the mind! Dynamic life is only possible through the new state of mind. Without a renewed mind we cannot engage the minds of others. Sometimes we come across Christians who not only draw on past experiences, but who you get the feeling that they are just getting into

have been close to the Lord and who can also bring you into that closeness. They do not give the people dried-up stale bread, but fresh manna and fish freshly prepared by the fire of the Holy Spirit.

A holy spirit

1Cor.7: 34 'Let them remain holy in body and spirit' 2Cor.7: 1 'Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit'. Anyone who wants to imitate Christ can only do so with a holy spirit. An unholy spirit leads us into foolishness, wrong thoughts toward things or people, lack of love, criticism, selfishness,

jealousy, pride and much more can defile our minds. A child of God must always hate sin. Without sanctification no one can see the Lord. (Heb.12:14).

Strong in spirit

Luke 1:80 “Now the child grew and was strengthened by the Spirit.” Our spirit can grow and therefore must continually increase in strength. This cannot be done without the increase of spiritual life. Yet we experience that the mind is not strong enough to control the soul and body. This is especially true when the soul is excited or the body weakens. Sometimes when we help others, we notice how they are depressed in spirit and do not have the strength to free themselves. Even in spiritual battle we often have to conclude that our strength is not sufficient for victory. As the inner man becomes stronger, the power of intuition and discernment also increases. Our spirits must be taught to cooperate much more with the Holy Spirit.

Prov.18:14 “The strength of a man's spirit sustains him in his afflictions, but who can lift up a depressed spirit?” The spirit of Moses is usually considered very strong. But because he also had moments of weakness, the Israelites may have embittered his spirit (Ps. 106:33). Only the Holy Spirit can give strength in the spirit, this is a matter of practicing spiritual walk.

One mind

Phil 1:27 “Only conduct yourselves worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear from you that you stand firm in one spirit.” Spiritual life of a believer is in harmony with spiritual life of another Christian. As God with His Holy Spirit completely in someone

lives, is it possible that we are not connected? Only when reason and feeling are subordinate to the spirit can differences in thinking and feelings be overcome and still be of one mind.

A spirit of grace

Gal.6:18 “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.” The grace of Jesus Christ is incredibly precious. The grace of Christ sustains our spirit. This is a blessing prayer that indicates the highest level that the spirit of a believer can reach. We must always claim this grace from our Wonderful Lord in our spirit.

The main idea in the Bible for prayer is: 'Let your (spiritual) eye be fixed solely on Jesus, the author and perfecter of the faith.' (Heb. 12:2) Our prayer should not be pious talk, but a prayer according to God's will. Pray according to what God has revealed in Jesus Christ. The test of our lives is not only that we are led together with Jesus to the high mountain and experience hours of ecstasy (Mark 9:2ff), but we must also descend again into the low plain into the world possessed by devils (Mark 9:14-29).

1Cor.1:27-31 'God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong things; and God chose the low and despised things of the world, the things that are nothing, to destroy the things that are strong, so that no flesh should boast before God. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who from God is made to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; that as it is written, He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.”

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Tips for quiet time, meditation with Jesus

1. Take enough time so that there is no sense of haste. Writing down the thoughts

you get frees the mind and opens it up to new thoughts.

2. Start dedicating time to Jesus. Invite Him and ask His help against going astray

thoughts.

3. Try to be completely relaxed. To open our souls to Jesus and wait for guidance. Don't struggle for leadership, but look at these moments as a time

of fellowship and fellowship with God. Guidance comes naturally when it is needed. The time of silence should not be too short.

4. Take about a third of your time to read the Bible.

5. Consider the past and let Jesus test our thoughts against the four rules of: a) perfect purity. b) complete honesty. c) complete selflessness. d) perfect love.

6. Reflections may include: a) Is there something between you and...that keeps you apart from Christ? b)

Is there anything to thank Him for? c) Is there something or someone to pray to Him for? d) Is there someone you should write to or speak to or invite? e) Is there anything you need to read or go to? f) Have confirmations of God's love and concern for you come to you? g) Are there any other things you should do or not do?

7. Ask for guidance from Jesus in special matters such as communication, planning and decisions for the day ahead. Bring special difficulties to Jesus.

8. Trust: God will bless you richly!

CHARACTERISTICS OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY

The development of relational brain skills of the right brain determines our way of thinking and gives meaning to our identity and emotional skills. We will discuss this in detail in Chapter 7. In anticipation of this, in this chapter we pay explicit attention to returning to inner peace from 6 difficult emotions. This also has everything to do with the previous chapter about relaxation. Many topics in this book and the associated training have similarities or partially overlap. This is because we approach the themes holistically from a physical side, but also on a soul level and spiritually from the connection with God. In this chapter we would like to consciously reflect on how our Lord Jesus dealt with difficult feelings and what we can learn from Him. After all, we find our identity in Christ.

Many of what we call unconscious are learned skills that are activated in the brain faster than conscious thinking.



It is striking that many conditions for healthy development are also important values from a biblical perspective.

For example, a good, joyful individual and group identity, an ability to find peace in difficult circumstances, self-control, connectedness and good handling of boundaries.

In the book Rare Leadership by Marcus Warner and Jim Wilder, four skills are described that distinguish spiritually mature leaders from others. These are qualities that are actually very important for everyone when processing difficult feelings. This concerns the following 4 important properties.

Stay focused on the relationship. The skill means, among other things, that the relationship is more important than the problem. Often leaders who are only problem-oriented and focused on results become

isolated, fearful of failure and overstressed. If there is a lot of stress and tension in a relationship, stay in touch with the other person and with God.

Act like you are. Respond in difficult circumstances based on your Christian identity. Otherwise, those around you will not know what to expect from you. A consistent character from a positive heart attitude is a guarantee to remain yourself in difficult circumstances.

Relax quickly from 6 difficult emotions. Perhaps the most important characteristic is that a good leader is not overwhelmed by negative feelings (shame, anger, fear, sadness, disgust and despair), but quickly comes to calm and peace and joy from these six difficult emotions.

Learn to suffer well. Most of the time we try to prevent suffering. We can distinguish different capacities of suffering: as that of an infant, child, adolescent, parent and elder. In the Bible, suffering is connected to love. Whoever loves must also learn to suffer (1 Peter 4:13).

Check: Relational Circuits: on or off?

I just want a problem, person or feeling to go away.

I don't want to experience what others feel or listen to what others say.

My mind is 'stuck' on something shocking.

I don't want to contact or connect with someone I usually like.

I just want to get away, fight or do nothing.

I want to act aggressively and judge and make fun of others.

If you say yes to everything, your relational circuits are 'off'.

A 'yes' is an alarm signal!

This simple checklist for monitoring our relational circuits was developed by Dr. Karl Lehman.

Some strategies to stay relational are: curiosity (Gen. 3: 9,11), showing appreciation, kindness and encouraging conversation.

6.1 STAY FOCUSED ON THE RELATIONSHIP

In all circumstances, even in difficult situations, remain relational to God and to others. Staying relationship with God requires a skill that you might call: 'developing intimacy with God'. This is a learning process. That means we don't acquire that skill through a one-time prayer. We need to practice that skill, each at our own level. We will not all have to endure the trials of, for example, Paul and Stephen. The last saw, at the time

that he was stoned, the heavens opened (Acts 7:56). But we must first learn to bring our small and big problems to God, not only in our quiet time but also during the day. We must learn to walk the path to Him.

Col. 3:1-3 says: 'If ye have been risen with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on things on earth. For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God." If we were able to see the problem from Christ's perspective, we would be able to deal with it more easily. We then come into His possibilities to solve the problem or to give us strength to deal with it in a good way. In practice it means: praying.

Bill Hybels of Willow Creek describes his learning process in the book Too Busy Not to Pray: "I read 15 to 20 books on prayer and studied every text in the Bible that has to do with prayer. And then I did something completely overwhelming: 'I prayed!'

Many men of God have prayed after young Samuel: “Speak Lord, Your servant is listening!” We often ask God for advice in a specific situation. “Lord, what can I do in this problem with that annoying colleague, neighbor, etc.?” We become aware that in some situations we are present for a specific purpose. Lord, will You help me to see my friend, child, acquaintance, with Your eyes? We often find comfort and experience peace in difficult moments of the day. Because we see with the heart of Jesus, respond as Jesus, we are also able to respond with complete self-control; After all, that is the fruit of His Spirit, His Heart. In our stress, which we sometimes experience with others, it is also important to maintain an open relationship with others through the relational open relationship with God. Many people no longer make contact with the other person (sometimes for years) after an argument or aggression, isolate themselves or flee and are no longer able to use right-brain communication skills (non-verbal, emotional calming, considering the relationship more important than the problem, etc.).

6.2 BEHAVE AS YOU ARE, FROM YOUR CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

This involves the development of both an individual and a group identity (Body of Christ). According to the Bible, man's identity is determined by the fact that he is a creature of God. This is in contrast to humanistic thinking in which autonomy is the guiding principle of identity. This also means that God fundamentally determines man's identity, or (perhaps better said) man's relationship with his Creator. The fact that we are creatures of God means: dependence on God, accountable to God, obedient to God, subservient to God, living according to His will and to His glory. Man's identity has been determined from its origins by the great privilege of knowing, loving and serving Him. After all, man was created in God's image.

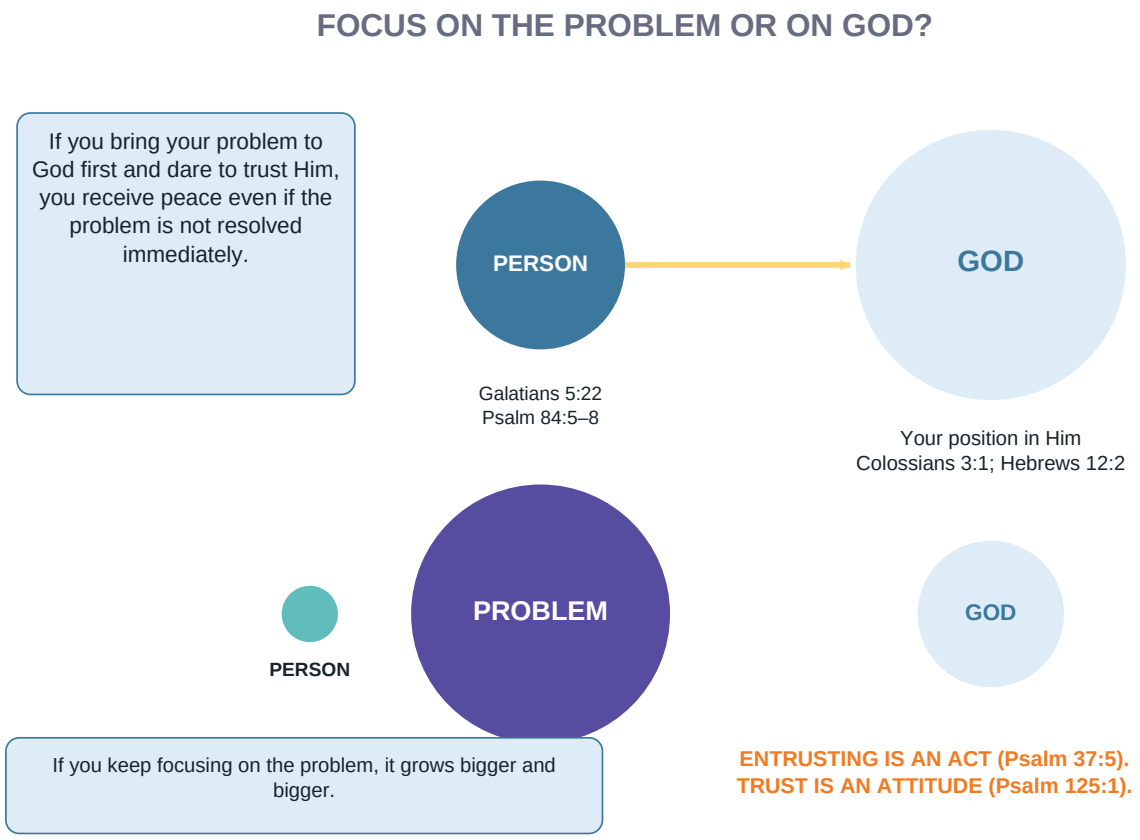
In the book 'Living according to God's plan' the various tasks that must be learned for natural and spiritual maturity are described in detail. For 4-12 year olds, the most important learning task is to be able to take care of themselves. In a spiritual sense, this means learning: praying yourself, making wishes before God, developing perseverance, learning to discover what unique qualities God has given him or her. If this is not learned, the child will not be able to take (mental) responsibility for itself later, when it has become an adult. During the age of 13 until the birth of the first child, one must learn to care for two people at the same time. Learning to develop care for others. If this is not learned, the adult will later be unable to enter into mutually satisfying relationships. After the age of 13, students learn to bond with peers and develop a group identity. One learns to contribute to the community and to feel connected to it. It goes without saying that a healthy religious community can play a major role in this. Among the elderly, those who are of the age of adult children, the most important task is to take care of the community without being there

to expect something in return. If this task is not accomplished, communities of faith will be characterized by less and less spiritual maturity. An elder values each member of the community for who he is and will lead the community and help it grow spiritually.

> *Without a well-functioning relational circuit, it is impossible to experience God's presence or achieve a common consciousness where God is with us (Immanuel).*

If we look at traumatic experiences in this way, we will find that in every traumatic memory the person is unaware of God's active presence. This applies to all traumatic memories that are still triggered by post-traumatic stress symptoms. To resolve a traumatic event, you need to get into a mental state that you are no longer in. Once this reality is shared with a trusted other, we begin to question what it means to be ourselves, and what our feelings and actions are in light of that terrible event. When we begin to process the trauma in this way, it will first cause suffering. But instead of feeling alone and revisiting the bad event, we can now face and even accept the suffering, and then learn from the event that is now in the past. In this

relational setting we can learn from God and others who we are as God created us. Provided that we, our brains, are able to experience God's active presence in a mutual mind setting where we feel understood by God who shares our suffering and our joy. Awareness of mutual mindset with God is also a learned skill of the brain and is best accomplished by being modeled and trained by those who are aware of God's presence. In such a way we come to know our deepest identity, even in the presence of stress in our lives.



Neurology and spirituality meet and are related.

6.3 QUICKLY REGAINING CALM AFTER SIX DIFFICULT EMOTIONS

Let's assume that there are five major stages in the processing and experience of feelings in the brain, which always have to be processed in the same way and order and where the processing can also be blocked at every wrong step. Compare it with a car wash program, which would be: a) soaping, b) scrubbing, c) rinsing, d) drying, e) touching up details. It is clear to everyone that changing the order affects the final result. Just as improving scrubbing does not affect drying. The brain similarly tries to solve problems by processing emotions, relationships and events.

Careful attention to the processing order will help solve the problems.

Perhaps the most important contribution of the LIFE Model is to regulate the sequence and selection of many well-known interventions on brain function.

A simple illustration of brain processing begins with observing when securely attached children become upset and then spontaneously calm and comfort themselves. Validation or finding the truth means accurately recognizing and feeling how big the problem is that is being felt. Through comfort you will notice that the problem has limits. From a brain perspective, this can be seen as two functions of nervous systems: namely associating things together (what is part of this experience?) and keeping separate from what we do not associate (what is not an aspect of this experience?).

If one tries to reverse the order by reassuring first and starting with “it could have been worse” or “it's not that big,” the result is an immediate resistance to comfort.

But if we first accurately express the name and size, the scope, the intensity and the importance and emotional content of an experience, we can calm down more quickly. So acknowledge the feeling and put words to it.

Continuous state of alarm

If the brain is unable to maintain a good relationship when it experiences sadness, anger, fear, disgust, or shame, the difficult emotion remains active and some of those emotions become chronic or are easily triggered. For example, we try to avoid certain emotions or we warn others not to evoke those emotions. For example: “You don't want to know what happens when I get angry!”.

Due to a constant 'alarm state' we never relax and, for example, we become depressed.

People will try very hard to avoid shame, anger, and threats. This response is so strong that the brain can no longer switch back to that feeling of joy. People no longer think they can relax properly without that negative motivation. Some examples of how people think: 'Threats are necessary to make employees work', 'Children only obey when I am angry and shout at them', 'If I don't put pressure on my wife, she will never be a good wife'. However, in the absence of the ability to return to peace and joy, 'motivating' others can increase their unpleasant emotions, and therefore lead to a negative 'self-fulfilling reality'. People do not notice that returning to

joy when a normal lifestyle is thus unattainable. In the article 'Ten important skills that therapists have never learned' by Jim Wilder, which can be found on the website: www.complementaire-gezondheid.nl, you will find a detailed description of how to regain calm from the various negative emotions. We will briefly discuss a few here.

EXAMPLE: RETURN FROM ANGER TO PEACE (SHALOM)

Most people don't see anger as something that improves relationships. There is also no desire to make contact with someone who is angry. We are so often exposed to anger that comes from a 'toxic' motivation that there is to some extent a legitimate fear about what anger can bring about. Few people have been confronted with a particularly angry person, who had not closed their relational circuits and who did their best to improve the relationship. There are few people who affirmed the value of the angry other person, who sometimes reduced his anger, to allow the other person to process it and at the same time be open to the other person while he is angry.

As with many emotions, anger has a right brain version and a left brain version. The right brain version of anger is a response to a threat that we cannot escape (such as escaping from a lion) or a threat that we must stop, such as someone hitting our child. The left brain version of anger is a result of a certain way of thinking that is exacerbated by affirmation. “My wife is stupid and disobedient and she needs a good beating to listen to me.” If we allow/condon how angry the husband must be with his wife, we are adding fuel to the fire. That should not be acknowledged. Right brain anger is different and can be seen as a direct response to a situation. When this right brain anger is missing, it gives the person the feeling that something is not right. An example: if the neighbor constantly molests a woman's children and she does not get angry at all and

very calmly says after what happened: “I don't get angry when he abuses my children...” In this example we immediately know that something necessary is missing. Some people have tried to distinguish righteous anger from unrighteous anger, but this distinction has nothing to do with the "left or right" versions of anger. If someone is angry because their children are being molested and that is recognized as a permissible appropriate emotion, it is more likely to calm the person down.

Many families, churches, and businesses use anger to motivate (read: force) others to follow their rules. The negative consequences of this are that the other person's motivation disappears. Harsher punishment does not improve behavior, but manipulates it. The brain is also prone to entering an insecure attachment if the person we are approaching for help is the same person we 'don't want to scare'. Motivating a group and working toward group unity becomes more difficult as people increasingly try to avoid anger.

As with all relational skills of the brain, the return from anger to joy can only be learned from someone who has those skills, not through words alone. So I'm not going to try to give you training in this article. But words help us find people who have this skill.

> *Think about who you would like to have with you when you are dealing with people who are angry with you, and who you would not. Think about who you would want to talk to when you are angry...*

The best person would be someone who can get angry and yet treat others in a kind way. A role model who teaches you how to deal with anger! There are people with the ability to return from anger to joy. The best learning experience is when you are like that with someone like you

share your anger and ask how he or she would act in your place.

RELAX PHYSICALLY

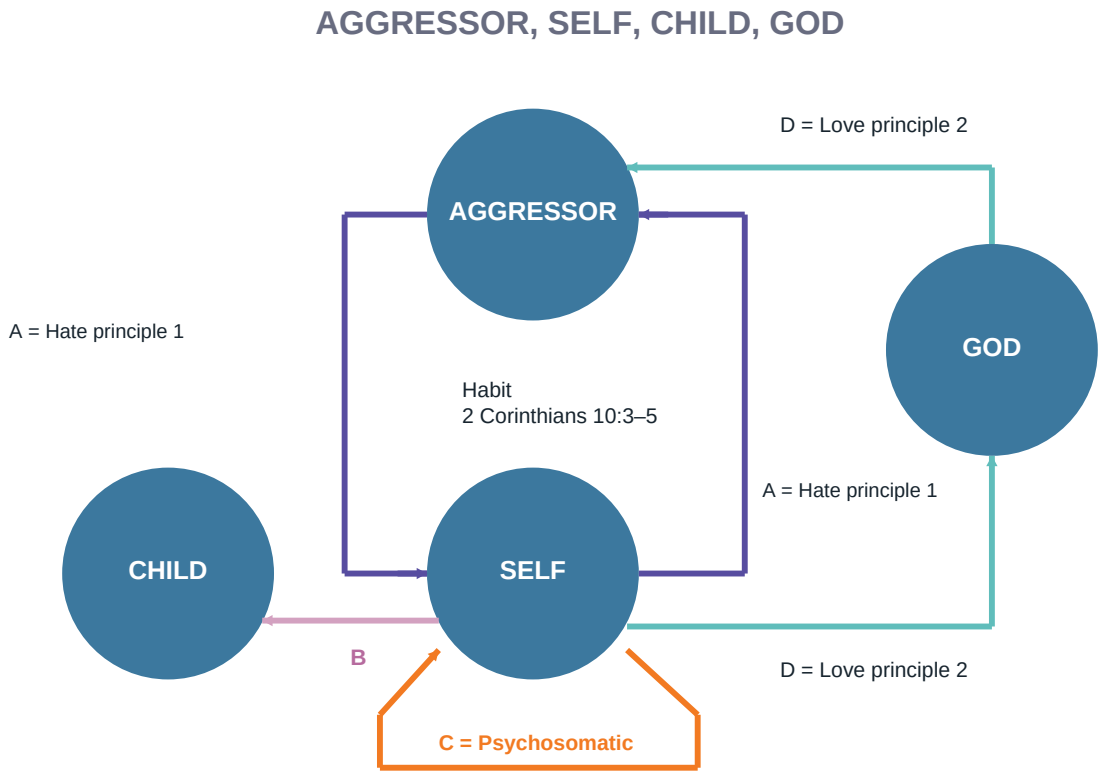
We also need to learn how to physically calm those difficult feelings while keeping our relational circuits active. This also has many physical consequences.

> *Just staying in a negative emotion for six minutes means that the stress hormone cortisol is present in our blood for 24 hours.*

In the unconscious or vegetative nervous system, the balance that should exist between the sympathetic system (Fight, Flight or Fright response) and the parasympathetic system (which brings peace) is disrupted, causing the sympathetic system to chronically gain the upper hand. This causes all kinds of psychosomatic reactions and complaints in the body that are reinforced by the negative feelings that are chronically present.

> *The resulting complaints are often chronic fatigue, chronic muscle and joint complaints, skin complaints and functional disorders of the intestines, stomach and heart complaints and much more.*

It is very important to positively influence the balance in the vegetative nervous system through breathing and relaxation exercises. If we are in a stressful situation, we can actively maintain our relational circuits through calm diaphragmatic breathing ('belly breathing') and muscle relaxation exercises, thereby dampening the sympathetic nervous system and thus reducing complaints. When we do that for the first time, it can be difficult for many people to do this for at least 5 minutes and get the feeling at the same time



of peace and appreciation. As soon as you succeed, you should practice this for 5 minutes in the morning, afternoon and evening. Dr. Jim Wilder says that he used to call this practice principle trivial, but that prior to the beginning of trauma processing, this skill has eliminated the need for hospital admissions in his practice!

6.4 LEARNING TO SUFFER WELL

Most of the time we want to avoid suffering and escape in the wrong way. Love and suffering are inextricably linked in the Bible. Dr. Kurt Blatter has outlined how we can respond to difficult feelings.

This diagram concerns negative feelings that are generated by aggressive behavior. Negative feelings can have numerous causes. In addition to physical aggression, there is also passive aggression (silence; breaking relational circuits), but also harming, offending, insulting, denigrating, dishonoring, disabling and robbing. Consequently, there can be 3 different reactions to those negative feelings, often automatic, unconsciously caused by brain skills.

The 'counter-aggression' that has been aroused in me is directed back at the aggressor. The principle A in the figure (What you do to me, I will do to you, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, hating your enemy). This leads to a far-reaching escalation of mutual aggression.

Principle B in the figure: I break the relational circuits and direct my pent-up feelings towards third parties, for example my children. For example, children wonder: "What is it about father that he is so annoyed and angry with us?"

The principle C in the figure. The 'counter-aggression' that arose in me is aimed at myself. This causes the psychosomatic complaints mentioned above. This often happens

for sub-assertive people. This creates self-destructive tendencies and mechanisms that cause/promote depression or addictions.

The detour through God as a biblical therapeutic solution (Principle D and 2 in the diagram).

learn your TESTIMONY DR. K. BLATTER: LEARNING TO LOVE YOUR ENEMIES (PRINCIPLE 2).

Dr. Kurt Blatter says: "The majority of doctors in my immediate and distant environment were hostile to the plan I devised to found a Christian clinic in Switzerland, which wanted to build its practice entirely on biblical therapeutic truths. Wherever they saw an opportunity, I was opposed. Negative feelings apparently accumulated among my colleagues; during a regional meeting, in which I also participated, a colleague stood up and described me as the greatest 'cult brother' there was.

> *My heart almost stopped, I was ashamed; the insult and disgust of these fellow doctors had a direct effect on my organs. I immediately felt a terrible inner turmoil; at the same time I felt a pain in my chest as if a knife had been stabbed into it.*

My mucous membrane felt terribly dry and everything in the area around my larynx tensed to such an extent that I noticed that I no longer had full control over my voice. My first thought was: “I'll make him pay for that!”. After all, I knew some negative events from his life.

I wanted to respond to this immediately. However, fortunately the physical symptoms described worked as a warning signal. At the same time I recognized the course of my aggressive actions, which were ignited by the aggression of others (principle 1). I also knew the therapeutic tool from Matthew 5:44 (Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you). At the moment when my voice finally failed me, I activated the “but, nevertheless, of faith” and cried out, just as Peter, when he was about to sink, cried out to God for help. I was strengthened internally, after all my strength threatened to disappear. I began with silent prayer for the aggressor and blessed him in the name of the Lord. That was what me

The matter was saved for the time being and I was even able to eat the meal that came afterwards.

'Sect brother'

The following days a fact I already knew became a new experience. Whenever I heard the word 'cult brother' in my heart and the same scene played out again before my inner eyes, my heart started to beat faster. My stomach contracted so annoyingly that I no longer had an appetite for food and felt uncomfortably bloated after the meal, with stomach pain. A typical psychosomatic pattern after a psychological injury, and new symptoms, which serve as a warning (Principle C). During such moments I began to pray again for that colleague; I experienced that my disgust for him changed into compassion for his situation and gradually I developed a loving attitude towards him.

Principle 2 in the outline (according to Matthew 5:44) began to work itself out within me. Suddenly I no longer had a problem meeting this colleague and the Lord arranged three meetings with him. The first meeting took place about a year and a half after the unpleasant event. I traveled from Langenthal to St. Gallen, where I was going to give a lecture. That colleague was waiting for the train on the platform. I did not know in which direction he wished to travel, nor in what class. That's why I prayed: “Lord, will You ensure that this colleague will travel first class to Zurich.” I traveled first class because I wanted to review my lecture. I was the first to settle into a compartment. The colleague actually came to sit with me and during the trip, according to his wishes, a conversation arose about God, the world and Christ.

The second meeting took place again on the train. This time I traveled in second class in the opposite direction to Bern. The colleague was also standing on the platform and my prayer was: “Lord, let it be that the colleague travels in the same direction and in second class.” This actually happened then. Once again he was in the same compartment as me. Again he asked me questions about faith, Christ and God.

A third meeting followed at the cemetery. It was December 24th and I wanted to take flowers and candles to the grave of our recently deceased daughter. A conversation arose in front of the gate with that colleague, who had moved into a new house nearby. He wanted to know why I was visiting the cemetery. When I told him about our daughter, he started crying. “Oh, you know,” he said, “I also have a daughter buried here.

She died when she was twenty." There we stood, in the cold evening light, and we cried together. On Christmas Day I wrote him a note, quoting the following verse. "Bear one another's burdens, thus fulfilling the law of Christ." My colleague replied with a friendly, short note.

Conclusion: If my natural behavior, namely to stand up against this 'enemy' and to fight against the injustice I suffered, had been discussed, these encounters would never have taken place. Compare it to "heaping coals of fire" (Proverbs 25:22, Romans 12:20). Fiery coals are then a beneficial irritation that can lead to reflection on one's own actions.

JESUS RESPONSE TO AGGRESSION

Calming down from a difficult emotion plays an important role in the development and progression of aggression, with inner peace as the absolute benchmark.

> *Self-destruction mechanisms are always accompanied by very intense internal unrest. This restlessness also produces psychosomatic disturbances in the organism as a whole.*

It is equivalent to enormous tension in the human being, which consumes a lot of energy. Jesus also laid a therapeutic foundation by saying: "Learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" and in 1 Peter 2:23 we read: "But he committed it to Him who judges righteously" (compare this with the detour

through God). The conviction of Jesus by the high council is a living testimony (Matthew 26:57-69).

If you analyze this passage, you will discover that there is a whole range of aggression towards Jesus. They seized Him, they tried to find false testimony against Jesus in order to kill Him. Many false witnesses came forward. They found nothing. Finally, two performed. They spoke. The high priest stood up. He said, "I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou art the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus replied, "You say so." Then the high priest tore his clothes.

He said, "Behold, now you have heard the blasphemy, what think you?" They said, "He is worthy of death." Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists. They wrapped a cloth around his eyes. They said, "Prophesy to us, O Christ, who is it that struck you?" In the midst of this hostile action with a clear objective, namely to get rid of that troublesome Jesus of Nazareth, stand the remarkable words about Christ: But he held his peace. If the word silent referred to the fact that Jesus was silent, this would be a linguistic doubling (Hendiadys). This was not God's intention; God's Word mainly wants to point out to us a psychological aspect of the inner man, Jesus was silent but at the same time remained completely calm inwardly. He was also internally immune to the appallingly aggressive actions and accusations of the Supreme Court. Even on the cross, suffering as no man has ever suffered, He was not tempted to counter-aggress or curse His enemies but said, "Father, forgive them." A perfect response that remained true to His perfect identity.

> *Healing of the inner man is always connected with contact with God and an inner peace created by Him, which is made possible through Matthew 5:44 (Psalm 109:4, Psalm 62:9, 1 Peter 2:23).*

6.5 JESUS, PERFECT MAN, PERFECT GOD

If you yourself are faced with situations in which one of the four qualities above could play a decisive role, simply ask yourself, "What would Jesus do?" Pray for wisdom. Realize that Christ is your new identity once you have accepted Him. In Him is the new life that changes everything. What does this mean in practice?

Download the e-book about Jesus, fully human, fully God, in the digital learning environment and study the content or download it from www.complementaire-gezondheid.nl. Chapter 7 contains a major meditation assignment, connected to the theme of identity in Christ. Chapter 6.6 is also a preparation for this.

6.6 Seeing what God sees, seeing with your heart, see also the image Aggressor, I, child, God

To see as God sees, to see with your heart, is a learning process (see also image Aggressor, I, child, God). That means we don't acquire that skill through a one-time prayer. We need to practice that skill. Each at our own level. We will not all have to endure the trials of, for example, Paul and Stephen. The latter saw heaven opened at the moment he was being stoned (Acts 7:56). We must first learn to bring our small and big problems to God in our quiet time, but also during the day. We must learn to walk the path to Him. As you read this, imagine a problem you have. This could be a problem with your health, finances, a relationship problem, depressive thoughts or something else that is bothering you. Do you have an example? What is the most natural way to tackle the problem? Most people will keep thinking about the problem until they solve it. If that doesn't work, the problem will get worse. The problem comes to dominate them, so to speak. Some will continue to struggle with the problem even at night, with the result that the problem continues to worsen. It's getting more and more

attention and if we cannot solve it we risk being overwhelmed by the problem. Do you recognize that?

We have seen above that you need to take some distance from your problem and look at it from a different perspective. That other perspective for a Christian is the perspective of Christ. Col. 3:1-3 says: 'If ye have been risen with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on things on earth. For you are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

When we are able to see the problem from Christ's perspective, we can deal with it more easily.

We then come into His possibilities to solve the problem or to give us strength to deal with it in a good way. Jesus Christ is often depicted as the good shepherd who takes the lost sheep on His shoulders or as a Father who takes His child in His arms. Yes, you may say, that is easy to say, but in practice it is more difficult. That's right, it is a skill that you have to learn. We must learn to go to Christ. To learn this well we have to do two things. First of all, take action by resolving to entrust your problem to God. Ps. 37:5 'Commit your way to the Lord and trust in Him and He will make it happen.' At the same time you will have to exercise trust. In Ps. 125:1 says: 'Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but endures forever.' That trust is, in addition to the act of will, also a learning process, we must learn to trust Him in all respects, that does not happen automatically. We have seen that the Bible sees our new life as a plant, as a unity of life with Christ. If that plant is nourished properly, it will eventually bear fruit. Gal 5:22 names that fruit that consists, among other things, of self-control, patience, love, but also of trust (Greek: pistis).

If we practice always taking the detour to our problems through Him, we will receive more trust as a fruit.

It is trust that goes far beyond our natural thinking and places us in God's possibilities. It is also expressed so beautifully in Psalm 84:5-8. "Blessed are those who dwell in Your house, they praise You continually" (gratitude is another brain skill). Blessed is the man whose strength is in You. In whose heart are the highways. As they pass through a valley of barrenness it turns into an oasis for them, rich blessing comes down like rain. They continue with increasing vigor to appear before God in Zion."

It says: in whose hearts are the beaten paths.

The way is the heart or mind of man to the heart or Mind of God.

That road must be paved.

In the beginning the path is difficult. Compare it to a forest path with many bushes, only when there is a lot of walking does it become easier to walk. It is the same with walking the path to the heart of God. Only

when we have the ability to walk that path a lot can we see our problems and circumstances from the heart of Jesus, see with our heart. From that position the Lord can make it clear to us whether or not we should act and how (compare the way Elisha acted). Sometimes this leads to a final miraculous solution, sometimes God gives us strength to endure the thorn in the flesh.

RESULT

We realize that we often only see part of the reality in a problem. We often ask God for advice in a specific situation. “Lord, what can I do in this problem with that annoying colleague, neighbor and so on?” We become aware that we are present in some situations for a specific purpose. “Lord, please help me to see my friend, child, acquaintance with Your eyes.” We often find comfort and experience peace in difficult moments of the day. Because we see with the heart of Jesus, respond like Jesus, we are also able to respond with complete self-control, which is, after all, the fruit of His Spirit, His Heart.

When I remember the moments where God spoke to me in the past, it is easier to make contact in the here and now through prayer and/or thanksgiving. This can also be done during the day, at work, on the street, at home in church. Sometimes God gives us wise words that are just needed in a situation.

Sometimes God shows his closeness through humor. My father-in-law's name is Nagtegaal. A pastor to whom my wife and I have come to believe was working in his garden. He used to speak to God and said to God: “How beautiful it would be if I could see a nightingale right now.” At that same moment the phone rang, my father-in-law on the other side said: “Yes, here with Nightingale!”

That was the beginning of our conversion story! God can encourage us through the beauty of nature where we can be aware of his creative power. Through the love we have for our children we can become aware of God's infinite love for us, as His children. In Mat.17:2-7 Peter, James and John were walking with Jesus. Suddenly He was transfigured, His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became white as light. Suddenly Moses and Elijah appeared. In verse 7 it says that Jesus came near and touched them and said, “Get up, don't be afraid.” They looked up and only saw Jesus. Much more was happening in reality and Jesus showed this to his disciples. They tasted something of heavenly reality while still in their earthly bodies. Perhaps our daily experiences

not always comparable to these mountaintop experiences. But if we actively talk to Jesus along the way, He will be able to show us more and more what He sees: Seeing with the heart of Jesus. (Ps 36:10)

6.7 MENTAL (IM)MATURITY

Finally, in preparation for the next chapter, I would like to discuss here one of the biggest problems in personal lives, but also in churches, namely: a lack of spiritual maturity. This often causes relationship problems and even church divisions. Immaturity among members but also among the leadership of churches and Christian institutions often has disastrous consequences.

In the book 'Being a Man with Joy' by Jim Wilder and other books about the LIFE Model, the mental development process is discussed in detail. Natural development in adulthood has many similarities with mental development. The LIFE Model lists 19 brain skills (see Chapter 10) that lead to lasting, spiritual and joyful changes in relationships and character development. The special thing about the LIFE Model is that it develops growth in spiritual maturity in communities in a very practical way.

An immature brain

> *Hopelessness, chaos and reactive actions characterize an immature brain and therefore also immaturity in actions.*

The immature control center in the brain (prefrontal cortex) does not know how and where to focus our attention and thus wastes the most valuable part of our brain, namely our attention! Immaturity is built on

bad timing, it pays attention to the wrong things at the wrong time. Immaturity develops because of the tasks that come before

are trying to process the development needed at the wrong time and sequence. In other words, it is not trained and synchronized in its development. Proper sequencing of training with a well-timed introduction of evolving tasks creates hopeful and creative thoughts. In this way, our brain focuses its attention on solving the problem, rather than choosing the escape route of avoidance. Poorly timed, developmental steps lead

to hopelessness and chaos. Instead of persevering, the brain chooses to escape from problems without solving them. Words become tempting to get quick results and not walk the path of understanding.

Immature people are often blocked in their reactions to others or by circumstances. Some give in too often, while others hold back too often. As a result, circumstances often determine what gets their attention and what is important to them. Due to a lack of guidance, narrow-mindedness and hopeless responses, there are many specific skills that they lack in their capacity.

The best course of action for a growing brain is a gradual increase in complexity over life. As our identity grows, more and more parts of our lives fit together into a whole and work together in a well-adapted manner. We act and feel the same 'inside' as 'outside'. When we were younger, we were different at school, at play, or at home. We changed when we are being watched. We were afraid when we stood in front of a large group or when our clothes or hair were in a mess.

Stress, fear, guilt, confusion and worry are signals that our identity is not coherent. If our explanations for who we are and how life works keep changing depending on the situation, we are inconsistent. When powerful emotions come into play, they put tremendous pressure on our flawed explanations of our behavior. Our explanations no longer work in favor of something we can no longer deny.

Then the two halves of our brains will not synchronize. Our explanations (left brain) are not complex or consistent enough to explain our experiences (right brain)

to bring together. The problem is too intense to ignore. We feel pain and confusion.

Faced with unsynchronized hemispheres, people will always try to promise more than they can deliver. As a result, they often become more rigid, narrow-minded, inflexible or compulsive. Others will try to synchronize their thoughts through emotions and experiences. Synchronizing does not mean that we allow our emotions and experiences to become our entire reality, it rather means that we try to reach the intrinsic explanations of reality. By synchronizing our emotions, we learn to suffer appropriately and yet remain the same consistent person through all increasingly difficult and complex situations. Paradoxically, those who synchronize with their emotions develop better structure than those who only structure their thoughts. You then think that stress, guilt, anxiety and confusion are not very painful and that you are right. However, the vast majority of fragmented identities suffer from more painful conditions.

> *Growing into adulthood means that the demands we face are 'synchronized' in our development so that we remain hopeful, purposeful and controlled as we learn new skills.*

Each stage of development involves learning new skills appropriately while developing these new skills must be synchronized with the best age for growth to do so. Instead of always reacting to others about our circumstances, we act in a way where we are and remain ourselves. Our control centers are well trained.

MINDSIGHT: WHAT IS YOUR Helicopter View?

Psychiatrist Daniel J. Siegel has written a groundbreaking book on mindsight.

> *Mindsight is a new way of looking at thoughts, brain, relationships and consciousness. Our thoughts determine our experiences and vice versa.*

Daniel Siegel shows how we can literally reprogram our brains so that we learn to think differently and influence our mental and emotional experiences. Using the method that Siegel calls mindsight, you learn to look at your thoughts and feelings from a distance (self-reflection). According to him, this is how you create a new consciousness. He speaks, among other things, about the triangle of well-being formed by the mind, the brain and relationships. It is a remarkable book. Although it is certainly not a Christian book, Siegel is also looking for the meaning of the human mind and its influence on our thinking and behavior. However, many of the practical examples of the book could be filtered biblically, if we define the spirit of man among Christians as the consciousness that has the ability to communicate with God's Spirit. From there, truly innovative changes are possible in a Christian life. The problem is recognizable, we as Christians are often stuck in a limited way of thinking and understanding our personal faith experiences. From the Bible we recognize the broad outlines of God's plan for us and the world. We often interpret situations and relationships from our own thinking and forget that it is precisely the characteristic of Christians that we are connected to God in community and live with our spirit connected to God's Spirit and in that sense we must increasingly attune our thinking, feelings and behavior to Him.

> *A mature Christian becomes more and more dependent on Him as he walks with God, rather than dealing with all situations and problems alone.*

In that sense, Siegel is right that we sometimes have to learn to distance ourselves from our own thinking. Biblically translated: we must learn more and more to be aware that we must tune in to what God says through the Holy Spirit, how we should respond to situations and relationships and problems. How we should seek His will and become more and more sensitive, then He can renew our thinking and our brain. That's pretty much what Coursey describes as a skill of learning to see what God sees, to see with your heart.

Is there a reality?

Reality is a much discussed topic these days. From a postmodernist perspective, people believe more in a perception of reality and hardly in an existing reality. Elon Musk, the promoter of the automatic electric car and the organizer of a future Mars trip, does not even believe that there is a reality, but that we live in a simulation program like the one filmed in the Matrix. Hinduism also teaches that we live in a make-believe world (Maya). But the Bible teaches that there is indeed a real world created by God. A world that we cannot comprehend with our own minds and senses alone, but as it says in Heb. 11:1,3: 'Faith lays the foundation of all that we hope for, it convinces us of the truth of what we do not see. Through faith we come to the insight that the world is ordered by the Word of God, that the visible came from the invisible.'

This does not happen automatically in a Christian life, but is a skill that we must learn.

> *We can see the reality of the world when we are connected to the Spirit who created the world. This requires that we always seek contact with the Holy Spirit and always focus on Him in situations, relationships and stressful circumstances.*

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF OBSERVATION AND INTERPRETATION

In 2 Kings 6: 8-23 it is about Elisha's actions in the war against Aram. The king of Aram thought he had a traitor in his midst who was betraying his war strategy to the king of Israel. But it was the prophet Elisha who, in prayer with God, always saw through the plans of the king of Aram and warned the king and the people of Israel. The Arameans decided to surround Dotan, the city where Elisha was hidden, with a large army, with the intention of killing him. When Elijah's servant got up in the morning and went out, he saw that the city was surrounded by an army with chariots and horses. Elisha said, “Do not be afraid, there are more of us than they are,” and he prayed that God would open his servant's eyes to the real world. He then saw that the army of God that protected Elisha was much greater, he saw that the hills surrounding Elisha were full of horses and chariots of fire.

Elisha saw the real reality through contact with God. When she wanted to kill Elisha, Elisha prayed for the Lord to blind them and led them to the other city in Samaria. Then their eyes were opened again. They were in the power of the king of Israel. He asked the prophet Elisha, “Shall I kill them?” (vs21) Then the spiritual maturity of Elisha becomes apparent, saying: “No, do not kill them. Have you taken them captive with your own weapons, that you might kill them? Set a meal before them, that they may eat and drink, and let them return to their master.” From that moment on, the Aramean bands no longer raided Israel. Through his communication with God, Elisha comes to understand that the army of God is much greater than what appears in the visible world. That it is upon his prayer

becomes visible is for the benefit of his servant, Elisha knows it, he does not need proof. He trusts in the Unseen. And when he has given his enemies within his power, he again makes a strange decision in the eyes of the prevailing thinking at the time. He says 'Do not kill them,

but even gives them food and then sets them free.' That is a decision he motivates as being from God, through his mature identity and ability to see his stress and world from God's perspective he gives this advice to the king of Israel. Because he listens to him and God and obeys in a special way, God's Word says that from then on no more Aramean bands raided Israel!

There are many examples of biblical heroes who have learned to see what God sees, to see with their heart, such as King Hezekiah 2Chron.32(:7,8), Dan.10:7, 1John4:4, or Paul who, as a prisoner in the dungeon of Rome, says: “I am a prisoner in Christ (Eph.3:1).” That is his reality, because he has learned not only to look at the visible things and to judge his situation from the perspective and reality of God. Many of us would not have this perspective in that situation. It is a testament to Paul's maturity that he does have that vision.

Hebrews 12:2 says: 'Look to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. For the joy that was set before Him, He took up a cross and did not count the shame: now He sits at the right hand of God's throne.' Jesus is the perfect example of a perfect human being who did not look at the visible, but through his constant communication with the Father saw the real reality in the visible and invisible world and learned to be obedient and dependent to see as the Father sees. The knowledge that in His life He is completely connected to the Father in heaven caused Him to make that mature decision. In his complete dependence on the Father he finds his strongest identity. In Romans 6 verse 5 the Statenvertaling states that the believer has become a plant with Christ, a unity of life, the awareness of this and learning to act accordingly is a skill that leads to a strong identity, namely: 'Seeing what God sees, looking with your heart', looking with the eyes of faith!

For a further elaboration and description of Jesus as perfect man and perfect God, you can download the article Jesus God and man from the website www.complementaire-gezondheid.nl/artikelen-complementair. On this website you will find many other articles that are interesting in connection with complementary health.



COMMUNICATION IN THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

Spr. 18:21 - On the tongue are both death and life, and whoever prefers either will reap the benefits.

The book of Proverbs gives us the application of the wisdom of God, who created the heavens and earth, to the various facets of life in this world of confusion and decay. In this book of the Bible, God determines us by His immense grace by applying His Wisdom to the circumstances of our practical lives. He shows us with His insight what the consequences are of all the paths in which a person could walk. To one who is subject to the Word, means are given to avoid the way of self-will and the foolishness of the heart. The heart alone is incapable of understanding the significance of many actions that it dictates to us. Proverbs directs us to Wisdom and Prudence to protect us. There are many lessons about communication in the book of Proverbs. It is a practical and poetic book, it is not about 'one-liners' but about the knowledge and wisdom of the Lord (Prov. 8:8-9). We must not forget that it is part of all Scripture, which Paul says is inspired by the Holy Spirit and useful for teaching and education. Christ is the personification of the wisdom of God, as can be read in Proverbs 8. God communicates through the Word (the Logos) and the Holy Spirit

writes the words in our hearts. Only when we have received that Spirit can God fully communicate through the Word. In Proverbs 1:1-4 we see that He wants to teach us as a Father. According to Proverbs, there is an intimate relationship between our heart and our speech. In Proverbs 6:14 this is expressed in the saying: “What our heart is full of, that is what our mouth overflows with.” In Proverbs we are always told to hold the words in our hearts (Prov. 4:20-27). This means that the words must come from deep inside us, or more simply: words that we believe. To do this, we need to fill our interior with the words of God, guided by the Holy Spirit. After all, faith comes from hearing the Word of God. Spr. 16:23 puts it this way: The heart of a wise man makes him speak wise words, and they are an abundance of wise lessons. The Proverbs of Solomon is not a book of 'tips and tricks' but communication that is peppered with faith. Your words spoken silently to yourself, to your heart and mind, or spoken aloud to others, are the symptoms of your heart's diagnosis. It is not what goes into the mouth that makes a person unclean, but what comes out of the mouth!

7.1 Our words have power!

They can sow discord or bring healing.

Spr. 12:18 - Some strike with their hurtful words like a sword, but what the wise say does not hurt and is beneficial. Someone who tells the truth will always survive, deception is only a temporary matter, because honesty lasts the longest. Words can cause damage or give life.

Spr. 11:9 - The hypocrite with his words overthrows his neighbor, but the righteous are not deceived nor deceived by such a hypocrite.

Spr. 15:4 - Sound words are like a tree of life; however, wrong words do damage.

7.2 The source of our words is important

They must be rooted in truth

Spr. 6:12 - You can easily recognize a rascal and a troublemaker; you just have to hear him out.

Spr. 6:14 - What his heart is full of, his mouth overflows with.

They must not breed strife. Of course, this does not mean that someone cannot have conflicts. They should not make that fight bigger.

Spr. 17:14 - The beginning of a quarrel is like a dam breaking; so do not meddle in it until you and others are mixed up in it.

Spr. 20:3 - It is an honor for a man if he avoids quarrels; only a fool gets involved in disputes.

Spr. 26:21 - As coals kindle the fire, and the wood kindles the fire, so a quarrel kindles disputes.

7.3 We must learn the skill of listening effectively

Spr. 7:24 - Well, children, listen to me. Don't let your heart wander.

Spr. 8:33 - Hear my teachings and become wise; do not withdraw from my teaching

Spr. 20:12 - The Lord has made many things, eyes to see and ears to hear.

Spr. 15:31 - He who listens to constructive reproof is in wise company.

Spr. 18:13 - Whoever answers before the question is finished is considered a fool.

Spr. 18:15 - He who has understanding wants to increase in knowledge; he is keen on wise words.

Spr. 15:32 - He who rejects rebuke discredits himself, but he who listens gains understanding and wisdom.

Spr. 19:20 - Listen to counsel and rebuke, so that in the end you may become wise.

7.4 We are encouraged to think before we speak

Spr. 16:32 - A patient man is better than a strong man, and he who controls himself is stronger than the man who takes cities.

Spr. 21:23 - Whoever controls his mouth and tongue will keep himself safe from trouble.

Spr. 26:4 - Do not obey the words of a fool, lest you stoop to his level.

Spr. 29:20 - Do you know someone who speaks rashly? Such a person is more stupid than a fool.

Spr. 15:28 - A righteous man thinks before he speaks, but a wicked man spouts filthy words.

7.5 Proper timing of our words is necessary

Spr. 15:23 - An appropriate answer makes the speaker happy and how good a word is in its time!

Spr. 25:11 - Good and appropriate words are like golden apples on silver platters.

Spr. 15:1 - A gentle answer calms anger, but a tactless statement stirs up anger.

7.6 We can also talk too much

Spr. 10:12 - Hatred leads to unrest and quarrels; however, love covers all human failings.

Prov.11:13 - He who spreads gossip makes known secrets; but a tactful and trustworthy man covers up such a matter.

Spr. 13:3 - He who restrains his tongue preserves life; but speaking lightly is punished.

Spr. 17:27,28 - One who uses his understanding restrains his tongue; he is thoughtful and astute. For a fool who shuts his mouth is considered wise; considered sensible, because he says nothing.

Spr. 18:2 - A fool has no need of understanding, his foolish heart is open.

Spr. 20:19 - A gossiper makes known things that should be kept secret; Therefore, do not interfere with people who elicit statements from you.

7.7 The tone makes the music

Spr. 17:9 - Whoever has been treated unfairly, but does not make a fuss about it, promotes love. But he who pulls old cows out of the ditch loses even his best friend.

Spr. 15:1 - A gentle answer calms anger, but a tactless statement stirs up anger.

The Lord helps with the right tone and answers

Spr. 16:1 - A man can plan anything, but the Lord determines the course of events.

Spr. 25:15 - An authority is persuaded by gentle patience; a kind word softens even the hardest heart.

7.8 Our communications must be truthful

Spr. 12:17 - He who speaks the truth clearly shows what has happened; but a false witness distorts the matter.

Spr. 12:19 - One who speaks the truth will always stand; deception is only a temporary matter, because honesty lasts the longest.

Spr. 12:22 - The Lord detests lies, but he who lives truly finds favor in the sight of God.

Spr. 16:33 - Kings must love righteousness, they love people who are righteous.

Spr. 19:5 - A false witness will not be acquitted; a liar will not escape punishment.

Spr. 26:18 - He who throws his arrows and threats around him without cause, can be compared to someone who deceives his neighbor and then says, “Oh, I did it in jest, didn't I?”

Spr. 19:5 - A false witness will not be acquitted, a liar will not escape punishment

7.9 Find good advisors

Spr. 24:6 - Because through good consultation you can decide the war in your favor, reliable advisors are the basis of victory.

Spr. 1:25 - You have rejected my counsel, and you have rejected my admonition

Prov.1:30 - They ignored my advice and shrugged at my admonitions.

Spr. 19:20 - Listen to counsel and reproof, so that in the end you may become wise.

Spr. 20:18 - Good advice puts thoughts into action. Only start the fight after consultation.

Spr. 22:19,20 - I pass on this wisdom to you, so that you learn to trust the Lord in everything. Have I not written you high things, full of wise advice and deep insight?

Spr. 27:9 - Fragrant oil makes the heart glad, like the good advice one friend gives to another.

7.10 Tell people what they need to hear, not just what they want to hear

Spr. 29:5 - A man who puts syrup on his neighbor's mouth deceives him.

Spr. 28:23 - He who is rebuked will find that it is good for him, and that it is better than being reprimanded.

Spr. 27:6 - The rebukes of one who loves you come from friendship, but kindness from one who hates you comes from deceit.

Spr. 14:25 - An honest witness can save lives, a false witness can get someone killed through deception.

Spr. 9:8 - Do not rebuke the mocker, lest he hate you; But rebuke a wise man, and he will be grateful to you.

7.11 Use edifying, constructive words

Spr. 15:4 - Sound words are like a tree of life, but wrong words cause damage.

Spr. 16:24 - Kind sayings are like a honeycomb, sweet to the mind and medicine to the body.

Spr. 12:25 - Worry makes a man's heart sad, but an encouraging word makes it glad again.

7.12 Beware of 'sinful' anger

Spr. 29:11 - A fool shouts in anger, but a wise man restrains himself and calms down.

Spr. 26:26 - Even if a person tries to mask his hatred, his evil intentions will be exposed.

Spr. 8:13 - To fear the Lord is to hate perverseness, pride, arrogance, and wickedness; I also hate a dirty mouth that squirts.

Spr. 17:19 - Whoever loves quarreling and discord shows love for sin.

Spr. 14:17 - A hothead is quick to do stupid things, and a man who does mean things is hated.

7.13 Do not seek revenge

Spr. 20:22 - Do not say that you will avenge the injustice, but rather wait on the Lord, for He will be with you.

7.14 Be humble

Spr. 14:21 - He who looks down on his neighbor sins, but happy is he who has compassion on those in need.

Spr. 16:19 - It is better to be modest with kind people than to share the spoils with proud people.

Spr. 29:23 - Pride goes before a fall, but a humble person is esteemed.

7.15 FEAR GOD

Spr. 3:7 - Do not rely on your own judgment, but fear the Lord and avoid evil.

Spr. 13:13 - Whoever despises God's word and His teachings will suffer dearly; whoever reverently respects the commandment will find God's mercy.

Spr. 24:21 - Fear the Lord and the king, my son, and do not join rebels and rebels.

Spr. 28:14 - Blessed is he who fears the Lord, but he who rebels will be destroyed.

Spr. 31:30 - Outward beauty is deceptive and disappears, but a woman who fears the Lord is worthy of admiration and praise.

7.16 ADDRESS YOUR MISTAKES HONESTLY

Avoid self-justification and acknowledge that you make mistakes.

Spr. 14:9 - Every fool will cover up his sins, or perhaps not take them seriously, but honest people will be honest about what they did wrong.

Things that God hates (considers an abomination) in Proverbs

Violent people (Prov. 3:31)

Pride, lying, murdering, scheming, eager to do evil, false witness, sowing discord (Prov. 6:6-19)

Those who are unfaithful (Prov. 12:22)

The sacrifice of the wicked (Prov. 15:9)

The thoughts of the wicked (Prov. 15:26)

Those who are proud (Prov. 16:5)

Those who judge unjustly (Prov.17:15)

The way of the wicked (Prov.15:9)

Gifts to bribe/corruption Spr. 15:27

Deceitful scales, therefore deceit in trade Prov.11:1; 16:11; 20:10

Unlawful gain Prov.1:19

From: Life, practical lessons from the Book; Jongbloed Heerenveen, 2001

Contradictions in communication in the book of Proverbs

Knowledge (of the Lord)

opposite

Ignorance

Wisdom

Folly

Clarity

Ambiguity

Truth

Lies and gossip

Understanding

Misunderstanding

Trust

Distrust

Freedom

Bondage

Growth

Stagnation

Adulthood

Immaturity

Like-mindedness

Twist, to oppose

Unity

Division

Proximity

Removal

Intimacy

Distance

Brotherhood

Enmity

Community

Contempt

Spr. 18:21 - On the tongue are both death and life; whoever prefers either will reap the fruits thereof

> *Summary of principles from Proverbs: obstacles and keys to good communication in (marital) relationships (unknown source)*

Key verses in Proverbs are:

Prov.1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of all knowledge: fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Prov.9:10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and to know the Most Holy One is understanding.

Obstacles:

A. Materialism

If we value material things more than God, it will damage our marriage.

Our relationship with God affects our relationship with our spouse, which then damages our relationship with others, especially our spouse and family.

Giving or sharing material goods is not the only form of love and does not replace it. You can't buy love.

We must place greater value on speaking the truth than on expressing love for our relationship in material things.

B. A critical attitude

A major obstacle in communicating with others is that we quickly tend to judge and judge others.

If we judge at all, our judgment must be just. Realize that only God knows all the ins & outs. Stay humble.

C. Fear

When there are many prejudices, we are afraid to open up to others.

If our fellow man, for example our partner, has difficulty with a correction, it is difficult for us to open up to the other person.

D. Manipulation

Whining, pouting, intimidating or withdrawing to get attention and your way.

No one likes to be manipulated and it only breeds resistance and distrust.

E. Obsession

We live in a busy world, and we don't prioritize the important things.

Our partner and family members in particular need to know that they have our attention.

F. Blunted

Sometimes our marriage and relationships become a drag. Nothing changes, from our speech, food, clothes to the places we go. Happy relationships look for new things to do together.

G. Dishonesty

Dishonesty destroys relationships, especially marriages.

The trust that should be there is thwarted, even the smallest lie is recognized.

Keys for effective communication

A. Be familiar with the other person

Know the other person's preferences.

This is only possible if you spend time together.

B. Be loving and merciful

We should not return evil for evil.

We must love others unconditionally, even if your partner does not.

C. Be transparent

If you want your partner to love you deeply, you have to open yourself up.

There is no room for something the other person does not know.

D. Be trustworthy

E. Be positive; if something isn't important, leave it alone

F. Be sensitive

If we don't experience it that way ourselves, it doesn't mean that others experience it the same way.

We must accept the other person's feelings and help him/her with them.

G. Be an effective communicator.

Pay attention to the other person's (non-verbal) signals, sometimes this means something different than what is said. (See the article about body language of the Lord Jesus on the website www.complementairegezondheid.nl)

H. Be good at listening

In many places it says that Jesus says: “He who has ears, let him listen.”

Don't jump to conclusions, but listen to everything first.

I. Be abundant in prayer.

It's hard to argue with someone you're praying for.

We relax during prayer and remember how to approach our partner.

How should we properly handle conflict?

A. Make it clear what the main point is

Make it clear what you are discussing.

We often argue about different things.

B. Repeat the other person's words

You often hear in a discussion: That's not what I said or meant.

We must make an effort to find out exactly what the other person means and what his/her intentions are.

C. Choose the correct time

Don't use arguments as ammunition when it suits you.

Just before going to sleep is usually not the best time for important conversations.

D. Think before you act

Think about whether discussing this topic will do any good.

Spr. 17:14 - The beginning of an argument is a dam breaking.

E. Try to solve something

When you get angry: don't sin!

F. Attack the problem, not your partner

Distinguish between the behavior and the person.

Your partner must be your conversation partner.

G. Sometimes it is good to hold each other during a discussion

Don't let go of something if you haven't prayed about it (together).

The Proverbs are taken from several translations. Translations of Proverbs. differ considerably from each other. That's because it concerns small sentence units where the larger context is missing.



CONSCIENCE AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH

In Christian spiritual care, there seems to be an increasing tension between pastoral care, psychology and, more recently, neurophysiology. In the past, the moralistic and ethical side was mainly emphasized, for example in the pastorate of Jay Adams, in which awareness of sin, confession and sanctification represented almost all solutions to spiritual problems. Later, many Christian care providers abandoned this one-sided ethical approach and focused much more on psychology, especially developmental psychology, statistics, and they also became increasingly entangled in humanistic psychology. In recent years, due to developments in brain sciences and genetics, problems are increasingly seen as the result of biochemical changes and brain disorders.

> *Aid is becoming increasingly complex. For example, should you approach drinking as a sin problem, a symptom of unresolved trauma, or as a neurological or genetic problem?*

Or rather as a complex problem in which various causes and aspects play a role, and what difference does that make for the guidance? Should assistance be fragmented into different areas?

disciplines that often have a different view of humanity, or is there a holistic biblical model? In this article I want to explore the place and function of conscience in this field of tension.

> *Conscience (German: Gewissen, Greek: syneidèsis, Latin: conscientia, i.e. 'to know with or with oneself') compares a learned or innate ethical norm with a practical situation.*

In education, conscience is developed because experience shows that human tendencies can be kept in check by it. You could also call the conscience the mental capacity to judge. The inner sense of good and evil, the joint propositions and concepts, whether conscious or unconscious, by which man judges the moral value of his own actions, the consciousness of duty, insofar as it even opposes natural wishes and desires.

Biblically, the inner sense of good and evil is strongly related to the relationship and communication with God. Adam and Eve took from the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and set their own thinking and reasoning as the standard. The Tree of Life, connected to God in Christ, is the perfect source of conscience. In the Bible, conscience occupies an extremely important place, both in the liberation and redemption of the entire human being and in communicating with God and getting to know His will. In Hinduism and Buddhism and related humanistic psychotherapies, conscience is no longer related to, for example, guilt before God, but is given the connotation of maya or ignorance, not being enlightened, and in that case it is much closer to a developmental problem than to moral responsibility.

Development of conscience

Every person has a conscience, the realization that you cannot just do everything. It is depicted in cartoons as an angel

that sits on your shoulder and whispers all kinds of things to you. Small children already have a conscience but no impulse control. Society, your faith and upbringing also play a major role in developing your conscience. For toddlers, bans only apply if the father or mother, who has forbidden something, is present. This is called an external conscience. Later they will admonish themselves when they do something that is not allowed. But then do what is 'not allowed'. Around the age of three, the conscience of the 'natural person' develops who quickly blames others, for example the dog that has done something. This is not conscious lying but lying out of fear of 'the punishment'. Around the age of four, children often know what is and is not allowed, and at age six their conscience really develops. Until the seventh year, people have difficulty distinguishing between fantasy and reality. From the age of seven, the child must learn self-control, for example the concept of delayed reward. An experiment in which children were presented

with candy and told that if you leave it for 5 minutes, you will get twice as much in 5 minutes. Children who mastered this best later turned out to be much more successful in society.

We will further see that self-control is an important factor in brain development, conscience formation and life as a whole. Self-control exists when a person can hold on to his identity, who he is, and can overcome all kinds of primitive urges, such as unbridled sex, aggressive and strong feelings, all kinds of passions and self-centeredness, by behaving according to his own self despite all those temptations. In the brain physiology and control of our feelings, the prefrontal cortex is very important and, with a highly developed conscience, it would play a decisive role in the interactions and relationships of the thalamus, amygdala and cingula, and in human thinking. This should lead to a perfect biochemistry in which the 'reward neurotransmitters' such as dopamine, serotonin and endorphins are naturally produced in the right way.

Conscience in the Bible

This skill of self-control of impulses is a biblical fruit and attribute of the Holy Spirit.

After Adam and Eve partook of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the consequences were ultimately murder and manslaughter and humanity was in danger of being destroyed by its own lack of morality and conscience. Knowledge outside of God leads to death, unlike knowledge (fellowship, participation) in God. Knowledge without God is characterized in the Bible as foolishness. The fool says in his heart, “There is no God” (Ps.14:1). Through the gospel of Jesus Christ the fool can become wise again through the wisdom of God, which is foolishness to the world, namely

through the cross (1Cor. 1:24,25). At the new birth, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in our heart, mind (consciousness) and is eternally connected to it (Rom 8:35). The precious blood of Christ cleanses man's mind, intuition, and conscience.

“How much more then will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit was able to offer himself as a sacrifice without spot, cleanses our conscience from deeds that lead to death, and sanctifies it for the service of the living God” (Heb. 9:14).

When Adam and Eve sinned, they felt guilty and hid from God. The gospel of Christ allows us to approach God with boldness. In this way, Christ forever (according to the order of Melchizedek) fulfills a High Priesthood in the innermost Sanctuary, in which He sanctifies our lives with His life and blood. Therefore, through the cleansing blood of Jesus, we have the boldness to stand before God. When our conscience is clean, without unconfessed conscious sin, we can experience full communion and deep inner joy through the Holy Spirit.

“Therefore let us draw near with a true heart (mind) in full assurance of faith, having the body washed-

the one with clean water' (NBV Heb.10:22) A bad conscience is constantly accused, which hinders and paralyzes communion with Christ. When our conscience is not right, our approach to God becomes cramped because we cannot truly believe that God has nothing against us. It robs us of the freedom of communion with Christ. Therefore, a Christian must be cleansed in his conscience from accusations, namely completely cleansed by the blood (the life of Christ), so that there really is no more accusation (Rom. 8:33,34). If we remain conscious of sins, our minds are constantly focused on eliminating them, and there is no power left for heavenly things. Neglecting the voice of the Holy Spirit in our conscience results in a carnal lifestyle.

Conscience and knowledge

A clear conscience does not necessarily mean that the conscience is better than before. It means that by honestly and sincerely confessing sins we can come close to Christ with confidence. As we remain in the Spirit and follow the voice of our conscience, we must remember that conscience is limited by knowledge. After all, the conscience was the 'organ' with which we could distinguish the bad from the good. The knowledge is different for every believer. Some have a lot of knowledge, others less. This is often determined by education and environmental factors. That is why we cannot focus on the standards of the other. A sin unknown to us does not affect the community of a believer. Christians who are young in the faith often think that their lack of knowledge affects their fellowship with Christ. It is important to realize that God does not primarily require knowledge (knowledge of the tree of good and evil) from us, but obedience to His will.

Conscience and judgment

God deals with His children depending on the situation. Because there are different levels of knowledge, something can mean a lot

Christians is hardly a sin, but for other believers it is a serious sin. Therefore, we must “not judge one another” (Luke 6:36). Only the Father is able to estimate our level of knowledge. He doesn't expect mature male power in infants! Christ does not seek experiences of 'old men' among young people in the faith. He wants obedience (based on one's existing knowledge). If the Holy Spirit has not yet made our unconscious sins clear to us, how can we on the basis of our conscience condemn our brother, who may at that moment have a level of knowledge in his conscience that we ourselves had 5 years ago? If we really want to help people, we should not make detailed demands for obedience, but always advise them to follow the dictates of their conscience. As they surrender their will to God, they will equally receive the light of the Holy Spirit and then obey Him.

Conscience and empathy

An important condition for developing a good conscience is empathy. Paul indicates in several places in the Bible that he exercises his conscience before God and people (including Acts 24:16). That exercise of conscience for people has a lot to do with empathy. In addition to a cognitive awareness of right and wrong, a development must have taken place in which one has learned to assign a feeling to events and actions. If this is not done, a person will not be able to tell the difference between a major crime and a minor offense. One can develop a narcissistic personality or an anti-social personality disorder, which used to be called psychopathy. One knows somewhere that one is wrong, but one has no guilt, regret or shame about it. An extreme example is a serial killer who has no trouble with his conscience.

> *Empathy is the ability to empathize with others, which means that you can imagine and feel what your actions do to someone else.*

Emotions often determine what you ultimately do or not do. If you have the experience that something hurts psychologically, you are inhibited from doing the same thing the next time, that pain is, as it were, an inner punishment. Freud claimed that conscience arises when a child internalizes, among other things, the social norms of the parents and society. In sociology this is called socialization. Other scholars argue that conscience is strongly related to the survival of a group or tribe of which one is a part. The philosopher Kant was very resolute in his view: conscience is not the result of social processes, but it belongs to man as an autonomous moral person. For Kant, conscience was proof of the existence of God (Die Kritiek der Praktischen Vernunft). In a sense, Romans 2:15 also speaks of this: 'They show that what the law requires is written in their hearts. Their conscience bears witness to this, and their thoughts, which accuse or even acquit them on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secret deeds of man through Christ Jesus' (Willibrord translation).

Nietzsche has no concern for conscience. It's just faith in authority! For Nietzsche, the free spirit stands for 'Jenseits von Gut und Böse'.

Jan Kerkhofs, emeritus professor at the Faculty of Theology in Leuven, on the other hand, says about conscience:

> *"Growth towards an authentic self and conscience are connected."*

That also seems to be true neurophysiologically.

Conscience as a brain function

The development of conscience can also be approached neurophysiologically. Here I use the article Emotional synchronization from the book 'Being a man with joy' by Dr. Jim Wilder. The control center - the judgment mechanism, in a sense our conscience - of our brain has set itself the task of reminding us how to react as ourselves in all circumstances. The control center of our identity is seen by most scientists as something located in the prefrontal cortex. That's the part you tap on your head when you say someone is crazy! The center assesses stimuli and responds according to the identity of the 'self'. In other words, this is about a smooth synchronization process between inside and outside, regardless of what happens. As soon as something happens, emotions such as joy, sadness, fear, anger, shame, disgust, despair and humiliation arise. Sometimes they arise from within and sometimes they are evoked by others around us. When our control center is undeveloped and disorganized, the synchronization process does not go well and these strong emotions can cause us to lose control of our lives.

> *However, if our control center is strong and well trained, we are able to remain ourselves regardless of the intensity of these feelings.*

The preparation for dealing with all these emergency situations takes place during the first two years of a child's life, at least if the child can fall back on a good relationship and bond with the mother or caregiver. More about that in Chapter 9 (Neurophysiology and the Bible).

A bad conscience is demonstrable in the brain

Unscrupulous murderers do not have a properly functioning frontal cortex that regulates their aggressive emotions. They respond immediately

on their emotions. If a murderer does have a normally functioning prefrontal cortex and can therefore reason that something is not right, a poorly functioning amygdala can still get in the way of normal reasoning. According to Raine, an English neuroscientist, it turns out that many unscrupulous people have a low heart rate. The level of excitement, stimulation is lower than normal. As a result, people look for situations to increase that level. A low heart rate in this category indicates a lack of anxiety. People are less concerned about the consequences of their actions. The ultimate

According to Raine, the murder brain is seen with three abnormalities: a larger stratum driven by reward, a smaller amygdala that does not respond to punishment and poor functioning of the prefrontal cortex. A murderer can still react without conscience, have no compassion for his victims, and afterwards have no remorse for his action. He knows it is wrong but has no feeling about it due to a poorly functioning amygdala. In that sense he doesn't feel any difference between big or small mistakes. Due to the lack of empathy, he will narcissistically respond only to his own needs and not feel what he is doing to the other person. Psychopathic killers feel no guilt or remorse. A Biblical term is a branded (scorched, numb) conscience.

Conscience as a function and exercise in the relationship with God.

The spirit of a person who comes to faith (rebirth) connects with the Holy Spirit. The good conscience is then formed by the Holy Spirit 'who writes the law of God in his heart'. There is a wonderfully beautiful analogy of the way a mother naturally gives the baby joy through non-verbal contact and builds an identity through interactions with the baby (of love, being wanted, etc.). Gradually, the identity of the baby, the toddler, takes shape through the interactions of the educators. This is similar to how Christian identity is built. By continually coming before God, just as a baby continually comes before its mother, the Holy Spirit will teach us an identity in the faith.

to develop in Christ. This happens as we continually “synchronize” with God, cleanse our conscience, come before His throne (presence), and learn to focus on Him to build a Christ-like identity. The Old Testament blessing expresses this beautifully:

> *“May the Lord bless you and protect you. May the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord turn His face to you and give you peace” (Num. 6:24-26).*
>
> *Our conscience is trained by always seeking the Tree of Life (Christ) instead of the tree of good and evil, our own standards or those of our environment. Always seeking His face shapes our conscience, based on His joy.*

Conscience tells us whether the relationship with God and with fellow man is pure. Whether our thoughts and actions come from our own will or from God. With spiritual growth you see that the two are coming closer together. For example, the Holy Spirit can speak to a believer, for example with Paul: “I speak the truth in Christ, my conscience testifying with the Holy Spirit... “ (Rom.9:1). An important secret of a victorious Christian life is a pure, clean conscience. In Acts 23:1 Paul tells the Jewish council that he has walked with a clear conscience before God (see also 2 Tim. 1:3). However, this is a matter of practice, in which every Christian must become proficient (Acts 24:16).

Ultimately, the praise or criticism of people around us should always be viewed with a certain skepticism. They often fail to see the heart. A Christian should not primarily use the testimony of others or of himself as a touchstone for a good life, but the testimony of our living conscience, in which God himself speaks. That is our only benchmark. “For this is our boasting, the testimony of our conscience, that we have lived in the world in holiness and purity of God, not in the wisdom of the flesh, but in the grace of God” (2 Cor. 1:12). Although Paul is quite

might have achieved an impressive record of service, he is well aware that the mere fact that there is a heavenly High Priest who cleanses his sins is a basis of life. All glory is out of the question. In addition to a one-time cleansing through the washing of regeneration (Titus 3:5) for salvation, there is a need for a continuous cleansing of our conscience, which takes place when we have confessed and cleansed the sins that the Holy Spirit points out to us through the conscience. Walking in holiness and grace of God. In this way one can only understand the will of the Lord in life (Rom. 12:1,2).

An important aspect that is mentioned in the Bible when exercising conscience before God and people (which belong together) is found in 1 Peter 3:13,17: 'Sanctify Christ in your hearts, as Lord, always ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that is in you, but with gentleness and fear and with a good conscience, so that whatever evil is said about you, those who call you a good walk in Christ to be reproached, to be put to shame. For it is better to suffer, if the will of God requires it, for doing good than for doing evil." Suffering for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ is a grace (Col. 1:24). This is not a form of asceticism or seeking suffering for ourselves, but a suffering that arises after following God's voice in our conscience. With a cleansed conscience we learn to understand God's voice and will better and better. Sometimes this can mean that we follow a different path than bystanders, yes, even brothers and sisters, expect from us. It can even lead to captivity, torture, and death (Rom. 8:36).

Yet the absolute condition for remaining in the rest of Christ is: “Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts (conscience)” (Heb. 4:7b). Only a good conscience before God and man creates a good testimony. Let us not be deterred (1 Peter 3:15) by slander and threats from the opposing party, even though people try to combat this good testimony. It certainly won't work (verse 16b). Good conduct in other matters cannot influence a bad conscience, and slander cannot disturb a good conscience.

Practicing conscience in sensitivity towards fellow human beings

We have already mentioned that conscience must also be exercised, not only towards God but also in relation to fellow man. That is practicing the right, biblical empathy that is so important for conscience. That relationship of conscience is explained in the Bible by Paul on the basis of the sacrificial meat in those days. For example, many things that are done by 'mature' Christians according to the will of God can become sins if they are indiscriminately copied by 'infants'. More knowledge brings a stronger conscience, and thus greater freedom, while less knowledge, as the cause of a 'weak conscience', often leads to major restrictions. This is clearly indicated to us in the first Corinthian letter when it comes to our attitude towards the sacrificial meat (1Cor. 8:4). Some interpreted the gods as not existing, because only there were

is one God. To them it was meaningless that the meat had been sacrificed to idols. At least it could be eaten. But others, who had long been ensnared in idolatry, saw a strong connection between the sacrificed meat and the god himself.

They would not eat it because their conscience was “yet weak,” and therefore they were defiled by eating the flesh of idols (verse 7). The apostle Paul makes the different points of view clear on the basis of the state of knowledge of conscience (verse 7). The first had more spiritual light and did not sin when they ate the sacrificial meat. For their conscience did not accuse them. The latter did not have this knowledge (inner certainty) and felt guilty when they ate and therefore became guilty. This shows that greater knowledge can increasingly condemn us, but it can also counteract the condemnation of our conscience! We must therefore continue to pray to God for knowledge, because otherwise we will remain narrowed in our conscience, but at the same time that knowledge must remain in humility, otherwise we will become carnal again, just like the Corinthians.

As long as our knowledge is inadequate and conscience accuses us, we must obey this voice at all costs.

It does not help to philosophize that a certain thing is not a sin. That does not give us the right and freedom to act against our conscience. Mind you, our conscience is an acute measure of God's leading within us. We can obey it or sin. What is condemned by conscience is also condemned by God.

So far we have only talked about external things such as food. However, when it comes to spiritual things, our level of knowledge can show similar differences. God deals with us according to our “spiritual age.” With young believers it is often about external things: clothing, food. When young Christians want to follow the Lord, He often requires them to order their outward things in obedience. When there are more experiences with the Lord afterwards, it seems as if our freedoms increase.

But it is precisely the 'further along' Christians who face a great danger. Their conscience is so strong that it threatens to sink into 'insensitivity'. Young believers who want to serve the Lord wholeheartedly obey in many things because their conscience is sensitive and easily guided by the Holy Spirit. Older believers often have so much knowledge that they run the risk of overestimating things with their minds and thus reducing the sensitivity of their conscience. They are tempted to make choices using their minds alone. Thus they become insensitive to the Holy Spirit. This is a hard blow to their religious life. It often takes the freshness out of a believer's walk and causes distance and paralyzes spiritual absorption. Although knowledge is very necessary, we will not have to follow it alone. If we do not pay attention to what our conscience intuitively condemns and put our knowledge in its place, we are walking in the flesh. Who has not also experienced our conscience being disturbed by something that our knowledge considered legitimate? Knowledge is obtained through the search of our mind, but what

is not always led by God's Spirit. In this way it can happen that knowledge and conscience come into conflict with each other. Let everyone who desires to walk spiritually exercise a pure conscience before God and before men, so that there may be full boldness to enter into the innermost sanctuary through the blood of Jesus.

> *If we take into account all the points of view on the development and functioning of the conscience, many sociological, psychological and neurophysiological factors appear to support the biblical view of the conscience.*

Important aspects such as identity formation, impulse control, socialization, self-control, group identity, processing experiences of knowledge and culture, developing empathy, synchronization and brain research and of course, last but not least, spiritual life fit seamlessly into a biblical analysis of conscience. Of course, the biblical view is decisive and not scientific research. The conscience in the Bible is drawn from a spiritual dimension in which man is connected to God. That connection is expressed in the wonderful creation that man is in spirit, soul and body. God is the creator of our bodies, minds and brains!

He gets all the glory: “May the God of peace himself sanctify your lives in every way, and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved pure at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:23).

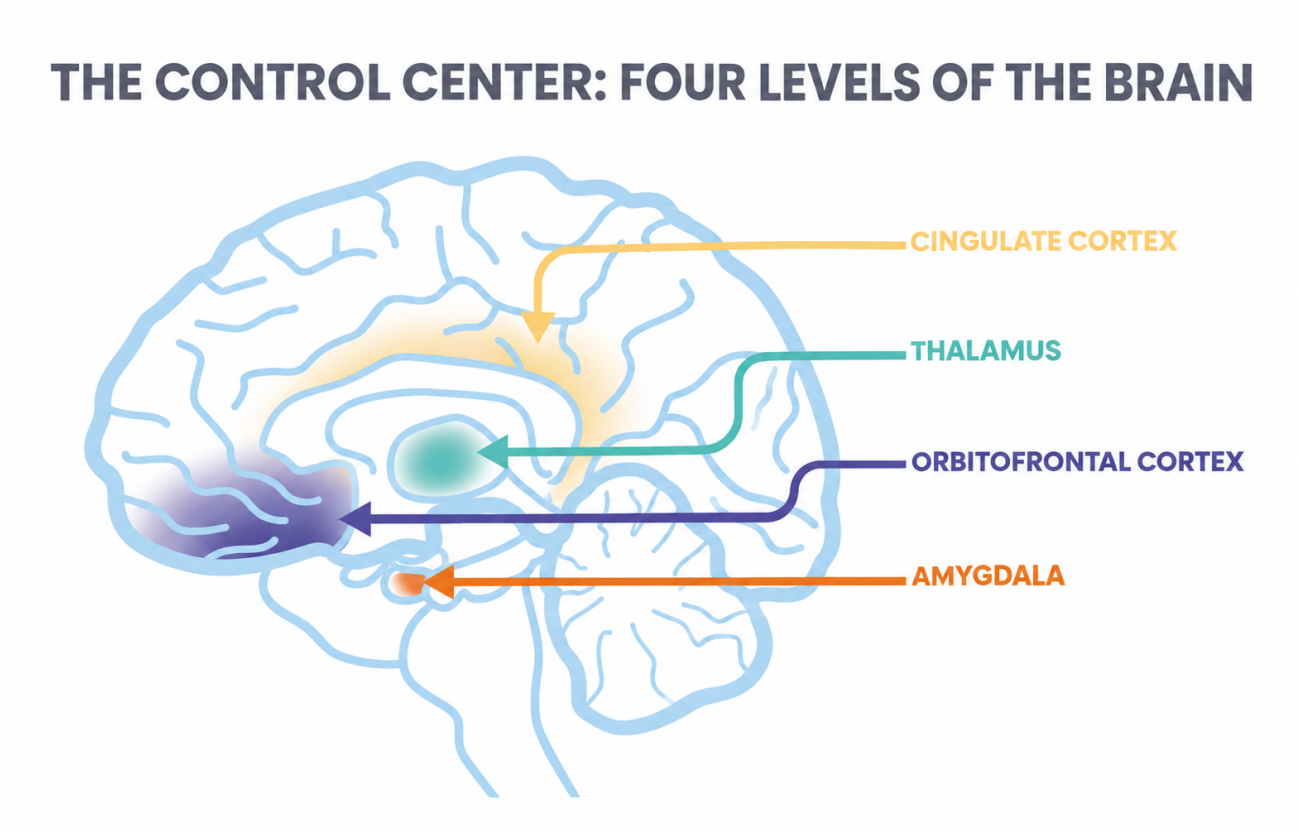
NEUROPSYCHOLOGY AND THE BIBLE

9.1 THE CONTROL CENTER (ROPC) AND THE 4 LEVELS OF THE RIGHT HEMISPHERE

Did you know that our brain has a control center? Yet it is true, even if we are not always aware of it. It is the so-called ROPC (Right Orbital Prefrontal Cortex), the blue part in the image, predominantly located in the right half of the brain, behind the right eye socket. It is the 'command post' in our brain, it controls feelings and it is also where our joy center is located, the blue part in the image.

Our brain sometimes does things that we are aware of and sometimes things that we are unaware of. For example, we are more aware of our body temperature than of our blood pressure. To understand how this works, I first have to explain a little more about the anatomy of our brain (left and right brain hemispheres) and in particular the 4 levels of the right brain where emotions are regulated. Level 5, the left hemisphere, is about thinking and analysis.





First of all, it is important to say that the cerebral cortex (directly under the skull) is the part of our brain in which conscious processes take place and on which our will has an influence. When we then determine that the top two levels of the control center are located in the cerebral cortex, this means that the processes that take place here give us a choice. The bottom two levels of the control center, on the other hand, are located below the cerebral cortex. This means that these parts are located in our subconscious. We cannot influence this with our will. Furthermore, our control center is predominantly located in the right hemisphere of our brain, where our feelings and creativity are located. This means that in a situation in which tense emotions arise, the control center will primarily look for a solution where peace and joy can be experienced again. This strong focus on emotional repair causes a child to act in a relational manner when upset. He is enabled to regulate his feelings, calm down and return to a state of joy, that is, if he has learned how to do all this.

The right hemisphere has an important property that influences the way the control center is trained and functions. What the memories stored here have in common is that we are not aware of them when they are accessed. If we want to perform an action, we need to remember the skill required to do so. The only way I can hold and drink a glass of water is to learn how to do it and then remember how I've done it before. But when I drink a glass of water, I am completely unaware of this memory. All I think is, “I drink.”

In the same way, the control center remembers who we have learned to be and how we have learned to act, but we do not think, "I remember who I am." The only thing we think – if we think about it at all – is: “This is how I am.”

In summary, you could say that the control center (the ROPC, level 4) of our brain aims to remind us how we can respond as ourselves under all circumstances. In other words, this concerns the smooth running of the synchronization process between the inner and outer world, regardless of what happens. As soon as something happens, emotions such as joy, sadness, fear, anger, shame, disgust, despair and humiliation arise. Sometimes they arise from within and sometimes they are evoked by others around us. When our control center is undeveloped and disorganized, the synchronization process does not go well and these strong emotions can cause us to lose control of our lives. However, if our control center is strong and well

trained, we are able to remain ourselves regardless of the intensity of these feelings. The preparation for dealing with all these emergencies takes place during the first two years of a child's life, that is, if he or she can rely on a good mother.

ROPC = 'command post'

> *The ROPC controls the feeling and that is also where the joy center is. From the ROPC you can assess, coordinate and connect. It works like a 'radar and a transmitter'.*

The ROPC is an abbreviation of Right Orbital Prefrontal Cortex; right is self-explanatory, orbital refers to the eye socket, (so it sits behind the right eye socket and continues upward) and prefrontal refers to the front lobe. Although there is also a center on the left, the real control center is on the right.

The ROPC is the part that regulates emotions, also in a physical sense. The ROPC is the only thing that can suppress the limbic system. The limbic system is the control system for emotions such as fear, violence, anger, eating and sexual urges. The relationship is interesting because we now gain more insight into the behavior, emotions and choices that people make.

A human is born without the ROPC and it can grow to 35% of the size of the entire brain by 18 months. This growth depends on the stimulation of the brain in this area, if it is not developed or stimulated you often find atrophy, or breakdown.

There are many people with severe depression, post-traumatic stress, autism or other psychiatric illnesses who have an underdeveloped ROPC. At the peak of bonding, mother and child smile at each other for eight hours a day! The growth of the ROPC mainly starts at the age of three months, this is the time when many mothers go back to work and take children to daycare and can therefore pay less attention to the baby. Another brain growth spurt occurs at the age of four, when world orientation improves and there is also much more attention for the father.

When it comes to bonds, the age of about fifteen years is important, when the first falling in love can occur that completely absorbs you just by looking at someone. Here too, growth of the ROPC takes place. The birth of your first child or grandchild can also be such a phase. As mentioned, myelination allows growth of the ROPC for the fourth year, more than in any other brain region. It is a very important part of the brain that receives a lot of information, for example the first signal of a stimulus (emotional stimuli).

There is in a sense a hierarchy in nervous systems and the ROCP can in a sense 'shut down' other systems, such as the immune system, pain control and internal transmitters. Such a transmitter that plays a role in brain chemistry is, for example, serotonin. If the ROPC has learned to stimulate neurological circuits correctly at a young age, you will have many more opportunities to function later in the event of depression. If these processes have not been initiated, the brain system has fewer options to act adequately in crisis situations and problems may also arise with regard to the immune system, blood pressure, heart, etc.

When you are angry you can pretend you are not angry, when you are anxious or sexually aroused, what your brain chooses to do at that moment happens. The ability to regulate emotions is therefore neurologically limited in some clients. But you can always learn and grow if the right basic conditions regarding attachment, security and joy are met, more about that later. In any case, the basic settings are determined during baby and toddler time.

At the age of four, the ROCP functions mainly non-verbally and in development is mainly dependent on non-verbal interactions (images, faces). Memory in this section is mainly based on experience and not on what is said. The ROCP is also the image of yourself, your identity is based on three faces. The image of yourself is how others view you. What I have seen in the mother and father who look at me, the ones closest to me, defines who I think I am. If this is mainly based on joy and harmony, there is a good chance that a strongly balanced personality can emerge. We were created to experience joy in being with others.

If you want to do an interesting Bible study on joy, you should do a concordant Bible study on “the face of God.” In the Old Testament, Moses wants to see the face of God. God says this will kill Moses. From a neurobiological point of view alone, you can say that Moses does not have enough joy receptors that can register the joy and happiness of God. We don't have enough capacity and it would 'blow us up'. Now we see everything in shadows, later in our perfect body we will see Him in all His joy and gladness.

GUIDED TOUR OF THE 4 LEVELS

First, let me give you a quick tour of the four levels of the right brain control center. Being able to carefully synchronize brain activity is learned in stages. Each stage represents one

control center level (1 to 4). From bottom to top, this structure works like 'a big learning machine.'

Level 1

This level is about the most basic connections. These connections are very specific and sensory. When Level 1 asks for mother, father does not have to come. If, on the other hand, father wants it, mother is left in control again. Level 1 is located below the cerebral cortex, and therefore does not have a will of its own. Level 1 determines who is in demand and who is not impressive. Our deepest pain and joy come from Level 1. This is also where our connection center lies. When the signal is on, it searches for contact. If it is off, then not. We could therefore also call 1 One our connection switch. When it is on, it radiates from our face: “I want you!”

Level 2

Level 2 is located – just like Level 1 – under the cerebral cortex.

> *This is where the rating center lies, where our experiences are labeled with a rating: good, bad, or scary.*

Once Level 2 has formed an opinion about something, it cannot be changed. In that respect, Level 2 functions as the emotional brain for Level 1 and only cares about what it thinks about something or someone. With the exception of someone in a coma, Level 2 is always alert.

The illustration shows us the brain structures that are often associated with the 4 levels of the control center. There is still some uncertainty as to where some features begin and end, but there is much evidence that they are concentrated in the places marked on the map. Level 1 uses the thalamus

and what are known as the deep limbic structures, such as the basal ganglia. Level 2 mainly takes place in the amygdala. The cingulate cortex contains the mother memory of Level 3. Most attention in science is focused on the orbital prefontal cortex of Level 4. Together, these structures are called the limbic system.

Level 3

> *Level 3 is the main synchronization area of the control center. It is located in the cerebral cortex and is therefore open to interaction with other people, especially those with whom we have built a bond.*

Level 3 is the emotional brain for two people, that is, it can only sync with one other person at a time. The skill to do this is acquired between the second and ninth month of a baby's life, in the relationship with its mother.

Level 3 syncs a lot of things. Under the guidance of a good mother, it learns to synchronize the lower and higher levels of the brain, both the levels below and within the cerebral cortex.

Level 3 not only synchronizes the different lobes of the brain. The brains of the baby and its mother – one brain with the other – are also synchronized here. This is why Level 3 is also called the mother memory, because this is where synchronization takes place with the mother. When mother and child are attuned in

this way, it means that the mother's Level 3 has been downloaded into the child's mother memory. The mother's more developed brain has copied itself into her baby, including what she knows and the way her brain is constructed.

Level 4

> *Level 4 is our conscious identity center. This is the part of the brain that thinks of itself as me. Level 4 is called: ROPC (right orbital prefrontal cortex)*

(right orbital means below the eye socket, prefrontal means at the front of the brain, cortex means the cortex part of the brain). This is where our capacity for flexible thinking, moral behavior, personal preferences, and self-awareness reside. The orbitofrontal cortex knows that it is I who is active and living its life. It is the top level of the control center and — when all levels are properly trained and developed — Level 4 has the final say over what our brain and body do. This ability of Level 4 to maintain “flexibly organized behavior in the face of a high degree of arousal or tension” is what Sroufe calls “a key characteristic of a stable person.” Level 4 is where the ability to organize flexibly resides.

We all go through difficult and painful experiences. Our minds and brains try to process these painful emotions. We begin by attempting to process this pain at levels 1 and 2 of the right hemisphere emotion processing system. These are the levels of the thalamus and amygdala. After these subcortical and therefore unconscious levels, the processing continues to levels 3 and 4, the cingulate cortex and the orbitofrontal cortex, (for further explanation, see the article on emotional synchronization on our website to finally be further processed in large parts of our left hemisphere (, this is level 5). If we have enough capacity in our emotional system and sufficient adult skills and adequate relationships or a community from which we receive support, we can process our painful experiences. We hold on to stable and organized relationships, we remain emotionally and cognitively connected to others

feeling connected', which is often brought about by painful experiences, to return to experiencing connectedness again. We are satisfied with the way we process this and we are able to fit the experiences into our understanding of the world, and have accurate interpretations of the meaning of these painful experiences while respecting ourselves.

9.2 SYNCHRONIZING CONNECTION SWITCHES

Synchronization takes place deep in the brain, at levels 3 and 4. For example, signals travel from the back of the brain in a cycle of 40 times per second to the front of the brain, cycles are sent from the cerebellar vermis from left to right, the speed of the heartbeats is controlled, there are brain waves, day and night cycles and many other types of synchronization activities in the brain. In the midst of all this, a baby's synchronization process with its environment also starts. It starts with establishing a strong bond with a person he sees as his trainer. In developmental psychology, this is called attachment formation. Level 1 of the control center selects this person. When the bonding switch turns on, the baby feels a strong internal urge to bond. What happens next is very important for his development. In fact, one of four types of attachment can develop.

Suture 1: correctly synchronized

When a baby seeks contact, he looks for eyes and makes sounds that a good mother interprets as: “My baby needs me.” His connection switch is on, so hers turns on too. When at any point her baby has had enough contact, he looks away, becomes quiet and lets her know that he needs rest. His mother also follows him in this. This way, his and her connection switch turns on and off at the same time. The Level 2 assessment center then says, “This is good.” With that determination, the baby knows that life is good and that he can feel safe.

Suture 2: always off

When a baby's connection switch turns on, but there is no response from his mother, he experiences this as unbearable pain. Nothing in his life will ever hurt him more than having his reaching out ignored. Adults feel a similar pain when their dog is run over, their child dies, or their spouse runs away with their best friend. The moment the child's need for contact is ignored or rejected, his assessment center says: 'bad'. He will then try to turn off his connection switch again, but because it is located under the cerebral cortex and therefore has a mind of its own, this will not work. The baby's next move will then be to hide the position of his connection switch. Around the age of two, he has developed a pattern in which he pretends to be socially acceptable and hides his real feelings. He is introverted and ignores his parents when they approach him. On the outside he seems independent and insensitive, but deep inside his little heart beats fiercely when he pretends to be big. But by the time he is 13 years old, he has learned to mask all external traces of this pain so that he no longer knows about it himself. His connection switch is rarely on anymore. Only when it comes to him emotionally connecting with his wife and children does the damage come to light. Because then it turns out that they are also ignored by him. Its connection switch remains off, so Level 1 functions cannot develop and thus remain weak and unsynchronized.

Suture 3: always on

This insecure attachment form is known for its clingy, dependent and claiming character. The remarkable thing is that mothers who are connected to their child in this way find it difficult to distinguish themselves from other mothers and the way in which they interact with their child. This only works if we pay attention

the way both types of mothers synchronize with their child. At the heart of the matter, the difference lies in the fact that mothers who synchronize well synchronize themselves with their babies, while mothers who do not synchronize well want their babies to synchronize with themselves. In the situation of the 'bad mothers', they are guided by the position of their own connection switch and the memory of their own attachment pain. An insecure and confused mother turns to her baby when her bond switch turns on and demands the child to turn his switch on as well. It doesn't matter to her whether his switch is on or not at that moment, she comes when she needs his closeness. She completely ignores the position of his connection switch; it is guided solely by the position of its own connection switch. Through this pattern, the baby gradually learns that he should always have his connection switch on. After all, he doesn't know when his mother will come or go, and he doesn't want to lose his only chance to spend time with her. Unlike 'Always Off' who never seems upset, 'Always On' is easy to cry and difficult to calm down.

Suture 4: Unpredictable

When the baby turns his connection switch to on and is confronted with an unpredictable and frightening response from his mother, he will eventually register her presence in his assessment center as a frightening event. He needs her, but when he gets her attention, he often becomes frightened by her. And he doesn't know how to solve this problem. If there's a chance that the police are going to shoot you, you're not going to call them, are you? There are three different reactions that can make a baby afraid of his own connection switch: (1) when his mother sometimes reacts angrily, (2) when his mother sometimes reacts with overwhelming positive feelings, (3) when his mother reacts, but at the same time he senses how scared

she is. Under these circumstances, a pattern develops in which the baby - every time his bonding switch turns on - fears being confronted with pain and anxiety, but also needs closeness and comfort. He has no idea what reaction to expect from his mother this time. And because he cannot predict what will happen, he becomes disorganized. This baby will be hypersensitive to diseases and difficult relationships throughout his life.

9.3 SYNCHRONIZING ENERGY LEVELS

When I was a little boy, a ukulele was a big instrument for me. I could spend hours learning to play this. But even with the simplest song, I would sometimes have to stop singing and put my fingers on the strings one by one to form the next chord. Sometimes I even had to look up the chords in a book before I could play them. A good musician might have played along with me, that is, if he had the courage to take into account my lack of skill, stopping - as I did - every time I had to pick up a new grip. However, the reverse was excluded. It was unthinkable that I would be able to play with a good musician, at least in the beginning. But gradually my playing got better and at a certain point I just needed a good musician to lead me in the right rhythm and tempo. That only worked after I had first mastered the chords. Before I could play a song fluently, I first had to learn certain music patterns. Only then could I focus on playing in a music group and attuning myself to others. A good music teacher knows that. A good mother too.

As we have seen above, the most important quality of a good mother is that she slows herself down, calms down, and adapts to the energy and development level of her baby. Level 3 of the control center, which is located in the cingulate (inner) cortex of

the brain is particularly designed to synchronize these things.

This area, also called maternal memory, is generally larger in women than in men. When a mother synchronizes her mother's memory with her baby's mother's memory, the child very quickly develops a similar chemical composition, similar brain patterns, and ultimately a similar brain structure. This happens when the child is between 2 and 9 months old, through non-verbal face-to-face contact. All this must be done on the mother's initiative, because the baby's brain is not yet sufficiently developed and organized for this. But if she does this training well, the child - when he is 9 months old - will gradually start to show initiative in the synchronization process.

SYNCHRONIZATION FROM RIGHT BRAIN TO RIGHT BRAIN

Synchronization occurs through communication from the right hemisphere of one person to the right hemisphere of the other. This happens in an easy and natural way if the mother memory is active. A brief description of what happens then looks like this. What is going on emotionally in the right hemisphere of the brain finds an immediate and honest expression in the left side of the face. The person looking at this face receives an image of the left side of the face and the associated emotions on the left side of the retina of both eyes. The nerves from the left side of the retina run directly to the right side of the brain where the circuits involved in synchronization are instructed to decode and respond to the emotions on the face. This answer goes back to the right hemisphere in the same way via the left side of the face. This cycle is completed in our brain no less than six times every second, with some reinforcement occurring each time so that the feelings become stronger with each cycle.

START AND STOP SYNCHRONIZATION

The most obvious moments in the synchronization process are the start, when the baby's connection switch turns on, and the end, when the baby needs a break. When this goes well, it gives the baby an intense feeling of security. He doesn't have to be afraid of being rejected or overwhelmed. He can then fully focus on making his brain do exactly what his mother's brain does. If his mother has a good maternal memory, his signals are received by her brain and she knows exactly when she can start and when she should stop.

Start

When the mother sees that her baby is ready to interact with her and connect his right brain with hers, she will generally have a higher energy level than her child. Her first reaction to connecting their brain parts is to lower her own level until it matches that of her son or daughter. Her heart rate slows a bit and her face relaxes, until both their brains are on the same level. Then together they build a shared joy that continues until the baby's heart rate reaches a peak. His brain can no longer contain joy and he will...

his mother looking away and disconnecting from the stimulation of his right brain. This process only takes a few seconds, because the communication is so good, fast and reciprocal. When the mother and child's smiles merge and their heart rate, chemistry and energy levels peak together, the first half of the synchronization cycle has been completed. The second half is a descent again.

Stop

During the descent, the mother leads the way and the baby must follow her. Because mom knows exactly how to quickly lower her energy levels, she returns to a state of rest almost instantly. Her baby needs more time for this. He doesn't know yet how to calm himself down. But practice makes perfect. The more often they practice calming down together, the faster the baby can achieve this goal. The ability to calm oneself from a state of intense emotion is of great importance for the baby. Everyone knows how nice it is to deal with people who know how to keep their composure when things don't go as they should.

The ability to calm ourselves quickly is the most important indicator of lifelong mental health. A control center that has not learned this is a harbinger of mental illness.

Work and rest

A well-trained brain is able to start when it needs to start, stop when it needs to be stopped, receive energy when it needs energy, and calm itself down when things get too intense. Such a brain remains synchronized both internally and externally and has perseverance, resilience and resourcefulness.

People who are hyperactive or depressed are people who cannot work when work needs to be done and cannot rest when they need rest. They cannot adequately synchronize their energy levels with those of others. By alternating between working and resting at the baby's pace, a good mother teaches her little boy or girl the rhythm of life and relationships. Until he gets the hang of it; doing things together, resting together, laughing or crying together, recovering together, all this at first at the child's pace, but as soon as he realizes it, he will adapt and learn to respond to his environment. A control center of which Level 3 is well developed and

trained, is able to synchronize with others after just nine months. An undeveloped and disorganized mind will always need others willing to synchronize with it.

'Bad' mother'

> *“Bad mother.” This is a very loaded concept. In fact, all mothers are bad mothers at some point, because they are damaged themselves. This also applies to fathers. In fact, no one is perfect, we live in a broken world. The fact is that the quality of how well we do as mothers is largely determined by what we ourselves have received, especially in the first three years of our lives. When a mother's control center is weak, unstructured, and untrained, she will have great difficulty dealing with her baby's natural disorder. Instead of focusing on his brain development, this mother struggles with her own lack of stability. She can respond to this in different ways. Sometimes she does this by keeping a distance; she then appears not to be involved and ignores her child's signals. She then says: “He or she will be fine,” or “There is nothing wrong.”*

A second way a damaged mother tries to control herself is by making sure the baby follows her lead. She tries to get him/her emotionally in order so that he/she feels what she thinks he/she should feel. When she succeeds, she feels like she has the matter under control! This is the mother who thinks she is doing everything right and letting the baby synchronize with herself. In general, these "bad" mothers laugh more, play more, and are more involved with their babies than truly emotionally healthy mothers. They always want to stay close to their children. They are involved, intimate, cordial, warm, happy and who knows what else, so that their child is happy! But this child does not learn to synchronize himself, to calm down, and to find joy again after sadness.

The third type of 'bad' mother is the 'make-it-end' mother. She has clearly lost all control, often due to a defective control center, a drug addiction or extreme circumstances. Wanting this to end, she puts pressure on her baby to stop the emotional demands he makes on her. When he asks for attention, she explodes: “Shut up!”

What these three types of damaged maternal memory have in common is that they cannot focus on the baby, the child, understand its signals and cannot synchronize with him or her. They are unable to tune into his energy level and rhythm because their own signal is too weak, too strong or too chaotic.

9.4 HIERARCHICAL ORGANIZATION OF THE AUDIT CENTER LEVELS

> *Timing is very important for proper brain function. Knowing what to synchronize and what not to synchronize is fundamental when using our heads. A strong and well-trained control center is able to remain synchronized even during intense feelings.*

An immature, poorly trained, weakened, or chemically imbalanced control center tends to fall apart. We then see the different levels of our control center being broken down from top to bottom.

When painful emotions flow through the brain, the first phase of desynchronization begins to occur as the control center located in the right hemisphere shuts down access to the left hemisphere. As long as the disturbed feelings are present, the right hemisphere remains the brain

serve. The left hemisphere of the brain, which is always busy with thoughts and words, is therefore sidelined. When the control center is functioning properly, the orbital prefrontal cortex located in the right hemisphere has exclusive control over the rest of the brain.

the brain. The top layer of the control center — the identity — is maintained as long as the layer below it (Level 3) remains synchronized.

In order to keep the orbital prefrontal cortex located in the right hemisphere active, the Level 3 mother memory must have built up enough capacity to continue to handle the electrical and chemical brain storm. However, when the disruption becomes too strong, we see the control center begin to disintegrate. The first thing we may notice is a stagnation in the functions of Level 4. This is where the powers of the Self—our identity—are located, allowing us to be ourselves rather than in chaos.

When Level 4 is exited, one is temporarily deprived of the following abilities:

maintaining identity as a person.

the control of emotions (individually and in relation to others).

the ability to concentrate.

the ability to divide attention.

the interaction between three or more people.

the personal preferences.

the creativity.

the sense of satisfaction.

the ability to act purposefully.

displaying morally and socially acceptable behavior.

correcting the image one has formed of others.

the realization of who we are in time (time travel / age regression).

calming down/controlling the amygdala (Level 2).

Level 3, the layer where synchronization takes place, closes off the top layer (our identity) when a threatening experience reaches an intensity that one has never known before. More nerve cells are already active in the brain than ever before. When the moment comes when they can no longer fall back on previous experiences in the world

memory, they look for a brain that is bigger. The brain then needs a brain that has sufficient knowledge to deal with this attack on the nerves, and will try to synchronize with it. They look for a brain that can show how to deal with such intense emotions. There is no longer any mental flexibility in this phase; all activities are aimed at finding that one brain. The baby desperately searches for someone to help return him to a situation where he can regain control of himself. His mother's memory is looking for someone who has the ability and experience to synchronize with him from right brain to right brain and who can be an example for him to continue to relate to himself and his environment from this tense situation and to respond as the person he or she has always been. Synchronizing with such a mother will allow him to resynchronize with his higher (prefrontal) brain functions. A mother who has been able to develop well in this respect will be able to give him this strengthening of his control center.

If synchronization with a parent memory of a larger brain fails, the assessment center (Level 2) will sound the alarm and attempt to halt all activities. This subcortical part of the control center is always on. The feeling of contentment is gone and the child switches to fear, withdrawal and avoidance. We no longer have to expect appropriate behavior from him, as well as creativity and mental flexibility. The child is now in a state of great stress, in which everything is aimed at putting an end to this. If emotions run high enough, Level 2 will eventually shut down as many areas of the brain as possible, putting all systems into an energy-conserving sleep state. Our boy is then in shock. His control center is completely desynchronized and he is in dire straits. The only way to help him is to ensure that he can build a strong control center.

During infancy and toddlerhood, a baby has a slowly beating mass of cells that gradually grows into a synchronized, functioning brain. During this period he learns to coordinate the different parts of his brain. He also learns to attune himself to others. He learns to deal with words and feelings, effort and peace, relationships and emotions, asking and receiving. If all goes well, he will be ready to start taking care of himself around the age of four. Then he no longer needs life to be adapted to him, as was the case before.

9.5 ADHESION AND DEVELOPMENT OF BONDS

So woe to the poor baby whose mother is unable to sense and meet his needs. She feeds him when she is hungry, puts him to play when she wants to watch television, and keeps him close when she needs safety. This way he does not get the opportunity to get to know his needs and feelings. Instead, he comes to know his mother's needs and feelings in a way that also puts pressure on him to meet them. But because her needs and feelings are mother-sized, the baby will be overwhelmed by this and his baby-big identity will collapse and disintegrate under this burden. To counter this threat, he looks for someone else who is willing to pay attention to him.

A baby with weak or anxious attachments experiences a strong urge to connect with something. This can express itself in different ways. However, he does not understand that his desire for attention is essentially a question of asking. Babies need to learn that even their crying is actually asking... A child who needs attention has not yet learned to ask for what he needs

has. Adults generally realize this. They can sometimes quite rightly say: 'He is just asking for attention'. That's right: attention is exactly what the child is asking for. But if a child does not learn to meet his needs through questions,

he will think of other ways to attract the attention of his mother or someone else. Maybe he will find what he is looking for, but it is also very possible that he will be beaten or abused. Usually he doesn't make himself very popular with such behavior. He also cannot really mature for the transition from milk feeding to a more varied diet of solid food (in developmental psychology this is called toddlerhood), because he does not learn to really take care of himself.

A baby with weak attachments is in trouble before he reaches the end of his infancy. When the time approaches when he is expected to take more care of himself, he continues to feel a strong urge to bond due to the lack of a close bond with his mother. He feels that intimacy with the other person can satisfy his needs, but the bond with his mother is not strong enough to structurally offer him that satisfaction or security. He will therefore experience toddlerhood as a period in which his sense of abandonment and rejection is further strengthened.

Because the feeling of abandonment and rejection is so confusing, a child with damaged attachments will reject their new identity as a toddler. Instead of seeing the new goal of learning to take care of himself as a challenge, he will try to manipulate other people into taking care of him. Because his identity is paralyzed by damaged and weak attachments, his development is stuck in the infant stage. This malnutrition of the soul can be called quite traumatic. After all, the baby lacks the necessary input of good elements that enable it to grow. According to recent brain research, this causes more damage to a baby's brain development than abuse.

We call the damage caused by the absence of good things A-traumas (with the A for absent). The absence of good elements in a child's upbringing will stunt growth as much as bad elements such as child abuse, illness and catastrophic events do. The

We call the damage caused by this B traumas (with the B meaning threatening).

PREPARING FOR TODDLER TIME

When a child has a strong bond with his mother, he can trust her to be there and help him when something bad happens. It becomes familiar with the pattern that there is always comfort after unpleasant events. The child knows that it is not alone and therefore he/she does not have to be afraid of unpleasant events or unpleasant feelings. His/her confidence and hope are based on this simple foundation. How strong is the confidence of the man or woman who somehow senses (actually this is the prefrontal cortex) that something bad is the harbinger of something good. Such a man or woman will not easily be thrown off course by setbacks or pain. The security of the bond with the mother has given him/her a strong rope with which he/she can handle an enormous dose of adventure as a mountain climber. The stronger the bond of love between mother and baby, the more confidently he or she can climb. The stronger the bond with the mother, the greater will be the ability to seize life in its fullness. When a child knows that it will not be rejected by its mother, it is able to brave wild things and do what other children and later adults think impossible. The child feels that he can tolerate pain, be upset, and even suffer without going off course.

'NEVER STAND ON THE ROPE'

Never stand on the rope! Experienced climbers can tell you that standing on a rope causes small grains of sand to penetrate the rope, causing it to wear out faster. When you need the rope most and the tension is greatest, it will break. Especially boys, who later take on the role of shepherd in the family. Boys must therefore learn to handle the bond they have with their mother with care. Of course, the importance of a good relationship also applies

for daughters. Older children and other family members need to help them maintain their bond with their mother and protect them from fear, underestimation, or neglect. Mothers also have to learn not to stand on the rope. When they make a mistake, they would do well to admit it so that their son will learn to ask for forgiveness and keep his bond strong. Anyone who avoids standing on the rope can climb for a long time and safely. If a boy has a strong bond of love with his mother, he can be involved with others without the need to impose his will on them. He knows that despite pain there will always be closeness, comfort and recovery. He knows that there is always a path that will take him back to Camp Joy. The less he tends to impose his will on others, the bigger his world can become. And what is more important, once he becomes a man, he will have no fear of his own wife and children. He won't see their needs and feelings as ways they are trying to manipulate or force something on him. A man who has learned to give life has his roots in a babyhood with a close bond of love, but that gets us ahead of ourselves: our baby must first become a toddler.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE INFANT AND TODDLER PERIOD

What a tender, intimate world it is with which the little baby is surrounded. A world made especially for him, to the best of his parents. It is a place so intimate that we have to have our feelings under control to be able to take a look inside. It is a world of touching and feeling, of knowing and loving, and occasionally... of pinching your nose. Breathing, sleeping, eating, moving, joy and peace, all these elements contribute to a strong bond with its mother in the first year of a child's life. Soon he also knows that she is a person with a brain. Her brain knows him, helps him, enjoys him, and shares pleasurable experiences with him. By synchronizing with her brain, he learns to synchronize his own brain. He climbs Vreugdeberg and rests in Camp Vreugde when

he needs that. By the time he turns one and starts walking, his mother — his rock — is going to change for him. This slow, gradual change allows him to experience small amounts of annoyance and disappointment. It is no longer the case that she always comes when he calls her. She won't always guess what's wrong anymore. But she remains him

and before he can plunge into despair, she helps him to hope again. He learns to find his own way back to Camp Vreugde. As the days pass like this, the baby learns to ask and receive. He learns who to ask and how to do it. "'Ask daddy to tie your shoes,' says mother. "'Would you like some more stew?'" or "How is my boy?" These are all harbingers of a soon entry into the world of the spoken word. The baby is almost ready for toddlerhood.

We will examine this period more closely in the chapter on the boy and his father, for its success depends largely on the father. With the help of his parents, the boy will leave his infancy behind him. Soon he will be able to stand on his own two feet. As he approaches his fourth birthday, he will have developed enough hope to try to take care of himself. Then mother's words have a different message, "Tell me what you want," or "What's wrong?", or, worst of all, "You'll have to wait until we eat." Toddlerhood is approaching, but not in the conventional sense. It heralds the end of infancy. The toddler period is a huge change that can only be accomplished by the well-trained brain of a four-year-old. A fully grown toddler with a brain capable of controlling itself, synchronizing with others, and maintaining relationships through both words and feelings is ready for the next step. However, for many, perhaps most guys, this is not the case. They

celebrate their fourth birthday and begin the next phase ill-prepared, ignorant and destined to do badly. Their stitches have not prepared them for what is to come.

SIX STAGES AND MYELINIZATION

There are six stages in bond growth. The first is the unborn child, in the second stage the child's self develops, the 'joy circuit'. In the third stage the child learns to deal with himself. The fourth stage is adulthood, they have a group identity so they can care for others. The fifth stage is being a parent, selflessly giving 'joy'. And the final sixth stage is community within a church.

The modern neuropsychology of bonds confirms the pastoral insights. The first discoveries in the field of the development of bonds and attachment are that these processes need to be stimulated. A baby's attachment and bonds are developed at five to six weeks, mainly through touch, smell and temperature. Nerves with that function go

develop and start working together. This process is called myelination and creates an insulating fatty layer, which significantly accelerates the conduction of stimuli. Babies bond with anyone who keeps them warm and after about six weeks their sense of touch develops, the brain knows where and how you are touched. Touch produces happiness and joy.

At approximately the age of three months, the nervous system related to vision myelinates. The baby starts to see better. They are mainly interested in the face and in particular the left part of the face and the left eye. They know that someone enjoys seeing them because they smile. At the age of twelve months, the auditory system develops (myelinates). In particular, the intonation (and intention) of the sounds, such as: “I love you” are registered on the right side of the brain, knowing the content and meaning of the words

is a process that mainly takes place on the left. This also applies to adults. Especially the intonation, the excitement and joy, the tingling of the eyes, determine the bond. Happiness and joy is the only thing that motivates children under the age of one year. Joy means: 'Someone is happy to be with me!'

Smiling at an underdeveloped baby's brain has many consequences. The brain chemistry creates the same feeling in the baby that is communicated, such as happiness, anger, madness, fear. This promotes brain development. This means that babies who receive a lot of love and warmth develop a lot of joy and learn in brain chemistry how their nerves should work together. This communication is powerful, but also very fast. Looking into the face takes 40 milliseconds. The communication of emotions, especially with the right part of the brain (hemisphere), leads to six messages within a minute, which is faster than in the left hemisphere.

Particularly important here is the Right Orbital Prefrontal Cortex (henceforth abbreviated as ROPC). Right means the right hemisphere of the brain, orbital means below the eye socket, so behind the right eye, prefrontal means at the front of the brain, cortex means the cortex part of the brain

the brain. A person is born without this area and it can grow to 35% of the size of the entire brain by 18 months. This growth depends on the stimulation of the brain in this area, if it is not developed or stimulated you often find atrophy, or breakdown.

There are many people with severe depression, post-traumatic stress, autism or other psychiatric illnesses who have an underdeveloped ROPC. At the peak of bonding, mother and child smile at each other for eight hours a day! The growth of the ROPC mainly starts at the age of three months, this is the time when many mothers go back to work and take their children to daycare and can therefore pay less attention to the baby! Another brain growth spurt occurs at the age of four, when world orientation improves and there is also much more attention for the father.

When it comes to bonds, the age of about fifteen years is important, when the first falling in love can occur that completely absorbs you just by looking at someone. Here too, growth of the ROPC takes place. The

birth of your first child or grandchild can also be such a phase. As mentioned, myelination allows growth of the ROPC for the fourth year, more than in any other brain region. It is a very important part of the brain that receives a lot of information, for example the first signal of a stimulus. (emotional stimuli).

In a sense there is a hierarchy in nervous systems, the ROCP can in a sense 'shut down' other systems, such as the immune system, pain control and internal transmitters. Such a transmitter that plays a role in brain chemistry is, for example, serotonin. If the ROPC has learned to stimulate neurological circuits correctly at a young age, you will have many more opportunities to function later in the event of depression. If these processes have not been initiated, the brain system has fewer options to act adequately in crisis situations and problems may also arise with regard to the immune system, blood pressure, heart, etc. The ROPC is that part that regulates your emotions, also in a physical sense.

It is important that you can learn under stress. When you are angry you can pretend you are not angry, when you are anxious or sexually aroused, what your brain chooses to do at that moment happens. The ability to regulate emotions is therefore neurologically limited in some clients. The ROPC is the only thing that can suppress the limbic system. The limbic system is the control system for emotions such as fear, violence, anger, eating and sexual urges. The relationship is interesting because we now gain more insight into the behavior, emotions and choices that people make.

At the age of four, the ROCP functions mainly non-verbally and in development is mainly dependent on non-verbal interactions (images, faces). Memory in this section is mainly based on experience and not on what is said. The ROCP is also the image of yourself, your identity is based on three faces. The image of yourself is how others view you. What I have seen in the mother and father who look at me, the ones closest to me, determines who I think I am. If this is mainly based on joy and harmony, there is a good chance that a strongly balanced personality can emerge. We were created to experience joy in being with others.

9.5.1 SAFE AND UNSAFE BINDINGS

An understanding of secure and insecure attachments will clarify how deeply loving connections play a role in the interaction between people. Its design is genius.

Smiling at an underdeveloped baby's brain has many consequences. The brain chemistry creates the same feeling in the baby that is communicated, such as happiness, anger, madness, fear. This promotes brain development. This means that babies who receive a lot of love and warmth develop a lot of joy and learn in brain chemistry how their nerves should work together. This communication is powerful, but also very fast. Looking into the face takes 40 milliseconds. The communication mainly of emotions with the right part of the brain (hemisphere).

up to six messages within a minute, which is faster than in the left hemisphere. The ROPC plays a central role in this as a command post.

With increasingly better research material such as brain scans, people are much better able to study the (co)operation of the brain. Many traumatized people only heal in a community, where there are love bonds. They are therefore actually only controlled by fear that is conditioned in their brain functioning. In therapy you see that changes in brain chemistry only occur very gradually.

Secure attachment in the limbic system works just like the thirst system, when your mouth is dry you get a signal that you need to drink. You drink until you have enough. It's the same with secure attachments, it's wonderful to notice that others enjoy having you there, but sometimes it's fine if this doesn't happen. You are not 'thirsty'. Babies and the elderly must learn to switch this system on and off, through labor, sleep, etc. However, there are also a number of unsafe mountings.

UNSAFE BINDINGS

The first unsafe attachment is the avoidance pattern. This happens if the child is ignored by adults or if it is 'difficult' and is immediately given a pacifier in the mouth. If you don't receive positive confirmation, it hurts and it makes you stop looking for it. For example, children as young as 18 months old may no longer respond after a day at daycare when their parents enter. In Sunday school at church these children are very quiet because they are not used to anyone paying attention to them. These children can develop severe dissociative symptoms until the age of 12. As adults, they learn to hardly develop any feelings that they have to deal with. For example, it could be that a man often sits behind the computer at home in the evenings after work, and his wife says that she needs to do things together and replies: “But I'm at home a lot…”

The second unsafe affirmation is an ambivalent affirmation. Parents are more concerned with themselves in their contact with the baby than with the baby itself. They are selfish parents, when they think it's enough they withdraw. They do not take into account their baby's 'thirst'. If there is no good and synchronous communication of joy and happiness, you will get bad interactions. Sometimes it can lead to reverse care patterns developing: the baby/toddler/child takes care of their parents, whose emotions are often preoccupied with divorce or private problems.

Disorganized and disorganized structures also create unsafe bonds. This often happens by anxious parents who themselves suffer from post-traumatic stress or are themselves demonically influenced. Fear is an invitation to the evil one anyway. That is why learning healthy bonds and neuropsychological skills is of great importance in the guidance of satanically influenced people. We must learn again to practice joy in a community of people, not as a fragmented individual, but as a whole personality.

FEATURES OF SAFE HEALTH BINDINGS

Learning stronger bonds, both near and far (where the person also learns healthy bonds when the other person is not in the picture) is beneficial. Compare the incorporation of Jesus, He lives in our hearts even though we do not see Him now.

There are a few notable features.

A healthy bond involves being able to share negative feelings.

Healthy bonds are learned through modeling. Someone who deserves respect and acts in a balanced and stable manner in a group.

A healthy bond provides freedom while still being connected. It is unhealthy to always be apart or always connected to each other.

Healthy bonds increasingly expand the limits of our possibilities. It has to do with the structure of the ROCP.

The development of our identity is mainly related to the quality of the ROCP. A toddler gains self-awareness at six months of age. This is mainly due to the aforementioned 'mindsight': look at someone and you know what they think about you, especially if you know someone better.

knows. Toddlers with poor attachments have no feeling about this at all. Our sense of humor is also based on 'mindsight': you laugh because you know that the other person does not mean it. If you have someone with the wrong attachments in front of you, he may react angrily in such a situation because he does not see the humor.

You learn through modeling. The baby duplicates mainly through mindsight. At the age of one, children can appear differently in their faces. The child develops his identity from 6-12 months by being joyful and happy. From 12 months to eighteen months, the child learns to return from angry or negative emotions to

people they love, a return to happiness from a negative emotion. The extent to which this is possible depends on the neurological capabilities of the ROCP.

The limbic system myelinates at 15 months of age. This includes anger and terror centers. It seems as if an extra accelerating force is used for anger and fear. If the child has built up a joyful identity and has learned to return to it, it does not cause any problems. Otherwise, children can sometimes have terrible tantrums that are almost impossible to avoid. They do not learn to respond relationally, until then each part of the emotions and brain develops on its own.

With good development of the ROCP, the baby becomes one person through feelings of joy, in which different parts of the brain are directed by the ROCP. If feelings fall outside of this, you quickly become moody and anger and fear no longer belong to you. If these processes are not learned around the eighteenth month, it becomes increasingly difficult.

9.6 JOY GIVES VITALITY, LIFE FORCE

The Bible and God have much to say about joy and its health-giving effects.

> *Spiritually speaking, joy in the Bible primarily has to do with relationship, with connection with God. That joy gives vitality, life force. 1Sam. 2:1, Neh.8:10*

> *“The joy of the Lord is my strength!” And Psalm 4:7,8: 'Many say, Who will show us good? Lift up the light of your countenance upon us, O Lord! You have put more joy in my heart than then...'. Ps.89:16: “Blessed are the people who shout for joy, for they walk, O Lord, in the light of your countenance.”*

This is how God communicates in shouts of joy and light of countenance, and this is how adult children of God, who are made in His image, also communicate. The blessing that Israel had to invoke three or four times contains the passage: "The Lord make his face shine upon you, and give you peace." The Bible also teaches a lot in this regard when it comes to learning to return to joy. For example, read Ps. 35:27: 'Let those who desire my righteousness shout for joy and be glad; let them say continually, The Lord is great...' Jer.31:25 'For I refresh the weary soul, and satisfy every fainting soul.' See further Ps.51:8-10.

Jesus has a lot to say about joy. John 14 “These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.” His teaching involves more than the development of the nervous system. Jesus who took the shame of the cross... for the joy set before him! The power that carried Him through was faith in joy. This power of joy makes it possible for us to suffer. Joy mainly means that someone likes to be with us.

'CAMPING'

Jim Wilder makes an analogy with camping and brain function. Joy and happiness is our natural state, compare it to a place where we have camped. When we return to camp at the end of the day, it gives us peace and quiet. Our nervous system wants to return to the camp of joy during the day and at the end of the day. Someone who goes to sleep angry or anxious is asking for problems with their nervous system. (stress). We like that others are also in this camp.

Outside the joy camp 'Kamp Vreugde' there is a joy mountain, children develop their strength by climbing it, often this happens in a figurative sense because they experience someone laughing at them, but they have few nerve fibers so they quickly reach the peak of their capacity to experience joy. Wilder compares it to tickling, at first you like it, but not for too long because then you can't take it anymore. Then the child turns away with eye contact and the adult does the same until the child again indicates that he or she wants more by looking challengingly at the adult. Tickling again strengthens the 'joy center' in the brain.

Another example is that sometimes in spring you are overwhelmed by the beauty of nature, the blossoms, the scents, the colors, the landscape, the air and so on. You cannot contain more because it is limited by

your nervous system. The development mentioned lasts up to approximately twelve months. Then the child also experiences negative feelings, for example, if he has done something wrong, the toddler looks at the mother's left side of the face and the right side of the brain (hemisphere) says: 'My mother is not happy with me, I experience disgust then shame...' The mother then sees shame in the baby. They are no longer in the 'joy camp', they are somewhere else. After a while, the toddler sees joy again in the mother and experiences that they are back on their way to 'joy camp'.

Frequent repetition of this principle of shame and finding the way back leads to the child neurologically learning to find the way back to the joy camp more easily. There

By the way, it takes as much strength as climbing the mountain of joy! If the child does not learn to find their way back to joy camp, they will be more and more concerned with it, how can I prevent myself from ever getting so far from joy camp, because there is no way back! We see this in sub-assertive anxious people. What is important is the experience that I have enough 'joy power' to get through the difficulty. This requires that mother or someone else shows me this path. If you learn this, you can always be yourself. That means no matter how far you get with suffering, you can always remain the same person you were when you weren't suffering. This is also very important when dealing with trauma.

The circuits of joy grow as you walk the paths and remain who you are. You can travel through rivers, cross mountains, go through swamps, but you will come back. Parents don't have to be afraid if you ask: "Can I go to the restaurant?" or “Can I play near the rocks?” You'll come back. So you can be angry, sad, depressed, no problem, you will come back to joy camp. Wilder gave the example of a client who kept asking him: “You're not angry, are you?” He said, “Maybe, but what's your problem?” The client said, “If you're angry you won't want to see me again!” Wilder said: “Of course I still want to see you.” After some time the client asked: “What makes you angry, I want to try!” When he got angry afterwards, it could be discussed. Wilder asked, “Would you have reacted the same way if I hadn't gotten angry?” The truth would not have come out.” These are learning processes that must be practiced. The same client said to Wilder after some time, “I know you're angry about this, but let's talk about it another time. It will be fine!”

People who have not learned to return to the 'joy camp' often exhibit avoidance behavior.

They do everything to avoid negative things. “Why did you do that, you make me feel bad!” They want you to participate in that avoidance otherwise they will 'punish' you. A second consequence is that people start to feint, they go

to other feelings. Women in particular who have no path back to joy camp often become sad. They have the experience that someone comes to comfort them and it seems as if they have found the path. They can't just be angry with you anymore, because they can't get back from there. Or they escape into sex, because that seems like a path along which you can get back together.

Another 'feint' is self-gratification or sexual addiction, often a taboo in the Christian world, this is also a wrong path that does not end up in the joy camp. People no longer come into contact with loving touch. This wrong path can lead you into a quagmire and only claw your way out months later. It leads to all kinds of physical and psychological complaints in which you feel rushed and lonely. A healthy brain can get back into joy camp in 90 seconds. With depression this can take months or even years.

Climbing the mountains of joy

One can gain healthy bonds by climbing 'joy mountains', supported by 'mindsight'. Someone can reach the pinnacle after twenty seconds and it feels like being in love. Of course this happens in relation to God and fellow man. If we treat each other in a good way in the church. But bonds are also formed through smell, touch, temperature and food. Wilder indicated that two rather obnoxious clients independently asked him if he used a specific deodorant. He hardly knew what that deodorant was called, but they had looked it up in the stores from the many hundreds of options and guessed.

Eating together can also create healthy bonding. Many Christian communities also make grateful use of this. A bond is often created between counselors and clients, because they hear stories and can tell them back later. Many traumatized people have the experience that people did not consider them important enough, or they had parents who were alcoholics, who later remembered nothing about their children.

Singing songs of praise and praising God are powerful ways of healthy confession and bonding. Wilder also mentions examples of unruly people who experienced an increase in joy through contact with babies and the elderly, who always laughed when they saw them. Even pets can perform such a function. In this way, one gradually learns to give again. You learn to return to 'joy camp', so to speak.

The Lord Jesus also likes to be with us in trouble, problems and sorrow. He also shares His troubles with us, and teaches us how to deal with these things. So that you can be the person He intended you to be. Wilder mentions an example from his youth, where his family liked to sit together when tornadoes threatened, even though they could not immediately do anything about the situation. It is important that when you, as a care provider, throw out the lifebuoy, you are close enough to your client, otherwise the lifebuoy will not come nearly close enough to the client. This is not easy for people who, for example, need help in the areas of aggression, suicidal tendencies or self-mutilation. You can only 'rescue' if you are close enough to throw the lifebuoy exactly where it is needed.

In Mark 3:1-6 we read that Jesus was very angry with the hypocritical Pharisees. Not only was He guided by that tremendous anger and sadness by continually focusing on the Pharisees, but it also says that He healed the man about whom the story is about. Paul also teaches us this in Col. 3: 7,8 and Eph. 2:10 'We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.' In essence, sin is not acting as we are in our new life. We sin when we don't do what Jesus wants us to do.

The limit of joy defined by the ROCP has everything to do with the bonds we have with others. To what extent can we endure suffering, develop joy and still be ourselves? When we grow and develop we do this through a bond of love. In Christ we have relationships of love. Peter says, “Jesus did not threaten anyone, so neither should we.”

To heal from trauma, it is important to first learn to build joy, otherwise there is little point in recalling painful memories that one cannot cope with. This is the first task of a counselor, care provider; this is only possible if he or she experiences 'joy' with the client: there must be a click. You may pretend otherwise, but the ROCP will not be fooled if you do not show joy on your face.

The second task is to practice discipleship. You encourage the practice of joy, and teach them how to come back to this joy. It is also a training of the brain. Make lists of positive things and, as a care provider, do everything you can for a positive approach. When you go to sleep, learn, to use the analogy again, that everyone you love is in your joy camp. Our relationship with God is based on joy. The strength of the band depends on the need

to be with Him. He even wants to be with us, in our sins, ugliness and dysfunction. The only thing Jesus is angry about is that people don't want his community. He came to his own, but his own did not receive him. He wants to be with us, that is a powerful bond.

The bond of the church is also based on joy, not just theology. You bond with each other in the church at the level at which you like to be together. This is usually forgotten. The church is there to be together, even when it is difficult. Another meaning is to return to joy. Raising children also has the same principles: “Where are you now?” Interaction: “I see who you are, and I like being with you, I will teach you how to act.” You are a creation of joy, wanted by God to share with others in His kingdom. In this way, healing, education, discipleship and liberation are practiced and mastered.

MEMORY PROCESSES

Traumas have an effect on memory. This has everything to do with the functioning of the brain. Memory is remembering who you are so that you can behave as you are in the future. Our memories are often disturbed by many lies

things about ourselves. This makes it difficult to be yourself in the future, you miss a lot of information.

You can interpret memory in different ways. Autobiographical memory: I think back about something from my life, this is an explicit memory. There are also implicit memories. There's a glass of lemonade here. To be able to drink that I need a lot of memory, how do I hold it? How do I swallow? If I can't do that, I'd be really messed up. I'm not aware of it and I don't know where it comes from. You can interpret memory with short and long term memories. In any case, memory processes have to do with the way in which information is processed by the brain. The information enters the brain through the thalamus, which is located in the midbrain. You could say that this is the central reception, then the information is sent to those parts that do something with that specific information.

This central information comes from our body. For example, there is the information that tells me where my hands and legs are, posture and movement coordination, feeling and much more. From the body the information is sent to the thalamus, the part called the amygdala and what you could call the surveillance service. This determines whether something important or dangerous is going on.

The 'worst' is an angry face, which is what the amygdala sees, and most people are afraid of that. The second thing that people are collectively in favor of is snakes, even for people who have never seen a snake. Yet another alarm is a visual abyss, for example when you are standing on the edge of a tall building, or a long way down. The surveillance service (amygdala) sends the information to the hippocampus, which is essentially the brain's library. The same information is looked at in the library. Have we ever seen this before? I see something curly brown on the ground here, what could that be? If it falls under the category of snakes, then I jump. Especially if the 'security' has identified it as dangerous information. It may also be that the brain says that there is a stick on the ground. What do I know about a stick? They don't bite, only if it falls on your head it is painful, the library gives

this information is passed on to the front gyrus (anterior singular). This is the 'head' of the library, it determines how we feel and think about sticks. What experiences with sticks are, sometimes dangerous, sometimes useful, but not important in this situation! It is then sent to your pre-frontal cortex, where it is located in your identity center. There it is assessed: 'Is that stick useful to me, is it useful to walk with it?

The information about how we deal with this is mainly localized in the different hemispheres. This is how the right brain determines how I feel about things, the memories of the right brain are implicit, I don't know where it comes from. You 'trigger' the memory, without the moment itself, you can feel the wind blowing past your hair, what you smell and so on. “I'm not riding a bicycle now, but I can feel like I'm riding a bicycle”: that's a right brain memory. Because it is non-focal, that is, a consciousness that cannot be focused on, it is also not suggestible. You cannot suggest to your memory through your right brain what is not there. They are event experiences.

JOY CHANGES EVERYTHING!

Joy is the modulator of all positive changes. The degree of joy is comparable to the temperature of an oven. When cooking we carefully choose the ingredients, but ultimately the temperature of the oven determines the result. Joy is the modulator of all positive changes. The level of joy ultimately determines whether our efforts prove to be productive and sustainable. Perhaps you are skeptical about this, perhaps you think: 'Why would such an important factor have almost never been noticed in the church?'

Building joy is not usually considered a spiritual task. Joy is rarely seen as an important tool in character changes. Yet Jesus identified joy as an important part of His teaching and a central feature of prayer.

“These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full” (John 15:11). “But now I come to You and speak this

in the world, that they may have My joy fully in themselves” (John 17:13).

> *From the perspective of brain function, joy stimulates the growth of the brain involved in character building, identity strengthening and moral behavior. If we intend to change character through brain changes, it is best developed and perpetuated through joyful relationships.*

It could be that we don't mean the same thing by the word "joy." Many definitions of joy are described quite statically, for example like the taste of salt.

> *From the perspective of how the brain works, joy is a dynamic, relational experience. Joy is an experience of being happy that is enhanced between two people who are happy to be together.*

Joy is about relationships. Great joy is expressed in laughter, play and love. One finds little joy in depression, aggression and shame. Joy, like any internal force, combines with other experiences to produce different expressions of joy, but the hallmark of joy is that we share in the joy of someone who is happy to be with us. Joy makes eyes twinkle and shapes relationships.

Joy is just as powerful as when we experience pain. It makes us feel good when someone enjoys being with us when we suffer. When we fall into the arms of a friend who, like us, has rushed to the emergency room to wait to see if a loved one survives, we cry with relief, but it is joy. Someone is with us, we are not alone. Joy makes us rejoice with people who are happy and cry with people who cry, we feel deeply connected. Maybe it is

It is the lack of appreciation for this relational nature of joy that we tend to view our spiritual development as a solitary experience and therefore do not view joy as a spiritual activity.

REASONS FOR LITTLE JOY

We don't often see Christians practicing and developing joy. The presence of little joy may have something to do with this, but it is much more the result of the fact that we cannot hold on to joy. The joy we have accumulated and built up in the natural course of our lives is comparable to heat that easily escapes through open windows and doors in an uninsulated house. It's easy to fall in love, but much harder to maintain joy and avoid divorce. It's easy to get people excited about church, but it's harder to keep them there. This is about the relational skills needed to prevent loss of joy; these are more difficult to learn than the relatively simple principles of building joy.

Because joy is relational, longer gaps in our relationship mean less joy. Coming into contact with ice cold water can sometimes be fatal after some time, but the temperature of the water does not matter as long as we come into contact with the water for a short time. The secret to staying warm is to limit temperature loss and exposure to the cold as much as possible. Swimming skills help us get out of the water quickly, although swimming seems to have nothing to do with heat loss in the first place. To remain in joy, we must have skills to quickly return to joy.

The skills that keep us from losing joy and quickly return us to joy are especially important in troubled relationships.

> *We have to use our minds and look at the problem from our relationships, because the relationship is always more important than the problem.*

We need to be trained to keep love first when we are hurting, upset, and faced with problems, especially those that are man-made. A baby will just scream every time there is a problem without caring about the relationship. We must learn to quickly return to joy. Fortunately, the same relational brain circuits that can develop joy can also help us return to joy, if we know good examples in our lives. If we don't know examples

that could help us maintain joy in the midst of trouble, we will find that joy quickly disappears, which is not conducive to character building.

THE ROLE OF THE WILL

Why haven't we thought much about joy? Theologically, American and Western Christianity grew up under the influence of “free will” philosophy, which focused primarily on reason, will, and choice in all discussions of salvation and change. The Puritans, who were heavily influenced by William Ames, were followers of the "free will" doctrine and their attention to free will and choice can still be found in American theology. It's no wonder Billy Graham named his magazine Decision.

Viewed from the perspective of brain functioning, reason, will and choices are neurologically weak links. The will is an erratic cortical (cerebral cortex) function that begins to disappear as soon as we are a little sleepy. The will plays a minor role in the hierarchy of mind control.

> *In other words: will plays only a minor role in changes in character or identity. Good intentions are often the first things to come under pressure when joy levels are low!*

For example, many people forget their good intentions to stop drinking after three beers under the chemical effect of two beers. Intense emotions, fatigue, new developments and many other factors disrupt the best intentions of brains with a low joy level. When people don't do what they set out to do, it is often considered a lack of well-developed character. The vision of the 'free will' followers is renewal of vision and intentions to try to do better next time.

The 'free will' view mainly stems from medieval views, in which it was assumed that man has only one will. The Bible and our brains remind us that there is more than one will at work. For example, in the Shema (confession of faith) in Deut. 6:5 we are commanded to love the Lord with our heart and soul and with all our strength. This would not make sense if the heart and soul were to some extent devoid of their own will. It is also very clear that there are different wants in our brain. What one part of the brain wants is not always shared by other parts that often have different priorities, motives and choices. But even if 'our wills' were to come to an agreement, it is still not easy to bring about a change of character through the will. The brain is 'wired' in such a way that our character is mainly in it

is primarily changed by the love and connection circuits. Love and affirmation are especially important and linked to an increase in joy. This joy-based change always moves us toward becoming more like the other person we love.

JOY CONNECTS SCIENCE AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH

The LIFE Model, aimed at making positive changes in the lives of people and communities, was developed by a small community of counselors, group therapists, pastoral workers, teachers, Shepherd's House staff and husband and wife team Jane and Dallas Willard. They discovered: joy is the modulator of all positive changes. The LIFE Model focuses on the needs of a community with different

generations, the interactive presence of God and a group of essential neurological skills that are important in relationships.

The LIFE Model was developed by investigating why highly motivated people who received the same mental and psychological help did not all achieve character changes or were able to maintain those changes.

> *They found that people who did not have relationships with people who were happy to be with them were less likely to change than those who had many joyful relationships. Joy is the best measure of the capacity for positive lasting change.*

According to (the late) Dr. Dallas Willard, what is especially important for spiritual formation are: vision, purpose and means. A recurring discussion between married couple Jane and Dallas Willard on this topic focused on the difficulty for emotionally wounded people to understand the meaning of spiritual networks for them. Dallas Willard was always prone to talking about weakness and the need to make spiritual discipline a priority.

Mental education and brain science have a lot in common when it comes to resources. Whatever means we choose, what is important is that it actually changes brain functioning in a way that the brain initially experiences as normal and essential. To avoid fears, worries and stress, brain patterns must be deeply connected.

> *Spiritual formation promotes and supports deeper peace and joy to the extent that brain patterns change. Since the One who created our human minds also created our brains, what is good for our minds will also be good for our brains.*

Typically, we haven't looked at mental development as a better way of brain functioning.

The more our brains crack when we try to think, and the more we forget what we know and the more our conflicts of wills become apparent, the more difficult it will be to change through resolutions. Let's consider the possible theological and neurological causes why we find it difficult to find a solution for character change in unstable people with a low joy capacity.

MENTAL GROWTH IS GOOD FOR OUR BRAIN

> *In the LIFE Model, emotional maturity is part of the mental whole rather than a separate phenomenon.*

Our development of the joy-based relational model for spiritual education and emotional character formation is built on exercises that aim to expand and strengthen the brain's relational skills. Joy activates the brain's social engagement system and prepares us to connect with God and others.

> *Because brain development functions mainly relationally, relationally oriented activities that are most suitable for spiritual formation also lead to brain changes.*

Spiritual growth is good for our brain!

We know that wrong relational experiences hinder spiritual development. We can now add that joyful relationships also impact our spiritual character, as does the development of basic relationship skills. The physical adult brain is formed, as it were, just like a sculpture, in shape, possible-

present and chemistry. Intimate interactions in our most important relationships pass joy from one generation to the next through non-verbal communication through the “mother heart” (the cingulate cortex) of the brain. This 'mother heart' is a cluster of relational skills, which, if we possess them, we take for granted. And which, if they are lacking in someone else, we often condemn as 'a lack of character.'

These joyful relationships are the basis for character development and are motivating to change a malformed character, if necessary.

> *Joyful interaction between people must be practiced, it does not come naturally, it is a skill that must be developed.*

The following edited excerpt from “Joy Begins Here” will help us understand why those joyful relationship skills sometimes suddenly become more difficult to obtain, and why if we want an effective agent of change, we must remember that we need joy and also

must consciously use the relational skills to sustainably remain in a state of joy, so that they are sustainable in a world with little joy.

Many old skills no longer exist. Skills such as hunting with a spear, spinning, sharpening a saw, milking, penmanship, waking, working with a needle and thread, sowing with your hand, spinning, baking, woodworking, sailing: these were all skills that almost all children learned earlier or at least saw and understood. As useful as these skills were at one point in history, developing relational skills eyes should not be missed in our development. And some specific brain skills are needed for the formation of our human identity. They mainly have to do with human interaction patterns.

FACE TO FACE INTERACTIONS ARE BECOMING MORE AND MORE RARE

It doesn't take much imagination to see the differences between our world and the world of a hundred years ago. Families ate together and were in the same room for long periods of time. It was a world where relatives lived near each other. People spent most of the day in 'face to face' contacts. While there were many places with low levels of joy, the sheer number of face-to-face interactions provided many opportunities to spread joy skills.

Every newborn child begins life with an almost total absence of relationship skills. Whereas sixty years ago children spent almost all their time playing and comparing skills, they now spend most of their time with machines, which have no relational skills or awareness of the child's presence. Babies watch television, they see films in group one and at daycare, in church, at home, and with a babysitter.

The ways for successful transmission of joy in the brain are limited. Television, computers, films, books and video games cannot transmit relationship skills. Joy skills are not passed on through media, the Internet, webcams or even telecommunications. We can't raise babies through the internet or television, any more than we can make babies that way!

Relationship skills are rarely taught in most churches because most Christians are rarely together in a way that is conducive to developing relationships. Most people in church stay in their comfort zone. Most people who call themselves Christians don't even see church as an important source of relationship skills.

EXAMPLE

The ventromedial prefrontal cortex is the damage control system in our brain. It lies above our eyes and has the important task of determining the least harmful solution for each situation. The area is also particularly popular

associated with the regulation of emotions. This damage control system in our brain needs to be shaped by the full range of joy skills. Part of this ability is being able to return to joy from difficulty. Returning to joy is the way

on which we save a relationship when others are not happy with us.

An example. When a classmate says you're stupid, you feel joy draining from you. The ventromedial prefrontal cortex will have to decide how to respond, and that is done by looking at the role models we have learned at home, at school or in church. We can scold back rudely, withdraw, or we can go to our teacher or mother. Our identity center in our brain in the prefrontal cortex considers the examples we have seen in the past and chooses the least painful solution. This control system works non-verbally, which means that it does not consider what our parents or church have said before, it considers examples from the past that are known. Perhaps our brain has never taught us that the best solution is to return to joy. You might rudely reply, "You're too stupid to know that," and your friends might laugh at that.

But do we respond from our own identity, and do we become calm from shouting back? Have we found a way to return to joy like this by insulting our classmate? If we have not learned to think about our identity this way, our ventromedial prefrontal cortex, our damage control computer, will not consider such identity options. And yet this smart system can be taught to look for possibilities it didn't know before. Even if we don't have all the skills to return to joy, we can persevere by finding new solutions with an identity that

says, "I respond to weakness with gentleness." If we become people who respond to weakness with meekness, then any encounter with weakness will teach us to respond with meekness, provided our prefrontal relational circuits are active.

Even if we don't have all the skills to return to joy, we can remember, 'There must be a way to respond with meekness.' If God is always with us, an “Immanuel” experience can help us respond in a new way. We can acquire these skills through God because Jesus wants to fill in the gaps in the skills we have through our family, school, and church so that we can practice returning to joy with others.

Suppose we completely forget to include God or our relational circuits malfunction when our classmate says our hair looks stupid. Perhaps when we get home we can ask our family for advice on how they would respond, or withdraw for a moment to consult with God about how we could have responded better. We can learn skills before, during, or after an incident when our identity wants to be joyful and we don't yet know how.

9.7 WHAT IF RELATIONAL SKILLS EXTINCT…?

What if relationship skills become extinct...? If relational skills decline, this has major consequences for the way people interact with each other. These changes are often unnoticed by the people in question. For them, 'this is just how people are'. Without relationship skills, power will become increasingly attractive and the term “that was powerful” will justify just about any behavior. An increasing interest in power will lead to lower ones

joy levels because people will increasingly stand up for their rights in a self-centered way. Thoughts of revenge and crimes will easily increase because one lacks relationship skills.

One is more likely to have problems with people than to love them.

> *Reduction of joy skills will always lead to increased violence and aggressive behavior.*

Developing emotional bonds leads to people doing more together, including how they speak or dress. They can show their emotions and anger without feeling ashamed. Self-control and common sense go together. Joy levels will drop if a person loses the ability to soothe themselves. As peace and quiet becomes increasingly rare, the wealthy will try to attend more and more silent retreats to demonstrate their wealth. At the same time, the powerful, power-hungry people rise above the law and become increasingly self-centered. People are showing more and more autistic behavior and less and less maturity. People are becoming increasingly accustomed to overeating and other addictions, which increases weight and deteriorates health. Eating together will become less and less.

> *Medicines and other non-relational solutions will increasingly be needed to manage emotions and concentration.*

People have no idea of what really satisfies them or how to maintain joy in their lives and as a result, joy levels will continue to decline. As relationship skills decrease, the brain's ability to experience joy also decreases.

With lower joy skills we can expect the following:

functionality replaces the importance of a relationship.

solving problems replaces restoring joy.

schools are busy managing problems instead of raising children.

self-justification is the norm of behavior.

the ideal is a pseudo-identity.

narcissism is increasing.

unresolved conflicts are increasing.

addictions are increasing.

CHURCHES SHOW A LACK OF RELATIONAL SKILLS

Churches fail in three ways when members lack a return to joy skills.

First, the inability to return to joy means that church leaders lack the ability to process what they are feeling and stay in a relational mode as they recover from a situation that upsets them. Emotions quickly become amplified and problems spiral out of control.

Second, without relationship skills, people will increasingly make rules instead of seeking more joyful relationship solutions to overcome problems. In times of change and crisis, those who make the rules and follow the best will win, but often at the expense of a large number of people leaving the church.

Third, fear spreads under the guise of spiritual guidance, service and ministries. The inability to return to joy can be seen as a lack of coherence and sometimes even a lack of integrity.

> *Is change about right thinking or right love?*

The result of all three scenarios is a lack of change in people's lives. Without relationship skills, the weak and the strong will not share their lives with each other. And the faithful will eventually leave in search of opportunities to do more with their faith. Ultimately, young people will give up their faith in the church as a source of life. When people are unable or unwilling to act protectively in the face of anger, sadness, fear, shame, disgust, and despair, they become stuck in trouble and forget about relationships within the church. These are the thunder clouds that bring a low level of joy. If we see a low level of joy as a weakness, which it really is, we can become joy creators and look for those who want to join us.

JOY AND CHANGE

> *The brain is more deeply influenced by the one who loves you (who brings the joy) than by what the brain comes up with on its own.*

Perhaps that is the real reason why we have never seen the connection between mental education/development and brain sciences. Is change about right thinking or right love? Has someone been saved (changed) by the right choice or the right bond or attachment?

> *Too often we forget that the most far-reaching brain changes are caused by love and not by thoughts.*

I don't want to suggest that we should stop caring about our vision or plans, but rather that we should consider adding joy to our vision, purpose, and means.

The practice of spiritual development will be different depending on whether the mind is growing into the image of Christ because of what you believe or who you love. The first approach will exercise the will and correct our thoughts. The second approach will focus on removing barriers to love. If change consists of reconnecting with God on the basis of love, joy and peace, then the person who becomes our joy will determine how our character is formed, perhaps without even wanting it.

> *Joy is the modulator of lasting and positive changes.*

In other words: the lower the joy level, the more specific the means must be to achieve improvement. In an environment of little joy, the power of method should outweigh the power of vision. Think of the revival around Wesley in the less than joyful England. The transformation took place around a clear method, hence the derisive name “Methodists,” but it brought people into truly joyful relationships. Where there is little joy, the changes should lead to a rapid increase in joy, so that we have a greater need to be with God

and others. Our zeal at this point must extend from those who have already experienced a change of joy to those who need it more. Joy is contagious! Pope Francis, in his book 'Joy of the Gospel', seems to believe that joy is the way in which the Gospel should be passed on.

9.8 BIBLICAL IN-DEPTH: THE REBIRTH

There are Biblical analogies regarding how man's identity is formed in a natural and spiritual sense. According to the Bible, man's identity is determined by the fact that he is a creature of God. This is in contrast to humanistic thinking in which autonomy is the guiding principle of identity. This also means that God fundamentally determines man's identity, or (perhaps better said) the relationship in which he stands to God by virtue of the order of creation. The fact that we are creatures of God means: dependence on God, accountability to God, obedience to God, service to God, living according to His will and for His glory. Man's identity has from its origin been governed by the great privilege of knowing, loving and serving Him. After all, man was created in God's image. The identity of man created by God is a joyful identity (Zephaniah 3:17).

Analogies are often used in the Bible. This is an Eastern way of thinking in which similarities in certain matters are made clear. It begins in Genesis when God says, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Gen. 1:26a) and “And God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (verse 27). The Lord Jesus also used many analogies to clarify matters and sometimes even to hide things from others.

Think of the similarities. Jesus loved to use it. Before His eyes the spiritual world was open and exposed. He painted it in beautiful words that expressed His love. The people were at the level of: first seeing, then believing. That's why He used a lot of visualization in His parables. He had a tax token presented to Himself (Matt. 22:19), He placed a child in the middle (Matt. 18:2), He pointed (with his finger) to the lilies of the field (beauty). And furthermore on the birds of the sky (carelessness) (Matt. 6:26,28), on the fishing net on the shore of the sea (trust) (Matt. 13:47) and on the sower in his field whom He compared to the heart (spiritual well-being) (Matt. 13:3). He gave with these examples

visual education. His disciples had to learn that he who would be the greatest must be the servant of all. Jesus showed this by taking a linen cloth and a basin of water and went to wash the disciples' feet (John 13:14). They had to know that He was going to die: the bread is a sign of His body and He breaks it before their eyes (Matt. 26:26). They had to know that He would die for them, so He gave them the bread to eat (Matt. 26:26). They had to know where He would stay: He would go to the Father who is in heaven, and so He disappeared toward heaven before their eyes (Acts 1:9). All words about His death were misunderstood, but here the love that is so strong found a means that made the understanding of His death a certainty for the future: for you! Love stoops to be understandable.

Another example of where analogies are used is the countless comparisons between concepts: fertilization, growth, birth and rebirth. They are often comparisons between natural and spiritual concepts. For example, the pangs on the earth in the end times before the coming of the Lord in Matt. 24:8, Rom. 8:22,23. “For the things of Him which are invisible are known and seen by His works since the creation of the world, both His eternal power and His divinity, so that they are inexcusable” (Rom. 1:20). Here I want to limit myself to the biblical analogy of the formation of our joyful identity, in which growth that leads to that full identity is compared in a natural and spiritual sense.

PARALLELS

There are parallels between the natural birth of a child and the rebirth that the Bible speaks of.

First of all: being cut off from the placenta flow. This is similar to dying to this world (sanctified/set apart). We can only be reborn

run when we give up our own lives (Matt. 16:25). We are thus baptized into His death (Rom. 6:3). The child then starts breathing, causing the lungs to expand. So it is with everyone who believes, begotten by the Word and Spirit of God. He will receive new life when the Holy Spirit comes to live in him/her (Spirit and breath are the same in the Bible). Partly because of this, the blood in the Botalli junction, which connects the pulmonary artery to the body artery before birth, flows differently. It is, as it were, an image of the reversal in the blood (life) flow, comparable to the conversion that takes place at rebirth. It is about repentance with the whole heart (Jer. 3:10).

The opening that was present in the heart between the right and left atrium in the baby's heart before birth closes. The split heart is made one: a new heart that now functions differently. In this way we also receive a new heart to get to know Him (Jer. 24:7), a heart in which He lives. He writes the law in the heart (Heb. 10:15). And this is the true circumcision (change) of the heart according to the Spirit and not according to the letter (Rom. 2:29). The heart is now focused on the Lord to receive the spiritual breath of life from the Holy Spirit and to fill us with it. For example, the natural heart function is no longer focused on the mother, but on the breath to provide the body with oxygen. In this way our hearts are cleansed and we see God by faith (Matt. 5:8).

> *The born-again person now depends primarily on Christ, on the 'breath' of the Holy Spirit; therefore he/she lives forever, because the Holy Spirit is eternal (John 11:26).*

Because the breath is absorbed into the blood, it gains strength (energy burning) and nourishment; it purifies the body. In this way the Holy Spirit will ensure the growth and strength and purification of the newborn spiritual life. In the Bible we find many other analogies that the Creator also placed in natural birth, especially with regard to

functions of the blood that I will not go into further now. These analogies are worth a study in themselves.

Formation of identity after birth

The identity after the birth of the newborn baby is further formed in a natural sense by the non-verbal communication of the caregiver, usually the mother. In contemporary terms: the mother's brain is, as it were, downloaded into the baby's brain. This communication is primarily sensory information. By laughing, caressing, by weaning, by smell, later by eye contact, by care, we always communicate: 'We are happy that you are here'. Sweet words are spoken that the baby cannot understand but can experience: you are welcome, you are safe, you are loved. The capacity to store that information neurologically is initially limited. Therefore, the baby needs to rest a lot and when it wakes up, the party starts again and it learns more and more closeness, connection, unity and intimacy. In this way, a joyful identity is gradually built up to the extent that the baby is receptive. Of course, a lot can go wrong in the bonding and attachment system, with major consequences, as we saw. The baby's incipient identity formation takes place through interaction with the loving face of the mother (and father).

Formation of identity after rebirth

After the Fall, Adam and Eve's first reaction was to hide from the face of God. They were afraid and realized that they were naked (Gen. 3:10). Their conscience accused them, they felt guilty, their sinful nature became the norm, self-centered and self-centered, but actually under the influence of the evil one. Every man born in Adam was born in the same state ever since (Rom. 5:12). The consequences were: away from Eden, away from the face of God. Fortunately, God found the man who was hiding again: “Adam, where are you?” And He himself has through the gospel of Jesus

Christ provided a solution. Through the atoning work of Jesus, the way to the face of God has been made possible again (Rom. 6:4). I have indicated above, in the case of natural birth, that the Holy Spirit comes to live in man at rebirth (Rom. 8:10,11). By faith in the finished work of Christ we are born again and one of the first results according to Hebrews 9:14 is that He cleanses our conscience from actions that lead to

death. There is forgiveness of sins, there is no more fear of guilt and punishment, but there is joy and liberation and salvation! The writer of Hebrews urges us to then come before God (Heb. 10: 19-22). In the old covenant the high priest was allowed to enter the temple into the inner sanctuary once a year, but now through the blood (life) of Jesus we may come before God with a sincere heart and a clean conscience and a body washed with pure water! Thus our new identity is formed before God. A joyful and peaceful identity, many believers indicate that in that first period they are overwhelmed with the loving closeness of God. This is often called 'first love'. This is similar to the mother's abundant love and closeness to the baby. Not many demands are yet placed on the born-again person, the secure attachments and bonds and connection and intimacy with God still need to be further formed.

The face of God

In a concordance we read that the word "face" appears more than 600 times in the Bible. The best-known text is the 'Old Testament blessing' in Num. 6:24-26:

> *"May the Lord bless you and protect you. May the Lord make the light of His countenance shine upon you and have mercy on you. May the Lord turn His face to you and give you peace."*

Furthermore we read:

Ps. 4:7-8 "Let the light of your countenance shine on us, and in you my heart is more pleased."

Ps. 89:16 Blessed are the people who bear witness to Your name and live, O Lord, in the light of Your countenance. They shout Your name day after day.

Ps. 21:7 'For You have made him richly blessed forever. You overwhelm him with joy before You."

Ps. 16:11 "You make known to me the path of life; abundance of joy is in Your presence, and at Your right hand is beauty forever."

This last text is quoted by Peter in his important speech in Acts 2:28: "You have shown me the ways of life; You will fill me with joy before You."

Proverbs 15:30: "A smiling face rejoices the heart."

And of Jesus it is written metaphorically (about the early days, before He came to this earth): Proverbs 8:30-31 (Willibrord translation) 'I stood at his side as a performer* and I was his joy, rejoicing in his presence day after day, again and again, rejoicing in his kingdom and I found my joy with the people.'

> *These passages speak of the enormous joy of life that it brings when we learn to rejoice in God's joyful look at us.*

It gives us energy. It dispels old false (poisonous) shame that others may have placed on us by how they had treated us. God, the Most High, disagrees with anyone who looks down on me, with anyone who abuses me, with anyone who does not see me as valuable! Have you not seen His face? His whole face says that I – and you too – can be there! That – through Jesus' work of reconciliation – we are okay with Him!

Further development of natural identity

Before intellectual development takes further shape, the newborn's brain practices two important skills. Firstly: learning the capacity to process emotions and quickly calm down after an emotional peak. Our brains have limitations in processing joy and happiness. A toddler becomes self-aware when he or she is 6 months old. This mainly happens through 'mindsight': look at someone and you know what they think about you, especially if you know someone better. Toddlers with poor attachments and attachments no longer have any feeling about this at all. At the age of one, children can appear differently in their faces. The 6-12 month old child develops his identity by being joyful and happy. From 12 months to eighteen months, the child learns to return from angry or negative emotions to people they love, a return to joy and peace from a negative emotion.

For example, if the mother says 'yuck' with a poopy diaper, the toddler will get the fright of his life, because someone who loves you just makes a dismissive gesture and sound! This is a very strong negative emotion that needs to be processed. If the mother then acts sweet and kind again, the toddler learns that less pleasant things can happen within a safe loving relationship, but that things can still calm down because the learned affirmative and safe bonds are not easily broken. This way it learns to calm down from a strong emotion. The extent to which this is possible depends on the neurological capabilities of the identity center in the brain. This is the ROPC, the Right Orbital Prefrontal Cortex. Right means the right hemisphere of the brain, orbital means below the eye socket, so behind the right eye, prefrontal means at the front of the brain, and cortex means the cortex part of the brain. A person is born

without this area and it can grow to 35% of the size of the entire brain after 18 months. This growth depends on the stimulation of the brain in this area. If not developed or stimulated, you often find atrophy or even breakdown of learned connections.

The limbic system myelinates (a fatty substance comes around the nerve that improves conduction speed) when the child is 15 months old. Strong emotions are experienced faster and more intensely. It seems as if an extra accelerating force is used for anger and fear. If the child has built a joyful identity and has learned to return to it, it will not cause any problems. And otherwise children can sometimes have terrible tantrums that are almost impossible to get out of. They do not learn to respond relationally, because until then each part of the emotions and brain develops on its own. With good development of the ROCP, the toddler learns to be one person through feelings of joy, as a result of which various parts of the brain are directed by the ROCP. The toddler later learns to synchronize with others. If this does not happen with feelings, the toddler quickly becomes moody and anger and fear are no longer experienced as your own. If these processes are not learned around the eighteenth month, it becomes increasingly difficult. If you have not learned to return to joy, at some point you may even miss the opportunities for neurological relaxation. In adulthood, this leads to psychological problems in 60 to 70%.

Further development of spiritual identity

After the 'first love', born again believers must exercise the capacity for joy with God. They must learn to come before God and learn to rest in Him. You can also say: learn to calm yourself with Him. So don't learn to be strong in yourself, but to become strong in Him. In this context, Psalm 84:5-8 (NIV) states:

> *“Blessed are those who dwell in Your house, for they may praise You continually. Blessed are those who take refuge in You with the paths to You in their hearts. When they pass through a valley of barrenness, it turns into an oasis for them; rich blessing comes down like rain. They go forth more and more vigorously to appear before God in Zion.*

So it is practicing on the beaten path (NBV) from our heart to the heart of God, before His face. As that path is walked more and more practiced, it becomes more passable and easier. Even if we walk through a valley of barrenness (compare 'yuck' with the toddler), if in our heart (mind) there is that beaten path, the barrenness will be turned into a source of joy and peace in His presence, from strength to strength.

Through various events of sin and stress, we must learn to come to the face of God for purification, joy and peace. Only then do we become spiritually strong or as David says in Psalm 51:

> *"Create in me, O God, a pure heart, renew my spirit, make me steadfast, do not banish me from your presence. Do not take away your Holy Spirit from me. Save me, give me the joy of old, the strength of a mighty spirit."*

A toddler enjoys playing hide and seek. That means hiding your face every now and then, for example under a cloth, and then emerging smiling. This teaches you that even if you don't see me for a moment, I am still there and suddenly appear.

> *That is also a spiritual principle: we must trust that God is 'in control' in our lives, even if we do not see Him or notice Him.*

The most important learning process for a baby and toddler up to 3 years old is learning to receive. If this is not learned naturally and spiritually, stormy and superficial relationships will arise later in adulthood.

GROWING TOWARDS ADULTITY

In the book 'Living according to God's plan' the various tasks that must be learned for natural and spiritual maturity are described in detail. Unfortunately, this cannot all be elaborated in this article.

For 4-12 year olds, the most important learning task is to be able to take care of themselves. In a spiritual sense this means learning: praying yourself,

submitting wishes to God, developing perseverance, learning to discover what unique qualities God has given him or her. If this is not learned, the child will not be able to take (mental) responsibility for itself later, when it has become an adult.

From the age of 13 until the birth of the first child, children must be taught to care for two people at the same time. If this is not learned, the adult will later be unable to enter into mutually satisfying relationships.

After the age of 13, people learn to bond with peers and develop a group identity, they learn to contribute to the community and to feel connected to it. It goes without saying that a healthy religious community can play a major role in this.

For the elderly, those who are of the age of adult children, the most important task is to take care of the community without expecting anything in return. If this task is not accomplished, communities of faith will be characterized by less and less spiritual maturity. An elder values each member of the community for who he is and will lead the community and help it grow spiritually.

For many people it is difficult to come before God. The following exercise is an example of how this can be done in a structured manner. Learning to listen before God, how He sees you. Learn to receive His joy in us!

9.9 IDENTITY IN CHRIST (WITH MEDITATION)

Knowing who you are in the face of God is your strength. It is important to discover that and draw on that strength. Otherwise you are like a flower vase with cracks in it, the water seeps away and the flowers in your life wither. Another metaphor for it is to remain connected as a vine to Jesus the true vine and God the Father who is the vinedresser.

In John 15:1-8, Jesus says, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he cuts off, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean through everything

what I said to you. Abide in me, and I will abide in you. A branch that does not remain in the vine cannot bear fruit of itself. So you cannot bear fruit unless you abide in me. I am the vine and you are the branches. If anyone abides in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit. But without me you can't do anything. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a vine and withers away; it is gathered with other branches, thrown into the fire and burned. If you abide in me and my words remain in you, you can ask whatever you want and it will be done. The greatness of my Father will be revealed when you bear much fruit and are my disciples."

METHOD

Take at least half an hour every week to investigate this and meditate on it from God's Word. We often have wrong ideas when it comes to our identity. Wrong criteria such as physical or psychosocial often play a major role. It is of great importance for Christian identity that we come into contact with God and learn to listen to what God says through His Word and Spirit, who we are. For this we must learn to listen to Him. Not only intellectual matters play a role here, but also feelings and associations. In the following Bible texts, God uses dozens of images and comparisons of who we, believers in Christ, may be before Him. In this 'quiet time' exercise or Christian meditation exercise you can tune into Him and who He says you are.

As an aid, you have a few questions to help you structure the exercise. Some questions can partly be answered intellectually, such as the context, conditions, etc. There are also questions that appeal more to the right side of the brain, such as what associations you have or the question: how does God speak through that text? For example, if you take the text that we are the children of God, you may wonder why God uses that comparison in His Word and what is going on within that relationship. There are many qualities of a good father: he gives love, he cares, he...

He educates, he listens, he shares life, etc. Then during that quiet time something can stand out: a good father picks up his child when he stumbles and helps him further. These are things that you most likely know, but that can suddenly be brought intensely to your attention again by the Holy Spirit and the Word. And that you need at that moment or that can encourage you. You may then say: 'God spoke to me this way, through that word.' Of course, the answers must be tested: do they come from my old life or even from the evil one? But if you pray for protection and if you listen to the voice of God from those biblical examples, you learn what your identity is, who you are. You train your spiritual antenna before God. (see the article on identity before God).

Let the purpose and method of this exercise sink in. The idea is to select a text from the many Scriptures that follow. You must first read this Bible text in context. Then ask God in prayer to make this text clear to your heart and mind.

Thank God for the content of the text. Ask God to speak to you personally. Write the text in your own words.

If images or comparisons are made in the text, try to describe what those images mean. Are there any conditions set in the content of the text? Write down what associations you have with this, write down how the Lord Jesus Christ speaks to you and how you are encouraged by this text.

Also read it aloud to the Lord as a prayer of thanksgiving, and also read it to people you trust. Even if other things come to mind later at a different time, you can write them down.

Make all notes in a separate notebook or folder. You can print the questionnaire again and again. Date your notes. This way you can build an interesting document for yourself, from which you can draw a lot of support and strength later.

WHO AM I?

Matt. 5:13

I am the salt of the earth

Matt. 5:14

I am the light of the world

John 1:12

I am a child of God.

John 15:1.5

I am a branch of the true vine, a channel for the love of Christ

John 15:15

I am a friend of Christ

John 15:16

I have been chosen and appointed by Christ to bear His fruit

Rom. 6:18

I am a servant of righteousness

Rom. 6:22

I am a servant of God

Rom. 8:14,15; Gal. 3:26; 4:6

I am a son of God; God is my spiritual Father

Rom. 8:17

I am a joint heir with Christ, and partaker of Christ's inheritance

1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19

I am God's temple. His Spirit and His life dwell in me

1 Cor. 6:17

I have cleaved to the Lord and am one spirit with Him

1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 5:30

I am a member of the Body of Christ

1 Cor. 15:10

I am NOT the great “I AM” (Ex. 3:14; John 8:24,28,58), but by the grace of God I am who I am

2 Cor. 5:17

I am a new creation

2 Cor. 5:18,19

I have been reconciled to God and He has given me the ministry of reconciliation

Gal.3: 26,28

I am a son of God and I am one with other Christians in Christ

Gal. 4:6,7

I am an heir of God because I am a son of God

Eph. 1:1, 1 Cor. 1:2, Phil. 1:1, Col. 1:2

I am a saint

Eph. 2:10

I am God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do His work

Eph. 2:19

I am a householder of God

Eph. 3:1; 4:1

I am a prisoner in the Lord

Eph. 4:24

I am righteous and holy

Phil. 3:20; Eph. 2:6

I am a citizen of a realm in heaven, and I already have a place in the heavenly realms

Col. 3:3

I am hidden with Christ in God

Col. 3:4

I am an expression of the life of Christ because He is my life

Col. 3:12; 1 Thess. 1:4

I am chosen by God, holy and loved.

1 Thess. 5:5

I am a child of light and not of darkness

Heb. 3:1

I share in the heavenly calling

Heb. 3:14

I share in Christ, I share in His life

1 Peter 2:5

I am a living stone and let myself be used to build a spiritual house

1 Peter 2:9,10

I belong to a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's possession.

1 Peter 2:11

I am a sojourner and stranger in this world where I live temporarily.

1 Peter 5:8

I am an enemy of the devil

1 John 3:1,2

I am a child of God and I will be like Christ when He returns to earth

1 John 5:18

I am born of God. Evil, the devil, has no hold on me.

Handles

Study the above texts carefully and think about them prayerfully.

You can use the following tools during the meditations.

what does another translation say?

what is the context in the Bible?

pray, ask God to bring this text into your heart and mind. Ask Him to speak to you personally.

write the text in your own words.

do you see or think of an image or a comparison?

Are there any conditions set in the text?

what associations do you have with this?

write down how the Lord Jesus speaks to you in this text.

are you encouraged? Why?

thank the Lord in a prayer of thanksgiving, mention your encouragements!

Are there people you would like to share this with?

comments, notes, thoughts.

INTRODUCING THE LIFE MODEL

10.1 Growth in Divine nature

The LIFE Model is, as the name suggests, a model that describes the life cycle of a person from birth to death. This description is idealistic in scope, that is, it shows what life would be like under ideal conditions. It does not describe the abnormalities that life can bring about. The LIFE Model is based on five factors that people need to flourish. To really understand this chapter, it is important to read and study Jim Wilder's book Living according to God's plan. In this chapter you will learn to better understand the holistic connection between the aforementioned themes, you will understand the course material in a broader perspective and the LIFE Model will help you with this.

Five factors

The LIFE Model provides five factors that are of fundamental importance for healthy human development. They are:

1. a place where he or she feels at home.

2. an ability to receive and give life

3. an ability to recover from errors (desynchronizations),

4. a growth or maturation process.



1. a life based on one's identity (heart).

Jim Wilder's LIFE Model takes both growth and recovery into account. The factors mentioned are important for physical growth, emotional growth, growth within the family, growth within the community and spiritual growth. They are necessary — in the order in which they are listed — for strong and healthy development. In reverse order, starting with a life based on one's true identity, these five factors offer a good diagnostic tool to detect stagnation in someone's development. Based on this analysis, a plan of action can be drawn up

recovery are drawn up. In this way, the LIFE Model can mean a lot for the recovery of identity in individuals, families and communities, so that people learn to live from a harmonious and authentic identity, which we describe as 'the heart that Jesus' gave us. This authentic identity is both communal and individual.

We have a body and a brain that can generally keep up well, but refuse to work in certain matters. Our knees, for example, can only bend in one direction and will lock when we try to move in the other direction. Our eyes can perceive a broad spectrum of light, but infrared light and X-rays go unnoticed. In the same way, our identity is also bound by boundaries. Within these limits, anything is possible.

However, the fact that there is a wide range of options does not mean that we make optimal use of them. This is because we develop our identity in response to what we see other people doing.

> *The identity develops like a cutting and not like a seed.*

We receive the life of those who have gone before us and use this to develop ourselves physically, emotionally and spiritually.

REDEMPTION AND MATURITY

The LIFE Model is a Christian model because it distinguishes between salvation and maturity. Most people agree that not everyone grows up well. Among them are those who think that maturity can only be achieved through human effort. They believe that everything needed for this is already present within each of us. Christians disagree with this on principle.

> *Christians assume that something is always missing as long as the (re)connection with God the Creator has not been restored.*

If you believe that you already have everything needed to reach full adulthood, there is no need to read any further. But if you agree with me that there are areas that you cannot heal yourself, I would like to invite you to join the discussion that has been going on for several thousand years.

In our development there is not only a human effort, but also a Divine effort. This is aimed at teaching us to live and making us experience how He intended life. It is therefore very important for us to distinguish between what is our share and what is God's share. I became aware of this through an experiment in 1969 where I decided to try God's way of life and see if it would really make me prosper. It soon became clear to me that many non-believing people were doing much better than some devout believers who had placed their expectations on the LORD and seemed to be making no progress! Careful research has ultimately led me to the conclusion that God has made a clear separation between what is His and our responsibility. This conclusion is supported by many. I summarize it in two statements:

1. God is responsible for salvation.

2. Man is responsible for his development towards adulthood.

Man has been given dominion by God over his individual and communal development towards maturity. This has already been established in the order of creation. This includes the ability to understand and complete the development towards adulthood. Man is able to take note of the way he grows up. This is his responsibility and within his capabilities. We understand how families and communities develop and how this can happen in a harmonious way. This is our territory and is not beyond our capabilities.

The maturation of ourselves and the world around us is an achievable goal that we can achieve through human activities. When we handle our responsibility well, we are able to develop an authentic identity for ourselves, but also for our family and our community. Without our own input and guidance from the community, we will remain immature.

WHAT IS SALVATION?

We find our true identity in the heart that Jesus gives us. If we are unable to look at God and ourselves from this heart, we will fail to become fully ourselves. In other words, we miss our purpose and live in sin.

God's redemptive work is aimed at getting us out of this condition! Because of our fallen (sinful) nature we have become corrupted and damaged. This blocks or deflects our attempts to grow. It is not within our power to free ourselves from this. Salvation is not our field of endeavor; we fail again and again in influencing or achieving salvation.

Salvation is a Divine activity. The apostle John tells us that the search was made in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, and that only the Lion of the tribe of Judah was worthy

has been found to deal with evil (Rev. 5:1-14). Salvation is Leo's territory!

Some aspects of God's redemptive work include:

Rebirth: we receive a new heart.

Sanctification: we are restored to our true identity, healing: we are healed from the wounds of sin.

Spiritual Adoption: We are adopted into a spiritual family.

Deliverance: We are delivered from and/or protected from the attacks of evil.

Spiritual gifts: we receive the means to participate in God's work of redemption.

We are unable to understand the big picture of salvation. Our inadequacy is not due to chance or lack of coherence in the work of redemption, but to our finitude and the greatness of redemption. It is therefore very special that the redeemed can play an important role in redemption. You can rightly call this a bonus or gift from God. The ways we do this are referred to in the Bible as “spiritual gifts.” Because we cannot direct God's work of redemption ourselves, we are often led in unexpected directions. This allows us to learn something about salvation, but also experience it at the same time. The result is that we return to our own area of work: growth towards adulthood!

Deliverance, healing, rescue and adoption

Within our work area we are focused on growth and recovery. This is influenced by at least the following four aspects of God's redemptive work: deliverance, healing, salvation and adoption. We may participate in these four processes from our heart, our soul, our mind and our community, through prayer and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit from whom we receive everything.

LIBERATION

refers to God's powerful action ending attacks on our lives. The police can free us from an abusive partner or a burglar. The army can liberate a country from an invader. But spiritual attacks can only be stopped by God.

HEALING

has to do with restoring our ability to receive and transmit life. Great damage has been done to us by hardships suffered and attacks by evil. This has greatly weakened our ability to live. We can only recover from this if we – as individuals and as a community – receive healing.

SALVATION

is a request to God to fully restore our lives – through Jesus. We thereby recognize that we are causing brokenness around us instead of life (sometimes even contributing to destruction). We recognize that we need God's help. He can restore us and make our efforts fruitful. The desired change in our lives is achieved by fully allowing the life that Jesus offers. We do this by attuning to Him in all areas of our lives.

ADOPTION

is a way to reconnect with others to receive and transmit life. When we have learned to do this, we need to have around us these sources and receivers of life, linked together by the bonds of love. By

This adoption makes us part of God's family.

> *Adoption is therefore also described as being grafted into the vine. This connects us to life itself, so that we will be able to bear fruit.*

This fruit is the spiritual result of the adoption work of the Holy Spirit.

Adoption is the aspect of God's work of redemption that is most closely linked to the human mission to grow. In evangelism, healing, and deliverance ministries, this is often referred to as “aftercare” or “discipleship.” In fact, it means that through adoption we are added to the spiritual family in which we are allowed to grow up.

> *We choose the term 'spiritual adoption' here and not 'sense of community' because we are talking about more than friendly relationships within a spiritual family.*

The spiritual family is the place God designed to recover from Type A trauma (which is caused by a lack of loving bonds). Natural family ties are tested and changed by spiritual bonds of friendship, by exposing the defects of these ties. This partly explains why many churches resist spiritual adoption.

No restoration would be necessary if no damage had been done to humanity by the Fall and its consequences. The entire creation suffers from this. No person can grow up pure and pure, as God intended, with the exception of Jesus, His only begotten Son. In Jesus we may receive salvation and redemption, through which all the consequences of sin can ultimately be repaired. This salvation works directly in our midst through God's actions and indirectly through His children – the people of God, His church. Because God did not design His salvation to be a one-way journey

to heaven, his followers are challenged to participate in overcoming sin in everyday – earthly – existence. This renewal of the heart and life is the effect of sanctification and redemption. Once saved, through repentance and forgiveness of our sins, we may live as if God's Kingdom has come and His will is done on earth as well as in heaven. Too often we see our salvation as something that is primarily intended for after this life and not as a way of living in the here and now that continues into eternity. There is plenty of work to do here on earth and God expects us to do this too. Our works and deeds cannot save us, but they do show that we are a new creation. It is up to us to grow into adulthood together with all the saints. We can achieve this by living from our new heart, through which He can sanctify, heal and deliver us from evil. We are and are being saved.

TYPE A AND B TRAUMA'S

Traumas are wounds (and damage) that are left behind in our identity, causing us to emerge less well than God intended us to be when He gave us life. Traumas stagnate growth. Traumas block and delay the desired development towards adulthood. Traumatic injuries (type B traumas) are caused by something that was forced on us that was not wanted or good – such as a bullet that causes wounds in the body it entered. Traumatic damage (type A trauma) is caused by something missing from what the soul needed – just as malnutrition disfigures the body.

Traumas not only cause damage and pain, but also block and delay the growth process towards adulthood.

Especially when the person in question is still very young, trauma can seriously mutilate, disfigure and hinder the development towards healthy adulthood and the normal functioning of his identity. When growth towards adulthood is slow or stagnant, always look for the presence of these two types of trauma.

SIN = MISSING YOUR TARGET

Sin adds something to our lives that should not be there, and it takes away something that should be there.

Sin (dysfunction, missing your purpose) comes from three sources: the world, the flesh, and evil powers. It always causes stagnation in the development towards adulthood.

Making the consequences of sin disappear is God's work of redemption. He alone is worthy to direct this process and accomplish His Divine purpose – our salvation. This can only be achieved through a life of the Spirit, that is, through a heart that has come alive to God. Too often, pastors, counselors, and churches try to create a plan through which they can direct and control God's work of salvation. The results are the same in what you can expect from works of the flesh.

We are too one-sided when we accept only God's guidance in removing what blocks or hinders growth and adding what is lacking for a complete and full life through the Spirit. We must also correct a development that is misdirected. I once planted three small trees together and twisted their young, flexible trunks around each other. Subsequently, they became connected to each other in their growth. In the same way, people can also grow up when they are guided by someone who makes them follow a winding path. Perhaps they have been given a wrong example of how a man, a woman,

should be a father, a mother or a Christian. Perhaps they have been taught to laugh at those who cry, to curse those who curse them, to take revenge on those who are not faithful, to drink just for fun, to lust after many women or other men, to control others through threats or anger if they do not get their way. These habits have been ingrained so long and deeply that they have become part of their character. This is certainly not what God intended for their development.

DIVINE INSTRUCTIONS IN THE EVENT OF DErailMENT

A Christian must apply the instructions from God's Word to his derailed development. God's teaching exposes our faults and shows His true desire.

Repentance, recognition and forgiveness lead to healing, liberation and a spiritual friendship with God and His people. Prayer, praise, worship, and the fruit of the Spirit are the beginning of developing godly character. Then real maturity can begin to develop. Maturity only develops in the environment of and through fellowship with God's family.

When the two obstacles are removed and the derailed development is corrected under the guidance of God's Spirit, then a Christian is ready to take up his own part of the recovery process: the development of true maturity. True growth into maturity requires that every aspect of the Christian life, every provision of God for our salvation, every teaching from the Word, every gentle guidance of the Holy Spirit, be given full scope.

10.2 SPIRITUAL ADOPTION WITH ASSISTANCE FROM THE CHURCH

Humans were created as social beings. Connectedness in relationship with God, with other people and nature is an important

rich characteristic of life. The 85 billion brain cells in our brains have one important purpose, namely to make contact with the world within ourselves and outside us. We are all part of a natural community

consisting of family, friends, colleagues and acquaintances. In addition, we are also part of a spiritual community that is either concerned with God or with His adversary. If a person does not receive the love and support he needs, he will develop a greater susceptibility to evil. In this article I would like to pass on Dr. Jim Wilder's view on spiritual adoption as he explained it in his book 'Defeated the Red Dragon'. His years of experience as a care provider have made him realize that a person can only achieve real recovery when he is accepted by and in a community that approaches him with love and meets his needs. In the book 'Defeated the Red Dragon', Wilder shows what blessings and conditions are associated with spiritually adopting people into the church's care and in particular the help given to victims of occultism and Satanism.

ADOPTION

All believers are adopted and connected to God by faith and grace. With the exception of the Lord Jesus, there is no natural offspring of God. When a person is adopted, all their bonds are permanent, all their relationships are real. Charles H. Kraft once said that the true Christian life is made up of elements of truth, power, and relationship. However, Christianity in our postmodern culture can be said to have developed greatly when it comes to truth and is just beginning to discover its power, but is still completely lost when it comes to relationships.

Truth and power, if they are not confirmed by loving relationships, are emphatically rejected by Paul in 1Cor.13. Relationship, power and truth are inseparable. Salvation is the work of God by which He adds strangers to His people, His body. It is important that 'the

stranger" must be adopted into the family by the people of God before he can find life or attain spiritual maturity. Because our family structures have been disrupted through salvation, both among the 'stranger' and the people of God, people are inclined to resist this out of fear. For many, the costs of the 'changes' appear to be too high. They return home, waste away and withdraw. For the strong who are willing to die and for the weak who want to live, spiritual adoption brings total transformation. In order to find a place for yourself in a family as an ex-foreigner, it is necessary that this family makes a place available for you.

RELATIONAL ATTACHMENT MODEL

Many cult members, New Age followers, Satanists, occultists, but also atheists often have a life that consists of systematic changes in the meanings of relationships, gender roles and symbols. These changes are often corruptions of the original Biblical relational meanings. Western methods of evangelism, which are based on rational conversion and mutual understanding of those relationships and symbols, are of little use. It appears to be necessary to reinterpret every word and meaning we give to relationships based on our faith and to correct existing ideas about them.

> *Most Westerners, when it comes to conversion, tend toward a rational didactic model rather than a relational attachment model. The relational model is also referred to as incarnation theology.*

This theology is described by E. Thomas and Elizabeth S. Brewster in the booklet 'Entering into a connection and the missionary assignment'. We will first take a closer look at different attachment models and bonds that exist between the two spiritual families of God and of the evil one.

FEAR TIES AND LOVE TIES, STRONG AND WEAK TIES

What is stronger: fear or love? What motivates and connects people, what makes them productive, what ensures understanding? How can you really reach people, and what sets them in motion? How do you keep children out of trouble and how do you get their attention and teach them something? How can you get their attention and make them care? How do you keep the family together, and how can you stop the whining or yelling or drinking, and how do you keep them home at night? What can withstand anger, rebellion, laziness and indifference? What do you do when everything threatens to fail? What is stronger: love or fear?

Our attachment relationships with other people are emotional connections that help us get our needs met as well as those of others. We bond or connect through fear, joy, hate, love, lust, excitement, guilt, shame and other feelings.

> *Although there are many different emotions, they all ultimately boil down to fear or love. Fear bonds make us avoid painful experiences, while love bonds draw us toward others.*

Our bonds or attachment relationships make us respond to each other, and are based on one or both of these motivations. People respond because they love us or fear us. Conversely, if they do not love and fear us, they will ignore us. The emotions we exchange through our intensive relationships with others become our relational response patterns, in other words: our relational dynamics.

These attachment relationships can be weak or strong. But we all have our own basic attachment patterns and associated emotions that we rely on when all else fails. We expect that these emotions will produce the strongest bonds with others. Every family develops such preferential bonds or emotions. Each community often has its preference on which certain forms of attachment are based.

Every church and denomination mainly relies on certain attachment styles. And in every culture, bonds or attachment relationships change.

CHANGE MOTIVATION, FROM FEAR TO LOVE

The choices and goals in our lives come from our thoughts. Our motivations come from our emotions. While we work very hard to educate our thoughts and correct our beliefs, few people train their motivation and emotions with the same discipline.

> *As far as our nervous system is concerned, our thoughts work well when they are motivated by love and desire, and poorly when they are motivated by fear.*

From a moral point of view, love is also superior. Perfect, that is, mature, perfect telio love casts out fear (1 John 4:18).

It is recognizable that fear motives creep into our lives because we do not mature properly. We learn our motivation during childhood through close relationships. Whatever emotions our parents use to motivate us becomes our internal source of motivation throughout life. If these early bonds arise from love and closeness, they serve us well, but if they arise from fear and avoidance of pain, our motivational system remains immature.

Fear connections arise as a result of failed attempts at self-preservation. Self-preservation is the great value of fear, but early experiences in anxious relationships from which we cannot escape cause very negative and disturbing internal emotions. When these unpleasant emotions exceed our ability to independently return to joy and tranquility, we begin to avoid pain as a form of self-preservation. Over time, avoiding pain becomes the central focus of fear associations, even when there is no real risk of overwhelming our emotional capacity.

Characteristics and differences between love and fear bonds

Love bonds

Anxiety tapes

1. Based on Love and characterized by truth, closeness, intimacy, joy, peace, perseverance and true giving.

1. Based on fear and characterized by pain, humiliation, despair, shame and guilt and/or fear of rejection or other harmful consequences.

2. The bond is maintained by desire. “I connect with you because I want to be with you.”

2. The bond is maintained through avoidance. “I connect because I want to avoid pain and negative feelings.”

3. The bond becomes stronger when we grow closer to each other and also when we are apart. “As we get closer, I'll get to know you better. When we are apart, I am still blessed by my memory of you.”

3. Fear-related bonds become stronger by growing closer to each other or when people are no longer together. “The closer we grow, the more frightening it becomes, so I have to avoid closeness, or the more we are apart, the more frightening it becomes, so I have to manipulate closeness.”

4. We can share both positive and negative feelings; the bond becomes stronger by sharing these valuable feelings.

4. We can share neither positive nor negative feelings; the bond becomes stronger by (1) avoiding negative/positive feelings or (2) by focusing only on negative feelings.

5. Both partners in this relationship benefit; the band challenges everyone to truly be themselves.

5. Only participants on one side of the relationship benefit: the relationship inhibits people from being themselves.

6. Honesty (truth) is the basis of the relationship.

6. Deception and deceit are part of the relationship.

7. Through this bond people grow into adulthood, and one becomes equipped to get to know the 'real self'.

7. Attachment based on fear increasingly hinders growth and prevents people from discovering their 'own self'.

8. Love bonds are controlled by the front part of the brain, the 'joy center', and regulates 'how do I act within myself?'

8. Anxiety bands are controlled from the back part of the brain and regulate 'how do I get what I want?'

CHANGE OF IDENTITY

Our identity determines and controls what we do, think and feel. Changing our identity changes our thinking.

Someone who controls our identity also controls our thinking. A life-giving community will always present us with the truth about our identity, while people who seek to exercise power seek to alter our sense of who we are to suit their own purposes.

It is unimaginable how quickly an identity change can take place with an incomplete and weak personality structure. A personality can be completely changed within two or three weeks through a process of breakdown. The road to Satanism, for example, can be traveled very quickly if the people standing on the sidelines do their work 'properly'. Why would anyone allow their identity to be dismantled? This is only

possible if he is deceived. The plan of action is devilishly simple: make the other person feel powerless and then tell him that what is making him fall apart, what is bad for him, will make him strong and powerful. For example, severing all family ties or taking revenge on perceived opponents. The harder he tries, the more he will fall apart. The more he will fall apart, the harder he will try. In contrast, the church can provide space for a unique individual and group identity based on love. A place where there is room for spiritual growth and caring for each other.

THE FAMILY OF GOD

If we see the church as a family, we distinguish a network of lasting and supportive relationships with an eternal value. The elders are like a father and mother to the orphans in this family and are responsible for maintaining the identity of the community. Unlike the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which require no human connection, the fruit of the Holy Spirit abounds in the enduring relationships among the members of God's family. This fruit makes a joyful life possible between parents, children, brothers and sisters in faith. The spiritual family is needed to protect, serve, and flourish each of its members. Thanks to her care, everyone is able to grow, mature and transform. This is the way

where God gives us life and we can pass it on to others. We are constantly discovering new relationships and bonds through which we can share life.

THE STRANGER

The Bible speaks about “the stranger” more than a hundred times. The stranger is someone who does not have the necessary supportive relationships and can therefore easily be ignored or abused by others.

> *Foreigners are mentioned in the same breath as widows and orphans who often face the same problems.*

The way these people are treated was seen by the Old Testament prophets as the ultimate test of true faith. In this context, Jesus speaks about the sheep and the goats that appear before His throne (Matt.25:31-46). Spiritual families must include those who do not have a family into their circle. We must not forget widows, orphans and strangers in our midst. But we can also see divorced people and children from broken families as orphans in a certain sense. People new to a community, survivors of sectarian groups, refugees, and members of minority groups are also modern strangers. There are many individuals who do not have access to a natural community. Nowhere is the need for family more evident than among those who come from a cult or destructive group and become Christians. These converts have given up both their spiritual and biological families to follow God. Like Ruth, the Moabite woman, they had to leave their gods and family behind to enter the 'church land' as a stranger. People who come into our community from new paganism or a destructive group are the touchstone of the nature and strength of our bonds of faith. Ruth and Naomi,

the two ancestors of Jesus can be an inspiration to us in this regard. Naomi may have been a bitter old widow, but her bonds of faith have withstood every test. And Ruth's cry, “Your people are my people and your God is my God,” has become an important standard of love and the gateway to the spiritual family.

A NEW CONNECTION, SPIRITUAL ADOPTION

In times of disaster you can see who your family is. This applies not only to strangers but also to others within the family of God.

We find an example with Mary and John at the foot of the cross.

> *“Standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother and her sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala.” When Jesus saw His mother standing and the disciple whom He loved standing with her, He said to His mother, “This is your son, and then to the disciple, This is your mother. From that time*

on the disciple took her into his home" (John 19:25-27). This short adoption procedure was performed by the Lord Jesus Himself. The fact that both John and Mary were adults did not alter the need for adoption. They had both lost someone very dear to them. John understood very well that love is the center of the family of God. John was blessed with a new family. Although most of us would be willing to welcome Mother Mary into our homes, we tend to avoid that place, at the foot of the cross, where the adoptions take place.

Conditions for spiritual parenthood in adoption

Spiritual adoption is not a technique or role-play, it is an eternal family bond that permanently changes the family structure for the parent, the adoptee, siblings and other family members. The idea must come from the Holy Spirit and be tested. And even if the Lord has given the order, it is still an indispensable necessity that the Lord control the process

leads. "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain" (Ps.127:1). In spiritual parenting, attention must often be paid to A and B traumas. Supportive therapies and care are often also indicated. It requires a lot of care, patience, restraint and self-control. In fact, spiritual maturity is needed. Of course, demands must be made for spiritual parenthood. In 'The Red Dragon Defeated' Wilder names numerous conditions for the authenticity of the adoption, the requirements and spiritual growth of the spiritual parents and conditions of the sons and daughters. Spiritual parents must be able to withstand painful situations and be aware of the developmental age (which is not the same as the calendar age) of the person they are adopting. Parents must recognize that spiritual parenting is also a redemption process for themselves. Adoptees must be prepared for the fact that their new parents' natural (biological) family will not always recognize their spiritual relationship. Resistance or jealousy may arise from the biological family, for example a son or daughter, who may find it difficult to digest the spiritual adoption of others. It is difficult to deal with the new relationships.

Adoption in a church community

Both admitting and reconnecting people have far-reaching consequences for the social structure. The activities involve costs that can never be met by one person. There are always several people involved. Joseph, Mary, and other mothers in Bethlehem and the surrounding area all had to pay a high price for redemption. The reaction of the

salvation community always comes down to accepting death and giving life. They must agree to change the family structure so that new connections can be created.

The needs of young adults for a group identity are exploited by youth gangs and destructive groups, but often ignored by the church.

It generally prefers to 'protect' its structures from the disruptive energy of young people. The greater the disruptions that sin has caused in the natural community, the more drastic will be the adjustments brought about by redemption. Salvation changes individual family, family, and community identities, whether we want it to or not. Salvation is never something we can do for ourselves, it only occurs when others are willing to pay our costs and we pay theirs. As a community of redemption, we should not think that it is we who effect redemption. The price was paid as God's gift to us. Jesus accomplished that redemption. The cost we pay for our salvation has to do exclusively with the earthly lives of our new family members. The church community must rally around the newly adopted members and build strong bonds of love with them. This happens by sharing in their pain and then returning to joy with them. In this process, hearts become visible and bonds of fear are broken. The wounded newcomer will also confront us with our relational fears. Cleansing and growth takes place, the death of the old group identity gives more and more access to the new identity. It takes great grace for the immature, weak, and wounded person to deal with the resistance, fear, self-deception, ignorance, suspicion, pride, rejection, and self-centeredness of

established communities. It is thanks to God's grace that they remain with us despite everything. This is how God's actions become visible.

Care from the community

Hope for the weak, wounded and immature members of our family comes from the care provided by the community. Some aspects of that care are:

1. Prayer ministry.

2. Trauma teams.

3. Spiritual adoption within the family structure.

4. Inclusion of the weak and injured in the community.

5. Liberation teams.

6. Community life.

This is often help that professional care providers cannot provide. Not least because they are trained to keep a professional distance and because of the protection of privacy data. Without support from the church, “professionals” will often be unable to provide adequate help and facilitate their clients' need for community. Without the support of family or community, the changes initiated in the care process will prove to be unfeasible or unsustainable. It goes beyond just some 'support groups' where some can sometimes offer some support and perhaps help them get out of their isolation, but it doesn't even remotely resemble a family. Unfortunately, many churches are also divided into age groups and social classes, so that strangers often only come into contact with strangers in the church. When problems arise, the ties between the strangers are easily broken again. Community care begins with spiritual adoption.

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR PASTORAL ASSISTANCE FROM AN ADOPTION THOUGHT

Love is more important than recovery. Recovery is more important than reducing pain.

Identify the two types of trauma A or B for each injured person. And determine in which period the trauma occurred.

Record the degree of isolation, distrust and loss.

Find out what options and methods are available to connect with others.

Make an assessment of a person's maturity and determine accordingly what the care actually consists of.

Prayingly seek what is needed in terms of deliverance, healing and spiritual adoption.

Provide a community structure that provides clarity on who is responsible for what.

Appoint one older person to maintain an overview and coordinate care.

Concrete care: intercession through prayer teams, contacts and family life, cleansing, balance in work, rest and relaxation.

The living environment must be safe and free of triggers.

Seek change of identity not of role.

The living environment for home adoption must be understanding and involved, but not wanting to rescue or exhibit co-dependent behavior.

Send another elder or therapy buddy to attend a prayer session on a regular basis.

Emphasize the members' love for each other and their commitment to each other's needs.

Also include the wounded person in the giving side of church life so that he can use his gifts.

For more guidance, see pages 339 onwards of “Defeating the Red Dragon.”

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR INCLUDING THE WEAK AND WOUNDED INTO A SPIRITUAL FAMILY:

1. Church leadership must be well prepared. The program must be supported by all, including the pastor. Support also means that there is a budget. It needs to be done by the leaders and adult members

2. be willing to invest time in the preparation and implementation of the program.

3. Church members need to be prepared. Some members need to understand the benefits of a Christian structure for trauma recovery. Volunteers need to be found who have the gifts to make the program possible. Volunteers need to be equipped for their roles. Prayer teams need to be installed and activated. The church needs to encourage everyone to be involved in spiritual adoption.

4. The 'injured' must be prepared (especially ex-cult members). Severely traumatized people must receive individual therapy, in addition to the help provided by the community. Every 'survivor' must be assigned a prayer partner. 'Survivors' must be encouraged to continue functioning at work or in education.

5. The therapists worked with must be prepared. A crisis plan must be drawn up. There must be mutual understanding between the community and the therapist. The environment must be safe for children.

6. The work within the church must be prepared.

7. A program must be developed. (For example, Shepherd's House in the US works with the CARE program).

8. Division of responsibilities must be mapped out, between the therapist, municipality and adoptee.

9. For further elaboration of all points, see pages 343-362 of 'The Red Dragon Defeated'.

10.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD RELATIONAL BRAIN SKILLS

ANTONIO ROSA DAMASIO

António Rosa Damásio is a Portuguese neurologist and writer who has lived and worked in the US for decades. He is best known for his book Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain. He describes the biological basis of the functioning of the brain. Among other things, he studied people who showed strong character changes after brain damage. He discovered that changes in the right hemisphere were mainly responsible for this. People seemed increasingly focused on themselves and functioned less relationally. It was only in the 1990s that it became possible to conduct further research using brain scans. The functions of the brain in living people could be studied, including through increased blood circulation as a signal of activity in a specific part of the brain. Particular attention was paid to the center that was responsible for character, norms and values. This is the same center responsible for controlling emotions and dealing with relationships. The functioning of this prefrontal cortex determines our identity and controls all our options, often before we even consciously make those choices. We must be careful to label the brain as the only source of our identity, but it certainly largely determines the limits of the functioning of our identity. We profess our identity as Christians through our faith, but we cannot deny the limitations of our identity

the brain plays a major role. For example, we can be very anxious, despite the fact that we know through faith that we do not have to be anxious. Only people who have never seen the consequences of a damaged brain doubt this statement.

DR. ALLAN SHORE

Dr. Allen Shore of the University of Los Angeles published books that provided a neuroscientific basis for the core values of the Bible. Just as character and skills must be developed in faith development, the brain must also learn skills, not only on the intellectual level but especially on 'the fast circuit' of our brain.

Dr. Shore studied the results of scientific research on the brain for more than 17 years. He has made an important contribution to research into the development of our identity. He described, among other things, the importance of skills that mainly involve the right hemisphere of the brain. He discovered that identity and character are mainly determined relationally by people who are happy to be with us. Relational skills are, as it were, copied from an older brain (educator) into the young brain (growing child) in a joyful context. This process is a reciprocal process, it is a communication in the brain that occurs faster than our conscious thoughts and which we consciously do not have direct control over. This is called the 'fast circuit' in our brain. Relational skills are developed here either well or poorly. The relational identity is the center of who we are, and must be continually updated as we learn to joyfully develop these relational skills further.

> *It is at least remarkable that essential brain skills are often synonymous with Biblical values.*

Christians know: this is where the Creator is at work. The development of identity in a joyful community is one of the core values of the Bible. Christian faith is not only an intellectual acceptance of a number of dogmas, but certainly also a relationship with the living God and relationships in a loving, protective community of believers in which joy, peace (shalom) and gracious, friendly relationships are central.

stand straight. Christians are not only expected to form joyful communities, but also to have a loving, protective influence on their (unbelieving) environment.

SLOW AND FAST BRAIN CIRCUITS

We tend to label everything that happens faster than our consciousness as 'automatic'. But that does not mean that this 'automatism' in our brain has not been learned. Because it happens so quickly, we don't consciously remember that we actually learned it first. These automatically learned processes in our brains include: our identity, motivation, emotional control, our ability to focus on something, our conscience and value system. These skills, which are mainly related to our identity and emotional intelligence, show much faster brain activity than our conscious thinking. We often assume that others have the same skills as us, but in practice this is very different.

Conscious thinking, located mainly in the left hemisphere of the brain, is called the 'slow circuit'. Slow is but very relative because it is updated five times per second. The outside of the brain is covered with the so-called gray matter, the more inside is integrated with the white matter. For example, the identity process, namely that we know who we are and how we react in certain situations, happens faster in the brain, namely six times per second.

> *The speed in our 'gray matter' of our brain is very flexible and adapts to a new reality.*

However, when something needs to be deeply embedded in the brain, the brain creates certain habits (skills), a "hardwired" response in familiar situations.

> *Submerged habits must be learned for at least a month so that the brain can anchor these nerve patterns and responses in the 'white matter'.*

Once the habit or skill is well integrated into the white matter, processing processes even go 200 x (!) faster than in the gray matter.

ALARM..!

Since the average person in the Netherlands watches television for more than three hours a day and is confronted with a text-based communication device such as iPad, computer, cell phone, etc. for another 4 hours a day, it is likely that their right brain communication skills are disappearing faster than the world's rainforests. An alarm should be going off here now..!

If we understand the skills and habits of the white matter, we know that they happen much faster than our conscious mind. Good ingrained, sustainable habits in the fast circuit allow us to quickly return from stress to joy and tranquility (recovering relationships), quickly after each peak emotion in a crisis to remind ourselves who we are and how to respond in such situations with better self-control. In a poorly trained skill circuit we will struggle with all these skills and place great demands on our (slow) conscious thinking and we often remain trapped in circular thinking which often ultimately leads to uncontrolled emotions and behavior.

10.4 LEFT AND RIGHT BRAIN – SLOW AND FAST CIRCUIT

So there are two different systems that we may call too simplistically the left and right brain. Simplistic because the integration of those systems is normally connected in a very special way. The system that

the left side is dominant, it is the 'slow circuit'. This makes conscious thoughts possible. It is extremely suitable for management. Its main task is results-oriented, providing explanations and solutions to the problems we face. In addition, there is the 'fast circuit' that mainly takes place unconsciously and works faster than our consciousness. Her main work is relationship-oriented, and as mentioned earlier, largely determines our identity and control of our emotions. The fast part does not listen to words but observes what people do. This also explains why we sometimes feel a presence before we think of a person.

Slow circuit

Fast track

Management system

Master system

'Slow' processor 5 Hz

'Fast' processor 6 Hz

Active in conscious state

Above and below conscious

Left brain dominant

Right hemisphere dominant

Follows the master system

Determines individual identity

It strategizes

Determines group identity

Solve problems

Regulates individual motivation

Engages in long-term planning

Controls group motivation

Optimizes results

Optimizes engagement

An example of brain hemisphere dominance working differently

Marcus Warner, president of the 'Deeper Walk International', gives an example of a different dominant system in his book Rare Leadership. He was talking to some pastors who were complaining about the youth leaving the church. They discussed how they could make the church attractive again for young people. Because of this management thinking, leaders became trapped in the 'slow circuit'. The result was that the solutions

to get youth back into the church, we always focused on programs. They were just struggling with left dominant thinking that focused on results and only on problem solving. As Marcus focused more on his fast right brain, he noticed that their problem had little to do with programming. The solution was much more in the area of relationships. Very few young people in the church were in a relationship with an older person. Adults and older people hardly worked on a relationship with the youth in the church. As a result, the youth felt isolated and disconnected from the church.

> *If you want to keep young people in church, you need to help them feel included, valued, and loved.*

Which music group is playing and what kind of program is in the service has little to do with this. Marcus handled it carefully, he did not anger or scare the pastors by saying that if they did not handle it differently they would lose the youth forever. But he started to make them aware of relational involvement. He also used curiosity as an important tool and asked them: “Have you ever looked at this problem from the (group) identity of the congregation and the fact that they feel at home and valued instead of planning new programs?” Ultimately - to begin with - the bond between the pastors was already more involved in this conversation. To be clear, his point was not to switch off thinking, but to achieve more integrated thinking from a skilled 'faster circuit' in which the left and right brain functioned in an optimal way.

Therapy and 'fast circuit'

Most therapies pay little attention to skills training and therefore use the same method for everyone. Most of the relationship skills

THE BRAIN

LEFT HEMISPHERE

Controls the right side of the body

- Reasoning
- Written language
- Numeracy
- Spoken language
- Mathematical skills
- Objectivity
- Scientific knowledge
- Analytical thinking
- Logic

RIGHT HEMISPHERE

Controls the left side of the body

- Intuition
- Synthesis
- Face recognition
- Creativity
- Awareness of art and music
- Subjectivity
- Imagination
- 3D shapes
- Emotion

PARIETAL	Intelligence, language, reading, sensation
FRONTAL	Behavior, intelligence, memory, movement
OCCIPITAL	Vision
TEMPORAL	Behavior, hearing, speech, vision, memory
CEREBELLUM	Balance, coordination
BRAINSTEM	Blood pressure, breathing, heart rate, swallowing

AMAZING FACTS ABOUT THE BRAIN

- 86 billion neurons
- 2% of total body weight
- 3–1,000 TB
- Contains 60% fat
- Uses 20% of all energy
- Average weight: 1,300 grams

of the brain are part of affect regulation, reality processing and identity formation, which is the basis on which higher skills are built.

> *When basic relational functions such as interactive emotional regulation are missing or disrupted, higher brain functions will not function properly or will be stressed.*

For example, we can conclude that someone functions quite well when he or she is alone, but that in the presence of others relationships are often under pressure and emotional regulation, the ability to find peace in a relationship, repeatedly fails. If this really sinks in, we need to realize that an important condition for therapists to do their job well is to master the full list of relationship skills. Therapists' training should aim to identify weaknesses in this area and teach them how to acquire and pass on the missing skills to others. Successful therapy is based on knowing the relationship skills necessary for communication from person to person, from brain to brain. Clinicians should be trained to alter the structure, chemistry, and functional configuration of the brain to develop and prioritize new skills.

APPLICATION: HEALTHY LEADERSHIP AND THE FAST CIRCUIT

'RARE leadership, 4 uncommon habits for increasing Trust, Joy and Engagement in the People you lead' is an interesting book, written by Dr. Jim Wilder and Dr. Marcus Warner in 2016. RARE is an acronym for the 4 important brain skills of successful leaders:

The R is for Remain Relational.

A is for Act like Yourself (Stay true to your identity).

R is for Return to joy (If you are emotionally stimulated, learn to quickly find calm and peace again).

E for Endure hardships well.

RARE leaders learn to value relationships over problems and reduce the chance of a permanent break. They inspire their followers to recover from strong negative emotions and they maintain unity in their teams by reminding people overwhelmed by strong negative emotions of their identity. They train adult followers in the process of nurturing and valuing their relationship skills. Leaders can only pass on relationship skills as they have, otherwise they function out of fear and hinder the growth of their followers. Good leaders recognize their own limitations and do their utmost to work on themselves and others in the available time. Prioritizing joyful skills also means emphasizing one's own personal growth as an indispensable part of successful leadership.

> *Studies have shown that effective leaders are joyful, relational, and creative, much more so than leaders who are merely problem-oriented, fearful, and rigid.*

This means that their relational brain is well trained and skilled. Good information, good education and charisma alone do not necessarily make someone a good leader. Relational leaders with emotional intelligence often pass on successful work.

GUIDANCE FROM GOD

Christians who are accustomed to thinking of God's leading only from the slow circuit of consciousness will have difficulty allowing God into the fast circuit of the brain where they cannot continually consciously follow God in all His actions. Their main objection is that they see allowing God into the whole mind as a charismatic gift or an unnecessary new addition to the Bible (speaking

of God). Dr. Dallas Willard, author of the book 'In search of Guidance' (later added 'In hearing God' in a newer edition), notes that God guides the thoughts of His children in various special and active ways. Knowing God's voice and being led by the Holy Spirit is the inheritance of God's people. Much more than fear as we seek God's guidance, we should expect it from our knowledge of the Bible.

> *Of course we have to test everything, but dare to expect that God will actually provide guidance. John 10:27 says: “My sheep hear My voice; I know them, and they follow Me.”*

The Greek word for knowledge here is ginosko (NT1097). Ginosko is a personal relational knowing, it stands for knowing, recognizing, understanding or 'completely understanding'. It is not just an exchange of information but rather an experience of knowing that comes from a relational connection and interaction. The word ginosko is also used in Mark 5:29 where the woman with the issue of blood 'felt' (felt) in her body that she had been healed of the ailment for good.

Dallas Willard stated that the LIFE Model is the best God-centered method and leads to the restoration of many damaged churches. The most important condition according to Dallas Willard is love for people. In a loving, compassionate and merciful church, not only learned leaders with all kinds of titles are an important condition, but leaders who are spiritually mature and actively and consciously focus on God's guidance. Maturity is nothing more than a well-functioning system of relational skills from which God's guidance is continually sought. In the LIFE Model this is called 'Immanuel Lifestyle'.

10.5 IMMANUEL LIFESTYLE

Immanuel means 'God with us'. The LIFE Model speaks about God's work of redemption (salvation), the work of God in a person's life and about the work or: the responsibility of

man himself. These two aspects come together in the name Immanuel, one of the names of our Savior Jesus Christ, God with us. Jim Wilder has explored this further in the Immanuel Lifestyle model, as a characteristic part of the LIFE Model.

The three most important points of attention in the Immanuel Lifestyle model are:

Development of a multi-generational individual with a group identity. Involvement of different age groups with each other.

An Immanuel lifestyle in which, through the interactive presence of God in the present, our relationships are brought into alignment with Him.

Replacement and development of relational skills of brain functions when these are lacking in individuals, communities and cultures.

10.6 THE CIRCLE OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH TOWARDS ADULTITY

A person who accepts God's work of redemption and takes up his or her own responsibility for spiritual growth - praying and reading the Bible for Divine guidance - will find that the Holy Spirit brings new life. According to the Bible, this new life has great value in the here and now but also for eternity. It serves God's Kingdom. This happens according to a spiritual path with characteristic anchor points that we find in the Bible. A picture says more than 1000 words.

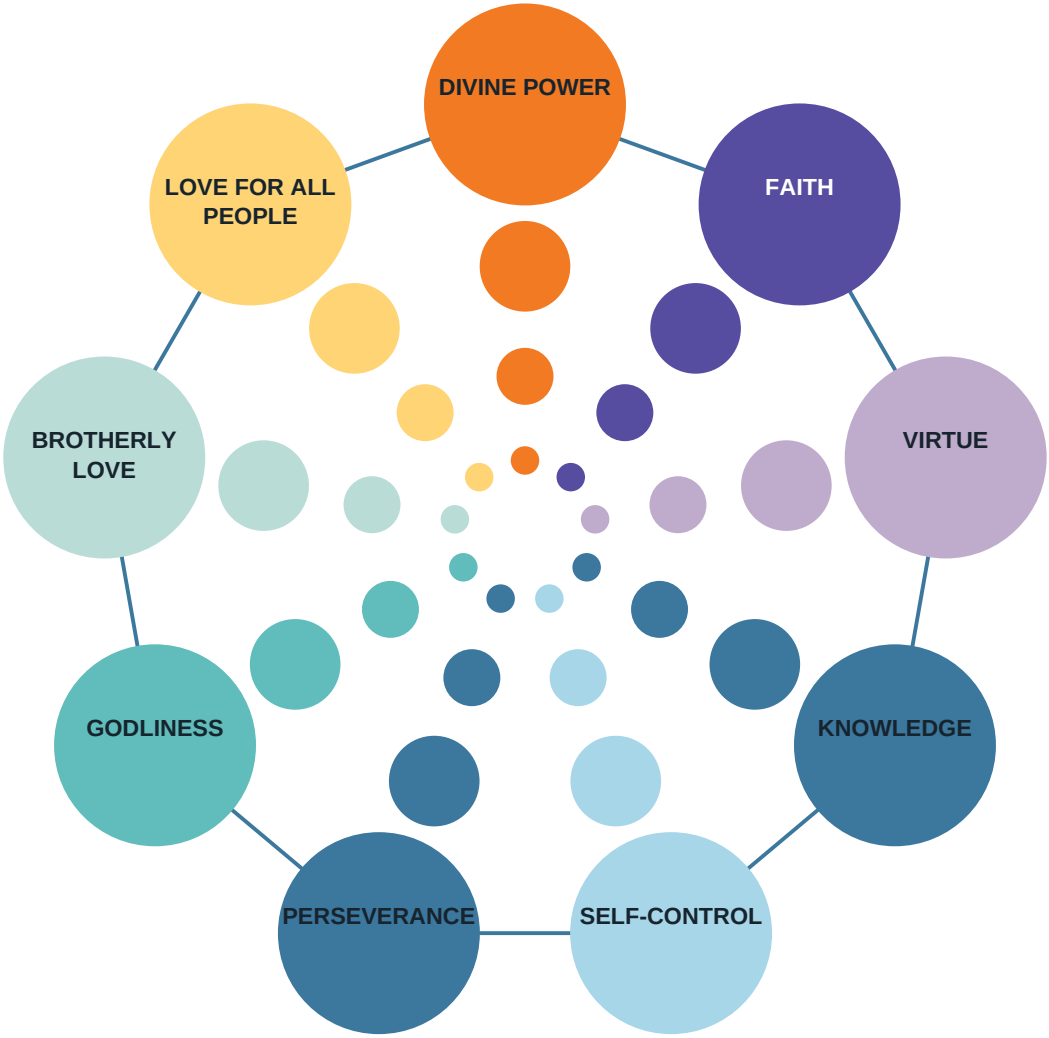
The growth of a Christian from the moment of conversion is in fact the growth towards spiritual maturity in Christ, the growth towards the full Christian identity as God intends and set out by the apostle Peter in 2 Pet. 1:3-11.

The translation of The Book states:

(....) 3 It is important that we get to know Him better and better. Because then He can help us more and more through His divine power. He will then be able to give us everything we need to live the way He wants and to serve Him.

He has called us to share His heavenly power and glory. 4 He has made precious and great promises to us.

GROWING IN THE DIVINE NATURE



THE FOUR LEVELS: SCHEMATIC OVERVIEW

Level	LIFE Model principles	Spiritual dimension	Brain region (added)	Brain-region function	Capacity / competence	Characteristic pain	Dysfunction	Recovery resources needed
1	Belonging	Spiritual adoption	Thalamus and basal ganglia (bonding)	What and who is personal	Personal reality	Painful existence	Disturbed personal reality	Two lifelong bonded relationships
2	Learning to give and receive	A life of love (not death)	Right amygdala (guarding)	Good, bad and frightening	Connecting or avoiding	Pervasive fear	Fear bonds and mapping	A highly trained control center
3	Restoring health; resynchronizing	Synchronizing with God (a Spirit-led life); relational	Right cingulate cortex (mother's heart)	Comparing energy levels	Shared awareness (mind matching)	Continuous distress in six difficult feelings	Loss of relational capacity and continuous distress	Trained brains (trained control centers)
4	Maturing	Acting like yourself (suffering well)	Right prefrontal cortex	Focusing our attention in measured time	Self in time (sequential)	Loss of attention (direction) and response	Immaturity (lack of complexity)	Community
4+	Remaining pure in identity	Living from your heart	Left hemisphere	Explanations	Autobiography	Internal conflicts	Incoherent, fragmented (identity based on lies)	Internalized spirituality

This is how we escaped death and decay. Now we can be new people who are like God. Death and corruption reign in the world because of the wrong desires of men. 5 Therefore, do your best to become wise through your faith. And by becoming wise you will come to know God well. 6 And by knowing God well, you will grow in self-control. And by growing in self-control, you will grow in patience. And by growing in patience, you will grow in the fear of God. 7 And as you grow in the fear of God, you will grow in the love of your brothers and sisters. And by growing in love for the brothers and sisters, you will grow in truly selfless love. 8 For if these things are in you and increase more and more, you are not doing anything in vain. Then your life will show that you know our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 But if anyone lacks all these things, he is spiritually blind and does not see things clearly. Then he has forgotten that God has forgiven him for disobeying Him in the past. 10 Therefore, brothers and sisters, do your best to do what God has called and chosen you to do. Because then things will never end badly for you. 11 Then the door to the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be wide open to you.

9 But if anyone lacks all these things, he is spiritually blind and does not see things clearly. Then he has forgotten that God has forgiven him for disobeying Him in the past.

10.7 RELATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS AND THE BIBLE

If you examine the word koinonia (friendship-brotherhood) in the Bible, it is always embedded in a relational and joyful, kind and gracious union. The friendship in a koinonia community is a bond forever. This covenant goes even further than 'until the

death separates us' and increasingly transforms us into 'we' (in Christ) instead of 'I'. Read 1 Cor.1:8-10:

> *"It is He who assures you to the end that you will not be blamed on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, by whom you were called to be one with His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful. Brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I call on you all to be of one mind, to avoid divisions, to be completely one in your thoughts and beliefs." In koinonia we learn better relationships with the help of the Holy Spirit. (2 Cor. 13:13) Our service and ministries are accomplished through koinonia (Gal. 2:9). It is attentive to the needs of others and encourages us to bear each other's burdens (Gal. 6:2). Sometimes also with sharing in the suffering (Phil. 3:10). John goes one step further and calls sharing and learning character development in relational connection a sign that our sins are forgiven: "But if we walk in the light, as He Himself is in the light, then we are united to one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).*

RELATIONAL SKILLS OF JESUS AS AN EXAMPLE

In all the Gospels we are impressed by Jesus' relationship with God. He stood with God in a community of life and 'experienced' Him, and that was enough. His knowledge of God arose from His association with God. When He spoke of God, He spoke in full awareness of God's presence. He knew God's Word better than anyone, His left and right brain must be perfectly synchronized. It is not true that He had to exercise heroic faith despite all the opposition He had to endure. No, to Jesus God was not something questionable.

> *He was constantly aware of the presence of God. In the words of Lehman, "His relational circuit was always on, even to the cross!"*

John calls the actions that Jesus did: signs that were to be symbols of His spiritual life (John 2:11; 20:30). These signs were not sorcery, but were always in the service of spiritual, moral purposes and of His love.

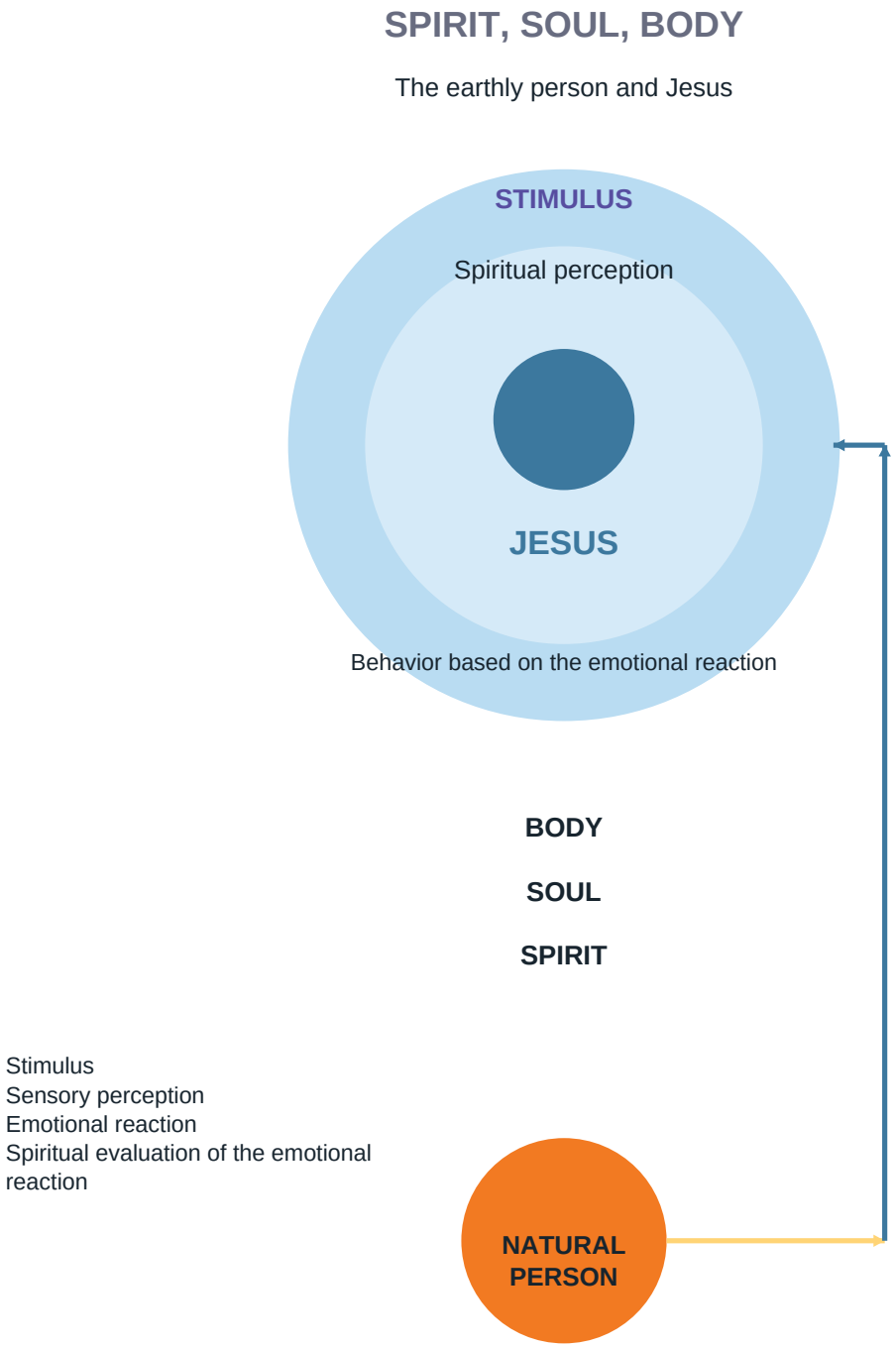
This serving love governed His actions. They demonstrated perfect relationship skills. Take, for example, touching the sick. In those days a deaf-mute was more the object of horror than of pity. Jesus approached people with a loving heart and a gentle touch (Mark 7:33). Jesus' meaningful touches of the sick, especially the blind and mute, were loving. How much loving warmth must His hand have radiated to the dead

daughter lying on the bed? (Mark 5:41). His body language was not manufactured, but completely in accordance with his sinless soul.

During the capture, the judicial staff retreated from His 'body language' of word, look and form (John 18:6). He tested the dull consciences of the Scribes and Pharisees by catching their eyes at the healing of the man with the withered hand (Luke 6:10). How then His anger flared up, which again gave way to deep sorrow (Mark 3:5). In Marc. 10:23 His eyes helped to teach the apostles the dangers of great wealth. Then there was another look in verse 27 to give them comfort and emphasize that at

God nothing is impossible. Jesus knew the power of His eyes. On the night of the betrayal, Jesus led Peter by His gaze to the saving exit of deep repentance (Luke 22:61). He observed the natural phenomena with special attention. He saw the sparrows on the roof (Matt. 10:29), the flowers in the garden (Matt. 6:28), the tailor mending (Matt. 9:16), the children sitting in the market and shouting to each other (Luke 7:32). Jesus had perfect imagery, befitting Someone who had perfect body language.

He had a coin handed to him (Matt. 22:19), He placed a child in the middle (Matt. 18:2), He pointed with a finger to the lilies of the field and the birds (Matt. 6:26,28), to the fishing net by the seaside (Matt. 13:47) and to the Sower and the field (Matt. 13:3). He gave visual instruction through symbolic actions. The apostles had to learn to be the least, and for that He took a linen cloth and a basin of water and washed their feet (John 13:14). They had to know that He was going to die. The bread that was a sign of His body,



He broke it before their eyes (Matt. 26:26). They had to know that He had to die for them, and for that He gave them the broken bread that they might eat it. They had to know where He was, so He ascended into heaven before their eyes (Acts 1:9). Jesus is in heaven as in believers, omnipresent by His Spirit. The 'radiance' of Jesus was always one

of compassion, love and mercy. His relational mode was always on. His kindness and goodness caused parents to bring their children to Him so He could touch them (Matt. 18:12). A sunny warmth had accompanied Him in all His ways, and although Judas would betray Him with a kiss, He reproached Simon the Pharisee for not kissing Him (Luke 7:45). The ancient Eastern way of connecting a greeting with a kiss became a Christian custom (Rom. 16:16, 1 Cor. 16:20, 1 Pet. 5:14).

JESUS SENSITIVE SOUL

However, this powerful personality was also a very sensitive person. He had a sensitive soul. When Lazarus died, He saw Mary and the Jews who were with her mourning. He was deeply moved and Jesus also began to weep (John 11:35). He also wept at the thought of the destruction of Jerusalem (Luke 19:41). When He saw the widow going behind the coffin of her only son (Luke 7:13), He felt deep compassion, even when He noticed that the people who followed Him into the wilderness had too little food. While speaking the stern words about the last times and tremendous threats, grief gripped Him as he thought of the women who would be pregnant or nursing their babies as they fled from Jerusalem in those fearful days (Matt. 24:19,20). And how must Jesus have felt when 'complete strangers' children gladly let themselves be embraced by Him (Mark 10:16). He was moved not only about others, but also about his own fate: “Foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head” (Matt. 8:20). In the Garden of Gethsemane He asked His disciples, “Abide with Me, and watch with Me” (Matt. 26:38). Nowhere do we find in Him a repression of His own emotional life or anything of stoicism

insensitivity. He was sure that He would rise again after 3 days, but that did not prevent Him from feeling and struggling through the deep pain and bitterness in His human soul.

EMOTIONAL REACTIONS

To indicate something about the soul/body relationship, the diagram below by Tom Marshall is illuminating. .Explanation: we receive some stimulus through our senses. Suppose we see the neighbor with whom we had an argument last week. We then have stimulus A, the neighbor, and then the sensory perception B, seeing the neighbor.

The sensory perception, seeing the neighbor, evokes an emotional response. This could be irritation, confusion, anger or resentment. We remember what he said. We think about what we should have said back, but weren't thinking about at the time.

Finally, our mind, in the function of our conscience, gives its opinion about these intense emotions: "That is wrong. You should not be angry or hateful towards your neighbor..."

THE PERFECT RESPONSE TO STRONG REACTIONS

The problem is that the conscience has to deal with emotions that have already been evoked. When our feelings are so stirred up and ready to act, the influence of our conscience is weakest. If you read the Gospels, you will see that Jesus did not live like that at all. What we like of course

view, is in fact the opposite. If things want to get back into place, they have to be turned around.

> *Jesus lived in relationship with people and his environment with His Spirit 'on the outside'. In other words: He lived more from His Spirit than from His feelings.*

The figure also shows the range of our senses. As far as our sense of touch is concerned, our senses do not extend beyond

about one meter. Our hearing extends several meters. Our eyesight extends for several kilometers. The reach of our mind is much, much greater. The reach of our spirit extends to eternity, to infinity to God. Because Jesus lived with His spirit first, so to speak, He first touched every situation with His spirit. The emotional responses that prompted Him to act therefore arose from a spiritual perception. This is so important that we want to support it through the Gospels.

In Mark 6:34 we read, “And when he came out of the ship, he saw a great multitude, and had compassion, because they were as sheep without a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.” What happened? Jesus “saw” who they were. He didn't just see a crowd of men, women and children. He also had a spiritual image of who they were: sheep with no one to care for them. This mental image resulted in an

emotional response: compassion. And this prompted Him to take an appropriate action. He began to teach them, and later He fed them.

Another example in Mark 3: Jesus entered the synagogue and saw a man with a withered hand. He said to those present, “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” They remained silent. Maybe they didn't know the answer. But the text goes on to say: “And when He had looked upon them round about with wrath and anger, being exceedingly grieved for the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, Stretch out your hand. And he stretched her out and was restored to health.” What Jesus saw when He looked around was the hard, bitter hearts of the people who would rather see a man remain deformed than have the rules broken. From that mental perception came an emotional response, in this case sadness and anger. With these feelings as motivation, Jesus called the disabled man forward. And in their presence on the Sabbath He healed the withered hand. This is how Jesus responded in Luke 19:41-43 about Jerusalem. Jesus saw the city, but He saw more than just the streets and buildings. The spirit of prophecy came upon Him and He “saw” the condition of the city and the consequences of its sin and He wept for sorrow.

> *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5).*
>
> *“Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children, and walk in love, just as Christ also hath loved you, and hath given himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling aroma unto God” (Eph. 5:1-2).*

Respond authentically

As we saw earlier, the control center of our brain (prefrontal cortex) has set itself the goal of reminding us how we can respond as ourselves under all circumstances, in other words 'react authentically, from your true identity'. Or put another way, this is about the smooth running of the synchronization process between inside and outside, regardless of what happens. As soon as something happens, emotions such as joy, sadness, fear, anger, shame, disgust, despair and humiliation arise. Sometimes they arise from within and sometimes they are evoked by others around us. When our control center is undeveloped and disorganized, when we have not learned the relationship skills, the synchronization process does not go well and we can lose control of our lives due to these strong emotions. We can be 'overruled' by strong emotions and therefore react differently than we would like according to our identity. For example, we could respond to aggression with aggression. This was not at all the case with Jesus!

> *Even in His most intense pain and emotions on the cross, Jesus remained Himself. He was not traumatized and He did not respond to aggression with aggression. On the contrary, He called upon His Father to forgive!*

To do this requires a perfect spiritual life and a perfect mastery of the 19 skills (chapter 11).

TRAUMA RECOVERY ACCORDING TO THE LIFE MODEL

The previous lessons were important for a good understanding of this chapter, which is about recovery from trauma in the LIFE Model. As we have seen, the LIFE Model has been developed from a neuroscientific basis, which corresponds to the biblical worldview when it comes to the relationships between the brain, body and relationships in the (church) community. It is also a framework for recovery from trauma based on an integration of mental and neurological elements.

From both a mental and neurological perspective, the effects of trauma can be defined as the inability to process an experience and regulate individual emotions. This chapter describes the common principles in trauma recovery and the necessary role of the individual and the community in the recovery process. Discussed are neurological considerations in processing traumatic events and the principles and requirements for Immanuel healing and recovery within a community. Immanuel stands for 'God with us'.



11.1 THE UNIQUE ASPECTS

The LIFE Model is unique because it combines three elements that are generally not combined, namely:

1. Multi-generational community.

2. Immanuel lifestyle.

3. Relational brain skills.

They are of great importance in the processing of traumas. The multi-generational community restores and maintains capacity. The Immanuel lifestyle creates and maintains a secure connection with God, restoring the relational brain skills and building the maturity of the collective brain/body/community system necessary for a joyful and peaceful coexistence. The model is designed to enhance the effectiveness and scope of other models and methods by highlighting the sequential tasks, skills, and God's guidance in rebuilding communities. The late Dr. Dallas Willard said, “The LIFE Model is the best model I have seen. A model that puts Christ at the center of guidance and provides restoration to fractured communities within the Christian churches.”

Applications of the LIFE Model are possible for many subjects. In the discussion of trauma, the LIFE Model has been used to explore how trauma causes identity problems and how mental and neuroscientific processes of identity construction can bring healing to human communities. Various methods to measure and restore the mature capacity of Christian communities are based on the LIFE Model. There is THRIVE, a relational brain skills training, and also Connexus, for thriving communities.

BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW OF THE LIFE MODEL

Most trauma therapists are familiar with developments in neuroscience when exercising and...

supporting their treatment methods. With the LIFE Model, we first looked for the dynamics that cause trauma and that can ensure recovery. Techniques known to stimulate trauma recovery were described and then it was examined which new elements to add could promote trauma recovery.

The LIFE Model was developed from a Judeo-Christian worldview that provides the following two commonalities in all human experience:

The same spiritual truths are the same for all people.

All people are better off if they control their brains and bodies in some community.

> *In this worldview, God's creation is intended as an ideal in the harmony between spiritual and physical reality*.

What is spiritually true must work optimally for man as a creature of God. From this spiritual perspective, what is good for the mind must also be good for the brain and what is harmful to the mind must also be harmful to the brain, the body and the relationship in the community. This only becomes clear when we see that the brain functions as an inseparable relational organ in a community of young and old people. Both the occurrence and recovery of traumas are closely linked to the relationships that a person experiences with others in a living community.

A first superficial analysis shows that there is a strong similarity between spiritual core values and optimal brain development. In the relationship of mind and body we value things like: different levels of consciousness of joy and peace; cycles of rest and activity; relationships based on love; tenderness versus vulnerability. But also synchronizing functions, solving painful experiences,

truth that makes experiences meaningful, the formation of individual and collective identity, overcoming things that go wrong and the growth of the desired self ('I').

WHAT IS A TRAUMA ACCORDING TO THE LIFE MODEL?

There is no general agreement about what makes something a trauma. Although a number of symptoms of PTSD are often clear, the nature and intensity that leads to a traumatic event varies greatly from person to person. What is that difference?

1. The LIFE Model states that trauma is first and foremost a disruption (without repair) of the normal relational response to our situation that should be characteristic of people who have their lives in order, including in relationships with others. Relational processes in a situation of secure connection with others

that result in a way of resolving events reflect our individual experiences and group identity, for example how I and my loved ones react to the loss of a friend. Severely disrupting our external relationships leads to a desynchronization of those parts of the brain involved in relationship and identity. Loss of coherent relational brain function manifests itself outwardly through a lack of relational shalom (peace) when that experience of unprocessed feelings from the past keeps coming back as if it were still active in the here and now. The individual feels abandoned and alone by the person who caused the trauma.

> *When recovery from the disruption of relational processes fails to occur, the result is a recurring disruption of 'knowing who we are' and 'how to respond in relationships', in the memory of the event.*

This also makes trauma a problem that affects our sense of community. The trauma develops when both the individual and the community are unable to process the experience internally and respond with safe relational connections. In a community, one should learn how to respond based on group identity to process a traumatic event.

1. The LIFE Model states that these disruptions to internal regulation are not processed relationally

may be due to a lack of emotional capacity (ability) to cope with the intensity of emotional pain. This failure to remain in relationship with others is related to the duration, intensity and complexity of the traumatic experience. We become mentally exhausted and overwhelmed to the extent that the intensity of the events, their duration, their possible recurrence and the way they can trigger us take hold of us.

> *Pain, illness, physical injury, anger, hatred, rejection, prolonged lack of sleep, repeated loss of loved ones and other cumulative factors reduce our ability to cope.*

Because capacity (being able to process something) is mainly developed as a function that is learned in safe relationships, not everyone has the same resilience. Age and connection with the community are determining factors for the ability to develop resilience again. It follows that the weaker the individual or community, the more susceptible a person is to trauma. Just as one may have a poorly developed immune system against biological threats, one may also have poor strategies for overcoming emotional stressors individually and as a community. Some municipalities have little social and individual

support options to help process shame, anger, humiliation, hatred, loss, aggression, fear and other negative experiences. The risk of trauma developing therefore has everything to do with the relational skills of both the individual and the community of which he or she is a part. In a group where people are deeply involved, even serious and shameful events will not result in trauma, but if shame quickly means the end of a relationship, even a less shameful situation can cause trauma.

1. A fourth factor that is important in whether or not a trauma occurs is the extent to which participation in a community provides safe connections and opportunities for expression of the 'true self'

can create. When a community requires over-spiritual, superhuman efforts or offers no human assistance at all, such an environment can even be counterproductive!

11.2 TYPE A AND TYPE B TRAUMA

When a stressor exceeds individual and collective strengths, we need to identify weaknesses and their intensity to understand the degree of traumatization and gain insight into the recovery process. The LIFE Model speaks of a type A trauma in neglect and a type B trauma in serious events. The absence (A) of necessary basic conditions often results in a weakened neurological capacity that leads more easily to overwhelm and traumatization than in someone of the same age who has received basic conditions in their upbringing. Every example of an A-trauma can cause injury. B traumas are the result of serious events. These (B) are always painful, but whether they really lead to trauma depends on the capacity of the individual and the support of the community and the extent to which the community communicates to promote recovery.

> *A neurological program for trauma recovery must therefore pay attention to both A and B traumas. Recovery and healing have to do with replacing missing and necessary preconditions as well as resolving the damage caused by unpleasant events.*

From both a mental and neurological perspective, the effect of trauma can be defined as: the inability to process an experience while remaining in relationship with others (relational) and trying to process individual and shared emotions. Also from a neurological point of view, trauma means the inability to process an emotional experience while remaining in good contact and connected with others. By understanding this, we can imagine that trauma inhibits or blocks some parts of development, making the victim feel alone in his or her situation, often resulting in an unchecked emotional tsunami. This quickly triggers people and disrupts mutual coherence and peace; it disrupts the sense of community and leads to a repeated or persistent state (both internal and external) of desynchronization in relationships and is therefore extremely painful.

To gain some insight into the prognosis of a trauma, it may be important to first make an inventory of the extent to which A and B traumas have been experienced. In a graph we can scale the A-traumas on the horizontal line (at point 0 no A-trauma or absence of affective and attuned relationships and at point R a large degree of absence of affective and attuned education and loving relationships), and on the vertical line we can scale the B-traumas (at point 0 no traumas and at point P a large degree of presence of B-traumas). If someone has many B-traumas and many A-traumas, the intersection of these lines is at the top right of the graph and the prognosis of a trauma will be the most difficult.

because there are often few possible skills available for processing. Of course, other factors such as a developed faith life and loving (supportive) relationships also play a role in a good prognosis.

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER – THE PHYSICAL REACTIONS

Post-traumatic stress disorder, or in English: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), is an anxiety disorder resulting from a delayed or prolonged response to a stressful event or situation (of short or long duration) of an extremely threatening or catastrophic nature, which would cause great anxiety in almost anyone. Let us first look at what the physical consequences (can be) of fear in the short and longer term. In acute anxiety, all available forces in the body are mobilized to cope with the emergency situation. First of all, there is an activation of part of the unconscious nervous system, namely the sympathetic system. This creates what the English call a 'fight or flight' response. Blood pressure increases, breathing accelerates, the stress hormone adrenaline is released in large quantities into the blood, the muscles tense, the pupils dilate, and much more, all in order to physically deal with the cause of fear by fleeing or fighting.

There is a lot more happening hormonally, see my book 'Healing the human being'. Normally these reactions will decrease once the cause of anxiety has disappeared and the body will calm down again. With so-called post-traumatic stress, the body does not relax as is usually achieved by the activity of the parasympathetic nerve, the other, soothing part of the unconscious nervous system.

A consequence of the trauma is that there is always a psychological and physical hyperactivation, it is, as it were, a permanent expectation (anticipation) of danger. This is also often triggered by situations that consciously or unconsciously remind you of the original trauma.

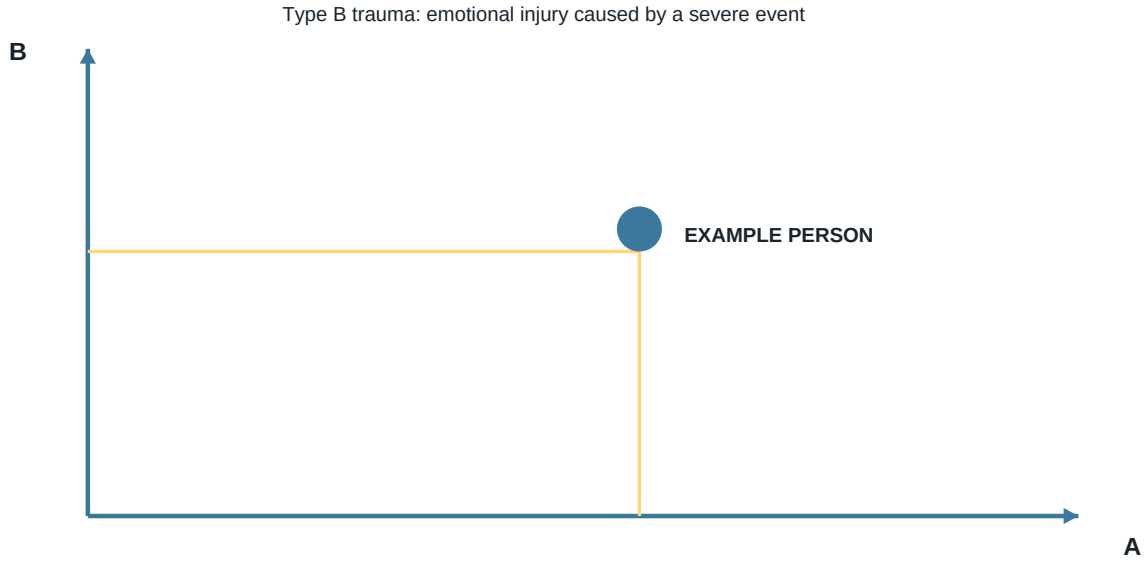
This causes a chronic shift in the balance that normally exists in the unconscious or vegetative nervous system.

The sympathetic nervous system mentioned earlier remains active and the body does not recover from the stress reactions. Sometimes these excessive stress reactions last for months or even years, causing all kinds of chronic physical complaints. Functions of the parasympathetic part of the unconscious nervous system, such as proper digestion, blood flow to the skin, blood flow to the heart muscle itself, the immune system, are no longer stimulated, so that chronic complaints can arise such as digestive problems, spastic intestines, skin problems, so-called non-specific complaints such as susceptibility to viruses, fatigue, but also psychological complaints such as anxiety, depressive feelings, irritability, etc.

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS; psychological COMPLAINTS

In addition to the non-specific psychological complaints mentioned due to the constant hyperactivation, there are other consequences. Compulsive re-experiences can occur due to the almost indelible impression of the traumatic moment. The trauma intrudes into everyday life. Triggers, which are conscious and unconscious reactions caused by situations, sounds and smells that partly resemble the circumstances of the trauma, can stimulate the physical and psychological reactions again.

PROGNOSIS: TYPE A AND TYPE B TRAUMA



The amygdala, the 'scanner for fear' located deep in the brain, becomes oversensitive and warns against apparently normal circumstances as if they were particularly dangerous situations.

These stimuli are unconscious and cannot or hardly be switched off by traumatized people. There is often a lack of traumatic memories, there is no clear (verbal) context, which sometimes becomes public through fragments of memories, spontaneous exclamations and gestures.

PROF. DR. VAN DER KOLK

Prof. Dr. Bessel van der Kolk, a well-known trauma psychiatrist, discovered that due to the continuous hyperactivation of the sympathetic nervous system, the verbal, 'linguistic' storage of memories temporarily comes to an end, and that the central nervous system switches to sensory and iconic memory forms that predominate in childhood. Children who normally play relaxed and carefree often behave differently after a trauma: they seem to act endlessly, joylessly and monotonously. For example, by playing with a doll in such a way. Post-traumatic stress often manifests itself in compulsive re-experiencing in such a way. Sometimes some people try to 'relive' the traumatic events, as it were, or deal with them, for example by returning to the scene of the accident. For example, a woman who had been raped in a certain place at a young age and had been warned never to return there, consciously returned to that place to overcome her fear, not without risk, however. Prof. Dr. Bessel van der Kolk, pioneering researcher and one of the world's leading experts in the field of trauma-related stress, developed a body-oriented trauma therapy that is a scientifically proven alternative to medication and traditional cognitive behavioral therapy.

If the fight or flight mechanism overshoots its target, in combination with compulsive action we see a flattening out, this is a state of complete powerlessness, in which no form of resistance is any longer useful, and which leads to surrender. The self-defense mechanism then becomes completely inoperative. However, one does not escape through actual action alone, but through a change in the state of consciousness. It can be compared to the situation in animals that, when attacked, completely freeze. Due to changed perceptions, the sense of time has also changed, sometimes events pass by in slow motion, sometimes there is a sense of the void of time. One is aware that one has no memory of a short period of time. Sometimes patients experience that they are standing next to themselves and viewing the situation from a distance. This state of consciousness has characteristics of a hypnotic trance: voluntary action is ceased, initiative and critical judgment are suspended, and a subjective detachment occurs that results in numbness and insensitivity to pain. The image of reality is distorted, resulting in depersonalization, derealization and a changed sense of time. This also causes all kinds of memory problems. After a traumatic experience, a pattern often arises in which compulsive re-experiencing and flattening out (two opposites) alternate.

> *One is caught between the extremes of amnesia and reliving the trauma; between the intrusion of intense overwhelming emotions and the complete absence of emotions; between irritable impulsive action and the total inability to act.*

When the compulsive symptoms subside (sometimes after several months or years), the flattening becomes dominant.

11.3 THE VERBAL LOGICAL EXPLAINER (VLE)

We have a part of our brain (brain/mind) that I call the verbal-logical explainer (VLE). The VLE functions by providing 'explanations' that help us organize, structure and make sense of our experiences and the world around us. Usually this works well. Our VLE is constantly helping us to give meaning to our lives, and most of the time it works so fast and quickly that we don't even notice it. It usually starts with basic, adequate and accurate information, from which, in principle, credible explanations emerge. However, if the VLE starts with distorted and/or inadequate information and data, mainly flawed explanations follow. For example, if the VLE starts with implicit memory thoughts and emotions of unprocessed traumas (i.e. memories that have a content of which it is not clear where they come from), he will try to create a story of how these thoughts and emotions fit into the circumstances of the present.

> *There are fascinating research studies and clinical reports describing how limited the VLE's ability to provide explanations based on incoming information is.*

One of the most spectacular sources of information about this is that about the VLE when the cerebral hemispheres are separated. When a patient is extremely disorganized in the brain and no longer responds

to medication, they sometimes separate the left and right hemispheres of the brain by cutting all connections so that the overwhelming damage and disorganization does not spread from one hemisphere to the entire brain. (This is of course a very drastic measure, but it can sometimes be better than progressive brain damage and subsequent death). When the two hemispheres are separated in such a way, the VLE on the left no longer receives information from the right hemisphere and this often leads to very interesting 'solutions' when the VLE tries to explain the behavior on the right. So

For example, there is a study in which a patient was first shown a photo, and then a card with different photos, and then asked to choose from those different photos the photo that was most related to the first photo.

Due to the neurological nature of the visual system, it is possible to simultaneously show a picture on the right side of the brain and another on the left, the research team had designed special equipment that made this possible. The patient was first shown a picture of a chicken leg on the left side of the brain and then a picture of a snowstorm on the right side of the brain. When presented with the second set of pictures, his right hand (corresponding to the left side of the brain) immediately pointed to the picture of the chicken, while his left hand (corresponding to his right side of the brain) pointed to the picture of a snowplow. This wasn't exactly surprising. But then the researchers asked the patient to explain his choice. First of all, the patient stated that he chose the photo of the chicken because it matched the chicken leg, which is not really surprising. However, when asked why he chose the snowplow, instead of saying he didn't know or even saying "I'm not sure," he said that if you had chickens, you would need something to clean the chicken shed.

He was aware that this picture had been chosen in response to the first picture of the chicken leg, but then unaware that this picture had been chosen in response to the first picture of the snowstorm presented to the right side of his brain. His left VLE had simply made sense of it. In addition, it turned out that the patient had no subjective awareness, that his VLE on the left side of his brain had made up this story that was completely different from the real reason why he had chosen the photo.

> *Research material from people under hypnosis also leads to surprising results with regard to the functioning of the VLE.*

For example, the well-known example of someone not being aware of a post-hypnotic suggestion as the real cause of a certain behavior, while the VLE turns it into a story when asked for an explanation of that behavior. If during a demonstration someone is in a hypnotic trance, the hypnotist may make a post-hypnotic suggestion, such as: "If I tap the table three times with my pen, you will get up and open the window, and you will not remember that I gave you these instructions until I give you permission to do so." This person will then be removed from the

trance and a few minutes later, after the demonstration has ended, the hypnotist apparently unconsciously taps his pencil three times on the table. The hypnotized person gets up and opens the window and as he walks back to his chair the hypnotist asks, "Why did you open the window?" You would think that the person would think for a moment and look confused, anxious and perhaps a little embarrassed and then say something like, "I don't really know." This is actually quite crazy. I was listening to your presentation, and suddenly I had some kind of irrational impulse to get up and open the window, I hope I don't go crazy or something.' However, most people react very differently. Sometimes there is only a brief moment of slight hesitation, or for a brief moment (for a split second) of confusion on his face, and then the person responds, "It's a bit stuffy in here, so I thought I'd open the window."

> *For most people, the moment of confusion is barely distinguishable and the person is completely unaware that their VLE has made a completely wrong interpretation.*

What is particularly evident in this example, and also from examples we know of in Korsakoff's syndrome, is the ability of the VLE to make a story out of something, and this astonishing ability is often accompanied

by an alarming absence of self-awareness. In view of unresolved trauma and implicit memories, it is clear and relevant that the VLE quickly and 'quietly' comes up with all kinds of explanations as to why and how your current circumstances are the cause of everything you experience (rather than the triggered thoughts and feelings, which are remnants of unresolved traumatic memories and which have their origin in implicit memories). Unfortunately, these fabricated and flawed VLE explanations feel real and truthful. Without much deliberate practice, most people seem to experience little difference between real, true, and made-up and incorrect statements.

If you already have an 'explanation' that is seen from the triggered thoughts and emotions as a reasonable response to the events in the present, then recognizing the implicit memory content becomes even more difficult. When unprocessed trauma, implicit memories, and VLE statements are mixed in such a way, you try to solve the problem by focusing your energy and attention on the triggers in the present as if they were a true source of the implicit traumatic content. And if the trigger turns out to be someone else's behavior, you will try to solve the problem by trying to control his or her behavior. Moreover, it will feel particularly intense and subjectively true that someone else has to take responsibility for causing your implicit memory pain. Not only do you want to hold him or her responsible for the behavior that triggers your underlying trauma, but you also want the other person to admit it, apologize, and compensate you as if he or she is fully responsible for the pain in the underlying trauma memory. You don't feel heard, understood, recognized, safe or ready for reconciliation before this happens.

Detective stories are often a good analogy for this. In the really good detective stories, a criminal will not

solved case, which is being investigated by a team of investigators who are still looking for him, won't just leave him alone.

> *A crafty criminal is always looking to blame someone else until the case is closed. Such a criminal would like to see someone convicted for his crime, so that the detectives do not continue with their investigation.*

The comparison with unresolved traumas that arise as implicit memories and the VLE is the same. The problem is still not solved if you keep looking for new clues. The implicit memory content feels true in the present, and your VLE comes up with explanations as to why one must take full responsibility for the triggers in the present of the implicit memory content that reveals itself. You are no longer looking for new clues because 'someone has already been accused and arrested'. This analogy is so effective because people in the present are largely blamed for damage that is a combination of trauma, implicit memories and VLE explanations of the underlying traumas.

Take for example Nancy who had a father with alcohol problems and who made it very unsafe for her emotionally and physically. Every time he got angry, he would threaten her, give her a scathing look, and intimidate her. This frightening behavior often resulted in physical violence, so Nancy knew he wasn't just bluffing. These events occurred throughout Nancy's childhood and she had many traumatic memories of these events. Now, twenty-five years later, Nancy is married to David, who occasionally gets angry but never threatens, intimidates or becomes aggressive. Every time David gets angry, Nancy feels threatened and intimidated because his anger triggers her unprocessed memories, and the toxic content of the implicit memories comes out and feels like a thing of the now.

And then the VLE 'looks at' this information and comes up with a statement along the lines of: "I feel threatened and intimidated because David threatens and intimidates me with his anger. He feels dangerous when he is angry and she knows that it will escalate into violence if she does not do what he wants... She is only vaguely aware that she has never seen David violent with her or anyone else and also that she can now identify specific things that give reason to think that he is threatening or intimidating, but she sticks strictly to the combination of her implicit memories and VLE statements because it feels so compellingly true.

The combination of implicit memories and incorrect VLE statements creates an unresolvable conflict. Nancy will only feel heard, valued, safe and ready for reconciliation if David would (vicariously) take responsibility for the bullying and intimidation and the threatened violence.

This is all true when it comes to her father, and her demands are justified regarding her father, but the combination of her implicit memories and VLE statements also create a compelling subjective perception that this same picture applies to David now too. But,

because this picture is not current now, he cannot honestly agree with it. They are therefore stuck in an irreconcilable tension, where she demands from him to acknowledge what feels true to her, and he refuses to confess to something he knows is not true!

Another example is that of John and Sara. When John was a boy, his father focused his time and energy on building a successful business, ignoring John's increasingly lonely mother. To have more contact with other adults, John's mother started working outside the home, where her beauty and intelligence did not go unnoticed. Her boss appreciated her competence and was particularly attracted to her and enjoyed her company. At first that friendship looked good. John noticed that his mother's boss was very kind to her, he noticed that his mother often smiled when she talked to her boss and that she felt happier in general. Unfortunately,

what started as a friendship developed into an intimate relationship, and John's mother eventually left the family to marry her boss.

Now, twenty-five years later, John is married to Sara, who is outgoing and friendly to everyone she knows, including men. John has never been able to observe anything in her behavior that could even be regarded as the beginning of inappropriate behavior. And yet, when he sees her smiling at their male friends, his unresolved memories are triggered and the toxic contents of the implicit memories come out and he feels that to be true in the present. It feels true that Sara connects with others in an inappropriate intimacy that must lead to a wrong relationship ('if it isn't already') and it feels as if Sara will eventually leave him for another man. Furthermore, his VLE gives the following explanation: “I feel scared and betrayed, and I have these feelings because Sara is unfaithful. I wouldn't feel this way if she weren't doing something wrong...etc. He, too, is vaguely aware that he can't explain exactly why Sara's behavior is inappropriate, and that he has never really seen anything, but still he clings to the combination of his implicit memories and his VLE statement because it feels so compellingly real!

Here the mix of implicit memories and incorrect VLE statements is once again the cause of an unresolvable conflict. John only wants respect, safety, to be heard, and is willing to reconcile if Sara takes responsibility for her infidelity. He admits that he has absolutely no evidence to suggest that she is in an intimate relationship, but he is concerned that she is having sex with other men and he wants her to at least take responsibility for any emotional relationship she has with any friend she regularly smiles at. Fundamentally, he wants her to admit that any way of laughing at other men is improper behavior. His mother's smile and friendship became inappropriate behavior and his mother was in an intimate relationship and the combination of his implicit memories and his VLE statements gave him that compulsive subjective perception that it was exactly the same situation with Sara in the present. But because

If this picture is not correct in the present, Sara finds it difficult to agree with that. They are therefore stuck in an irreconcilable difference, where he asks something of her that he experiences as compellingly true - and which she refuses to internalize because it is not true.

TRAUMA AND CAPACITY

The ability to process experiences and regulate emotions is largely absent at birth. The development of that ability in practice therefore has everything to do with the acquired maturity of both the individual and collective identity, because that is often a decisive factor in whether or not a trauma occurs. Children are not yet mature and are highly dependent on the capacity of the group (for example family and/or municipality) during intense and long-lasting events. Intensely painful experiences do not have to become traumatic if the community responds adequately and helps the child to process the events. Therefore, trauma can be seen as a consequence of a lack of development of the individual and collective maturity, which is necessary to be able to tolerate a situation with sufficient capacity.

If that capacity is lacking during attempts to process events, it will remain an obstacle to resolving trauma, regardless of the technique used. The brain's persistent attempts to process trauma will be hampered by unprocessed memories and flashbacks of triggered events. The unprocessed events are always latent and will not be resolved unless one develops more maturity and capacity. A neurological model must therefore take into account the degree of maturity and capacity at the time of the trauma and the attempts to resolve previous traumatic moments. First of all, the missing elements of system maturity must be inventoried. Secondly, a rescue technique at the time of resolving a trauma should never exceed the 'system capacity' of anyone.

exceed basket. If this is not taken into account, this help will lead to new traumas and disruption of relationships.

11.4 WHAT IS TRAUMA RECOVERY?

> *One way to describe trauma recovery is that someone who has been confronted with adversity or possible trauma triggers is again able to act and speak according to their true self (that is: their identity, accepted by the community they belong to).*

The person does so with the confidence that his or her response is appropriate to the situation and approved by both his or her group and by God. The knowledge of how to act based on our identity (our being) is what we expect from our faith. The failure to do this is described in Judeo-Christian thought with three terms, namely: sin, unrighteousness and transgression. The biblical content of those concepts are:

1. Sin: in Hebrew an archery term for not achieving the goal, or (in

Greek) missing the target in any direction.

2. Injustice: a deformity in development, e.g. an injury or illness, where what was to be developed did not grow or was deformed.

3. Violation: doing what was forbidden, or not doing what was ordered. Without the law there would be none

be a violation.

Even a cursory examination of the relevant Bible texts will reveal that there is much concern expressed about distortions (iniquities) of our identity that lead to iniquities in relationships with God and others. The same applies to falling short (sinning) in life when it comes to our identity in relationship with God and others. The full extent of sin, unrighteousness, and transgression in our identity becomes clear in light of the two greatest commandments: Love the Lord God with all your heart, soul, and

strength and your neighbor as yourself. Both spiritual community and trauma recovery have the same goal, namely: the recovery of our true self, our identity. Because both our spiritual lives and our brains are designed by God, treatment methods and results must harmonize with each other.

A SELF-DEVELOPING RECOVERY

The first thing to note is that deformities of character, thinking and behavior can be passed on from person to person and from generation to generation. The fact that deformities spread means that when we try to counter the extent and consequences of trauma, this recovery must be carried out from person to person and even from generation to generation. We live in a world with both traumatized and healthy people, but even if non-traumatized people raise healthy children, this will not stop the spread of trauma from one generation to the next. Recovery in traumatized groups must take place from a healthy support base and spread from person to person and even from group to group. This can only happen if the means of recovery are accessible and safe for most people and it produces enough results to continue. To achieve this result, recovery must meet the demands of the brain systems involved and spread further into spiritual communities experiencing the blessing of God. Such an approach would be well compatible with the highest standards of professional care, although methods and safeguards may vary.

11.5 TESTING OF ASSUMPTIONS

Many trauma models 'work', but testing assumptions remains a requirement. Care providers are usually very passionate about providing trauma recovery assistance, but unfortunately this makes an objective analysis difficult. Discussions of different treatment models often do not even lead

reach agreement when it comes to definitions, assumptions, conditions or goals.

Models that are effective have many similarities, but differ in the elements deemed necessary that make them unique. Part of that "disagreement" is caused by financial considerations, because the developers of the model want to protect their training because they have invested a lot of time and energy in it. However, it should be clear that in addition to the specific techniques of a method, the successive tasks of the common elements also determine the result. Most farmers harvest, plant, water, fertilize, pull weeds, change crops and harvest based on decisions that take into account (calendar) time and weather conditions.

> *Regardless of the order of those steps, one will harvest (and it will 'work'), but if one observes the optimal, i.e.: natural order, the yield will be maximum.*

The best sequence of actions for a high yield will usually also be the least tiring for the farmer and promote the continuity of a business. Such a company has a better chance of recovering from a dry or wet year, a storm or other problems.

One would rightly expect that a reliable trauma recovery therapy, based on healthy relational neurology and spirituality, could explain why a model or technique works or is problematic. The unique contributions of the neurological/mental model concern the optimal phasing of recovery with regard to the building (accumulation) of system capacity (maturity, growth) and with a direct operating capacity of the system. If this is combined and we know the degree of maturity and the current capacity of a system, this helps us to focus only on the missing elements or skills in successive interventions, because that is less complex and costs

less effort. One can sequence the recovery measures for an already traumatized system in such a way that as little capacity as possible is consumed.

> *In summary, a neurological model must pay careful attention to the sequence of successive tasks to increase efficiency, reduce emotional burden, and take into account the presence of the degree of maturity and growth for successful recovery.*

Traumatized people must be able to find their way back to happiness and joy.

Trauma recovery generally develops through the dedicated efforts of compassionate people confronted with others who are afflicted with tremendous pain and functional impairment as a result of terrible circumstances, abhorrent behavior, or catastrophic events. The intense emotional fires that involve trauma recovery are not easily extinguished with calm conversations by level-headed counselors. For both the care provider and the victim involved in trauma recovery, it is not easy to take an alternative path to recovery. Frequent criticism, harmful treatments, lawsuits, costs and counter charges have not helped to facilitate an open discussion about this problem area.

A recovery model based on experience leads to certain biases. For example, it is often thought that in repeated attempts to solve a problem, the last step in the process forced the breakthrough and is therefore the most important. Another common misunderstanding is that the method that worked in an individual solution to a trauma is 'therefore' the best solution for all types of trauma and for all cultures. For example, in our Western cultures a large number of sexual traumas are hidden, making it necessary for victims to tell their stories in order to find a solution to their problem. However, telling 'the story' is virtually

always the last step in the process. This is in contrast to many other regions and cultures, for example the Rwandan genocide or the consequences of the tsunami in Sri Lanka. Does telling the 'story' here have the same value for recovery from trauma? Because Western trauma is often secret, the recovery procedure is often sought in closed sessions with highly trained professionals, but without witnesses in the hope that the counselors can control sexually charged topics. Care providers often develop a model of trauma treatment that involves confidentiality. But will the same model also work in the trauma care of the war in Syria and provide a solution for the traumatized population? An individual recovery experience often means that we have the idea that complete recovery can only take place for each individual person.

ASSUMPTIONS IN THE LIFE MODEL

Let us first mention a number of assumptions that can be found in the LIFE Model.

1. Pre-existing capacity: All it takes to resolve trauma is maybe

not yet sufficiently developed. Both individuals and communities often lack essential skills and are immature.

2. Current Capacity: Individuals and communities are unable to provide trauma solutions that promote growth in adulthood. They may be exhausted and lack the tools to heal trauma.

3. Correct brain function: successive processes such as damage to chemistry,

Nutrition, hormones, physical damage, experiential and genetic conditions may not resolve all trauma. At the same time, the presence of brain deficits does not hinder the entire trauma recovery.

4. Removing trauma: Long-term trauma can block or weaken the development of social skills after recovery.

5. The recovery of individual functions leads to recovery of the community, of the group function.

From neurology and spiritual life it is clear that there is both a capacity for the individual condition and a capacity for a group community. Relational skills are required for both individual and group development. Restoring individual capacity does not automatically lead to a positive response from the group.

Now follow a number of assumptions that play a role in other models but NOT in the LIFE Model:

1. “Traumas are best repaired when the brain is in a desynchronized mode.”

However, there will not be many people who claim this, but it is the most common practice in care. Activating the trauma desynchronizes the brain into an unstable configuration (if that instability remains, it is called a psychological disorder) from which the average trauma recovery process attempts to find

solutions to the trauma. The LIFE Model expects that less capacity is needed or used if the brain is maintained in a stable relational state in terms of safeguarding the limbic system while the traumatic events complete their relational process steps.

2. 'Trauma recovery and guidance should be left exclusively to professionals.' Professionals are especially needed when confidentiality is desired and when the recovery capacity of the traumatized individual (or group) is not carefully monitored and overwhelm, functional decline, secondary PTSD or other risks must be avoided. Mental and neurological insights indicate that group recovery (for traumas that affect an entire community) can also be developed for use in groups in areas with populations suffering from intense trauma. In these regions, people with spiritual sensitivity and mature relationships can replace professional training, while the professionals can busy themselves

3. with training communities and treating perpetrators.

11.6 THE IMPORTANCE OF MENTAL MATURITY

Maturity is an accumulation of capacity, but it also results in a dramatic reduction in effort required to accomplish a given task. An accomplished musician who reads a piece of music and plays it within seconds does so much better than a novice who has already had a year of lessons and hundreds of hours of practice. Communities in which people enjoy each other and bear each other's burdens will have greater relational capacity in terms of the functioning of the whole brain, body and group community in painful emotional circumstances. They are less likely to withdraw out of shame, more likely to admit their problems and will expect that a loving response to their weakness will restore their relational integrity more quickly. This will require considerably less capacity for processing traumas. Of course, such a loving community is not self-evident because of many traumatic events worldwide in the past, which makes us tend to think that our immaturity as humans is very normal.

Important facts:

More mature brain systems are more difficult to traumatize.

Relational skills of the brain for processing experiences of increasing intensity are learned during normal development in infancy and can develop until the age of forty, occasionally even later.

Recovery needs vary according to age and capacity.

Trauma treatment should not stop at pain reduction, but should also address the recovery of a possible pre-existing lack of maturity, which contributes to a greater

vulnerability to acquiring the trauma contributed.

Effective trauma recovery methods increase individual, group and spiritual maturity.

Recovery of traumatized communities must be led by spiritually mature members of that community; for example, elders, who can facilitate adult relational skills in the group.

Capacity must be guaranteed and respected at all stages of trauma recovery.

Relational skills for developing and maintaining capacity should be taught to traumatized individuals and groups as needed.

Relational skills for developing and sustaining capacity must be reintroduced to groups where those skills are lacking or underdeveloped, even if a culture has developed around their absence as a result of past traumas of great and catastrophic proportions.

If these traumas are still present and there is no mature group identity, spiritual guidance and models are necessary to learn who we are and can become. In Christian thinking we call this: restoration of maturity, becoming conformed to the character of Christ.

If we focus on capacity, a neurological model must carefully take into account the accumulated damage to the brain, body and community. This includes damage from genetic, physical, mental and chemical causes. The most common consequence of this is that the brain tries to work outside parameters that can be trained, such as the frequency and strength of the brain waves and a certain hypo and hyper function. To recover from trauma, the brain must be able to function properly.

11.7 THE IMPORTANCE OF CONNECTION

It is becoming increasingly clear that during emotional experiences the brain is most stable when it works in a safe connection. In contrast, brain functioning in a disorganized disconnected state is increasingly linked to the development of mental illness, addictions, violent and antisocial behavior, and an increased likelihood of developing PTSD. A neurologically disorganized disconnect is often also a result of early life trauma, abuse and neglect.

Factors that determine the development of the capacity of the brain, body and community as a whole are: selective attention, affect regulation (individually and in relation to another), motivation, empathy, shared mental experiences, and the extent to which one is part of a group. The brain will usually process all the sensory experiences of group memories into mutually exchanged emotional experiences and common emotional responses and behaviors that reflect how “me and my group” respond to these types of events. Trauma disrupts the normal processing of events to such an extent that the individual is no longer able to respond adequately to events in consultation with others in his or her group.

events and feelings. Any attempt to process the current traumatic event will cause a mental state that is comparable to a disorganized disconnect in the brain. This is more likely to happen if the brain has fewer experiences with secure connectedness and more experiences with disorganized disconnectedness. For some people, this disorganized state lasts their entire lives. For most people this varies depending on whether their traumas are triggered.

If we focus on recovery of capacity and the successive tasks of trauma, the question arises whether the trauma can be processed faster and with less capacity (capacity) in an unconnected and disorganized state or in a relationally synchronized state of secure connectedness.

If you compare it to the operation of a computer, you might wonder whether we prefer to work with a stable operating system or with a computer that freezes every time. You can work with a computer in both options. Practical examples from the developers of the LIFE Model clearly confirm that recovery from trauma is substantially faster and costs less energy (power, capacity) when the individual or group is first guided into a stable, safe, connected consciousness and this remains the case throughout the entire trauma recovery process. This is often in contrast to other trauma treatment methods that attempt to resolve trauma from an unstable non-relational memory of the trauma and from there strive for a more stable relationship and connection at the end of the recovery process. It is very important to know that every successful trauma recovery process ends with a restored stable situation of connection. Clearly, this is almost impossible for people who have lived their entire lives since childhood in disorganized chronic disconnection, and easiest for those who have been separated for only a single moment from a relationally even and secure life. The ability to recover is therefore a reflection of the maturity and capacity of both individual and community systems.

Loss of connection

Traumatic events severely disrupt family, friendship, love and community ties. They often undermine the trust of victims, and this often has similar consequences in the personal relationship with God. Not only consequences regarding identity, but also on the deep attachment and meaning systems (Levels 1 and 2 in right brain diagram). The victims have lost basic confidence in safety, faith and continuity of life. Wounded soldiers or raped women cry out to God or their mother, and when there is no answer, basic trust is destroyed and people feel completely abandoned. The trauma often also violates the fundamental

physical integrity. The body is overwhelmed, dishonored and wounded. There is a loss of control. The trauma destroys the belief that one can be oneself in relationship with others.

There is often shame and helplessness, hopeless fear, humiliation, difficult feelings in which the person himself cannot calm down, synchronize. Traumatized people have difficulty regulating intimacy, and flee from close relationships when they are desperate for them. Sometimes it turns out that the emotional pain after trauma is caused by untruths

in the history of the trauma, often not due to the trauma itself. It is that untruth that is woven into the memory and that needs renewal. True liberation comes from being set free from the confusion and generalizations hidden in the trauma. This is exactly where inner healing, such as through TPM (Theophostic Prayer Ministry) and the Immanuel approach, can be helpful for emotionally wounded people. The process opens the way for the Holy Spirit to replace the untruths, the confusion, with the truth and the pain with peace.

Not all negative emotions are based on lies.

TPM recognizes that there are some negative emotions that are not based on untruths, but are based on the truth. Such feelings as disappointment, sadness, grief, regret and anger are often rooted in truth. If you ask a sexual assault survivor why he or she is so angry, he or she might say, “Because what the abuser did was wrong.” This is based on the truth! But when I feel fear, shame, abandonment, etc., it is often based on untruths. It is important that a person releases both negative feelings. This happens through the biblical command to cast all our cares on Him (1 Peter 5:7).

Below we will first try to describe how this process occurs neurologically in the brain. Then we will discuss various steps to healing.

IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT CONNECTION AND TRAUMA

Traumatic experiences are stored and relived in memory when the brain is not in a securely connected state (not in relationship, just experienced in feeling).

The processing in the brain is clearest and fastest in a safe, connected environment. So solutions must be experienced in safe relationship connection with Jesus, see the 6 steps of the Immanuel Process.

Connectedness is mapped in the brain's memory (experiences are stored).

Traumatic memories have been mapped in the brain.

Connected and traumatic brain configurations can be activated and retained by memory. They often occur reflexively and conditionedly outside the will or consciousness of the client.

Maintaining optimal brain function means that the brain remains in a relational function to help resolve experiences that do not feel relational during incomplete processing.

It is necessary to continuously test brain function during the trauma recovery process in order to maintain a secure relational connection with regard to relationships. Training and stimulation may be necessary to help traumatized individuals experience and maintain a state of safe connection.

Traumatic experiences activate the connection system to search for connection. So it comes down to making new healthy connections.

MAKE NEW CONNECTIONS

Both intensely positive and negative events activate the connectedness system to seek connectedness. The result is that one commits to the cause of the stimulation. Some examples are:

Chemicals that stimulate the reward center.

Loss of attachment to an object.

Intensely experienced sensations.

Strong emotions.

Traumatic events. These activate the relationship system with regard to connection, but do not meet needs for secure connection and can even block them.

Connection blocks often occur and complicate trauma recovery. (Therefore, do not go through the steps of the Immanuel process too quickly).

Pseud-related attachments (non-relational attachments to behavior, experiences, seeing people as objects, and substances) often replace secure attachments in traumatized systems. This also includes fear connections!

Restoring secure unions is an inherent part of trauma recovery and the Judeo-Christian religion. Think about forgiving, letting go and surrendering.

11.8 THE BIBLICAL ROAD TO HEALING

A-traumas are mainly about learning skills. In the ideal picture, this will only be achieved optimally once the B-traumas have been processed: the processing of difficult events. Learning to practice Biblical joy is then an important step, as is gaining insight into triggers and how to deal with them.

LEARNING TO PRACTICE BIBLICAL JOY

The Bible and God have much to say about joy, for example 1 Sam. 2:1 and Neh. 8:10. “The joy of the Lord is my strength!” In Psalm 4:7,8 we can read: “Many say, Who will show us good? Lift up the light of Your countenance upon us, O Lord! You have put more joy in my heart than then...' And Ps. 89:16 says: “Blessed are the people who shout for joy, for they walk, O Lord, in the light of Your countenance.” Consider the association in the ROCP (control center identity) of sound and light in relation to joy. This is how God communicates in shouts of joy

light of countenance, this is how adult children of God, who are made in His image, also communicate. The blessing that Israel had to invoke three or four times contains the passage: "The Lord make His face shine upon you, and give you peace." Also when it comes to learning to return to joy

the Bible teaches much in this regard.

For example, read Ps. 35:27: 'Let those who desire My righteousness shout for joy and be glad; let them say continually, The Lord is great...' and Jer. 31:25: '... for I refresh the weary soul, I satisfy every fainting soul'. See further Ps. 51:8-10. Jesus has a lot to say about joy. “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full” (John 14).

However, his teaching involves more than the development of the nervous system. Jesus, who took the shame of the cross... for the joy set before Him (return to joy). The power that carried Him through was faith in joy.

This power of joy also makes it possible for us to suffer, to accept suffering.

Biblically, joy mainly means that someone enjoys being with us. It is therefore also important in group exercises to have joyful contact with fellow sufferers, in which recognition, acknowledgment and solidarity must be practiced. The Sermon on the Mount of the Lord Jesus is central, from which eight choices are formulated that should change and renew a life in practical and encouraging Bible education.

UNDERSTANDING TRIGGERS AND FIGHTING THEM

Understanding triggers and combating them is a second important step.

There are implicit and explicit memories. With explicit memories we still know the context of the memory, with implicit memories we no longer know. Implicit memories in particular play tricks on us in the present. They have none

subjective experience of our personal past and do not feel like a 'normal' memory. In the present we are triggered by thoughts and emotions, by associations in the past, which we no longer recognize as such and which we give a rational meaning in the present through the Verbal Logical Explainer (VLE), which is, however, not relevant. Especially when it comes to unprocessed traumatic memories, a 'toxic' content of painful matters often becomes public in the present. The VLE's confused interpretations form associated lies, which can easily be triggered in the present, causing the unprocessed content of an implicit memory from the past to become active in the present.

It leads to a loss of connection circuits of relationships, and therefore thoughts and emotions increasingly reduce our discernment. This can get in the way of spiritual life and the relationship with Jesus Christ.

MENTAL INTERVENTIONS DURING TRAUMA TREATMENT

Pray during treatment.

Asking God's guidance in uncovering traumatic memories.

Restrict demons that want to disrupt treatment discussions.

Clients learn to defend themselves against demons in faith (armor).

Asking for the intercession of others.

Praying for healing from trauma.

If there are dissociated parts, they learn to use their spiritual power.

Try to bring dissociated parts of the personality into relationship with God.

Maintain contact with the client's spiritual family.

Praying for protection of the client, even outside of treatment.

In consultation with the client, ask out loud for God's guidance if obstacles need to be overcome in treatment.

Quoting Bible texts as promises, guideposts, encouragements.

Silently asking God for words of wisdom, or an image, and how to properly interact with the client.

Teaching the different parts of the personality to pray.

Asking God to expose ways of brainwashing.

11.9 Thinking with God

In this article, Wilder emphasizes that there is a difference between meditation and contemplation. He shows that the bonding love between God and man in the Bible is essential for thinking with God. As a neurotheologian, he shows how this spiritual reality develops in the brain.

Revelation of God and our attunement to Him

Thinking with God... what do we mean by that? We mean being so one with God that your thoughts become intertwined with His. That your thoughts, as it were, rhyme with His, just like when two people, well attuned to each other, brainstorm about something together and come to the conclusion that they think about it almost the same way. With God this is special. He is so enormous... We can think with God, that is to say: think together with Him in mutual coordination, because God wants to reveal Himself to us if we are open to it.

One aspect of spiritual formation is teaching our human brains to love God and think with Him. For the latter we also use the verb contemplate. Both loving and contemplating are fundamentally relational. The human brain has a relational part, a part that is engaged in involvement with others, that can be trained and built up precisely through the practice of loving and thinking with God. Let's take a closer look at this relational part of the brain so that the how and why of this becomes a little more clear.

The relational part of our brain

The relational part of the human brain shapes both our identity and our reality. This means that for everything we do in relationships with others, we must carefully deal with each other's boundaries, imperfections and limitations, and with what is going on with the other person. And we will have to pay attention to the necessary safety measures. If we observe these guarantees, it will have a positive effect on the development of our identity and our awareness of reality. Then we will:

a) have more relational awareness of God / have less difficulty experiencing Him as personally and involvedly close,

b) experience more character changes,

c) receiving and being able to pass on more love,

d) to better attune ourselves to the Spirit of God, and

e) be able to more easily enter into heart-to-heart relationships with the people God intended us to love.

Building or changing our identity and reality happens right in the deep relational part of the brain. There, at this unconscious level, only the people we love with deep attachment love can help us with this. Thinking harmoniously in coordination with others (knowing each other deeply) requires this unique form of love, attachment love. Is it also the case that Jesus and the Father seek this bonding love before They reveal Themselves?

Attachment love and Dallas Willard

Dallas Willard once asked me the question, “Is our salvation built around attachment love?” Attachment love is the most powerful force in the human brain and is the foundation for developing both our identity and character. After his question, I spent eight years exploring what attachment love means for our relationship with God and for spiritual formation. This culminated in writing Renovated: God, Dallas Willard and Churches that Transform

(Renovated: God, Dallas Willard, and Communities that Renew Us; 2020). There is no doubt that love is central to God. Everyone will agree that the love that God requires cannot be reduced to an emotion. But does God intend to forge eternal bonding relationships with Himself and with His people when He speaks

of love? God made attachment love a central element in our brains. When we use our relational parts of the brain based on attachment love, we better understand what God is telling us about love. When we examine the words and situations mentioned in the Bible around love, we will find that they correspond to the characteristics of attachment love.

Attachment love in the human brain

Babies develop their identities and brains in response to attachment relationships. Healthy connections and attachment styles emerge from joyful interactions with life-giving people. Unhealthy attachment relationships develop with those who deprive or threaten their life. Attachment love drives parents to enter a burning building to save their child. The absence of attachment love leads to humanity's greatest atrocities. Attachment love is stronger than our desire for life itself. Would God want us to love Him this way? Attachment love forms a kind of permanent 'glue' that connects two people. Man is prepared in his brain to connect himself, to attach to the source of his life. In this way, the person who feeds us, gives us something to drink, or provides us with shelter will become the center of our attachment love.

Hebrew uses the word dabaq (to glue) to command us to cleave permanently to God (Deuteronomy 11:22). Allowing ourselves to be fed by the snake is a faulty attachment. By asking the Baals to feed us or give us fertility, a bond is created with them. Those who feed on Words of Life, eat the Bread of Heaven and

Drinking Living Water and dwelling in the shelter of the Most High also build attachment love. The love that connects us to the Source of life is attachment love.

Does the Bible mean Attachment Love when it speaks of Agape Love?

In my book Renovated I go into more detail about the meaning of the Biblical words for love, but in this article I also want to say something about it. We cannot separate God's enduring goodness (chesed) from God's love (ahabha). Chesed means:

a) lasting kindness that is b) life-giving. Chesed and ahabha characterize both God's love and the best human love (Micah 6:8). Ahabha (translated into Greek as agapao in Matthew 5:43) encompasses all New Testament teaching on agape love. Compare, for example, what Jesus says in John 15: we must abide in Him / remain closely connected to Him, in order to remain in His love. Agape love is indeed attachment love. It is therefore not surprising that God has made attachment love the central and strongest force for developing identity in the human brain.

The fast and slow track in the brain.

How can the human brain think with God? This requires attachment love. We first need to take a closer look at a few things before we can form an idea of how attachment love enables us to do this. Finally, we will look at how we can develop a Christ-like character in this way. The relational brain process that shapes our identity runs faster, deep in the right hemisphere, than conscious thought. Everything that is based on attachment love, such as thinking together and character that is formed, works through this 'fast track'. This “fast track”-based identity is formed under the influence of those we are attached to, and determines the often unconscious responses we call “character.” In interactions with others, the relational “fast track” provides our immediate, spontaneous responses. (Note: We bond with all kinds of things this way, too

to things that are not good for us such as drugs. Many things we teach addicts don't work because we are trying to get the "slow track" to overtake or correct the "fast track" and that doesn't work.)

Conscious attention

Conscious attention occurs much more slowly, in the outer brain (the prefrontal cortex), under the influence of the left hemisphere. This 'slow trail' provides explanations, procedures and words for our experiences. What we understand, believe and usually mean by 'thinking' functions along this slow track. Beliefs in our slow track struggle to control our reactions arising from the fast track. The slow track does what Dallas called “sin management.” The slow track of conscious thought can think about God, but it cannot think with God. The slow track can believe things about God but is fundamentally limited in knowing God. The slow track is what you might call the 'home base' of the majority of what we might call 'religion'. Thinking with God takes the fast track and is possible through attachment love and spiritual-emotional attunement to God.

Mental-emotional attunement and the human brain

We can only develop mutual emotional-spiritual attunement in our brains through attachment to a person. The only part of the brain that is able to attune to another person and communicate with him/her is that deep relational part in the right hemisphere, responsible for the 'fast track'. Babies are born without this capacity for mutual attunement and develop this capacity from about 5 months of age. Without a loving attachment, the ability to understand what another person is thinking and feeling does not develop correctly (or even at all). Once developed, the re-

experience the state of mutual attunement to understand others and follow their thinking. By understanding and following others in this way, an identity and character develops in the baby. The first 'stronger' in his/her thinking that our brain encounters is usually not primarily God, but another human being. This is often imperfect. There is often suspicion, feelings of insecurity and therefore resistance to change, at this deep level of the 'fast track'. And if we struggle to connect deeply with those we see, how can we love and cleave to God whom we have not seen?

Changes in our identity and character

need safety. That is why the brain quickly builds a 'firewall' around our identity and character. That firewall needs mutual attunement based on attachment love to open. They will not allow any other person to change their character, reality or identity unless there is attachment love with that person. Attachment love opens the firewall through mutual attunement, allowing for changes in who we are and how we respond. The fast track uses attachment love as a safety check before it changes our character. Note: the brain checks for the presence of our attachment love and not so much for what we believe about attachment love. When we are with someone with whom we are connected through attachment love

and who is 'stronger' in his thinking on that point (can handle more / is more mature), something can then change. Through attachment love we can then attune ourselves to each other and thus establish a connection with each other in our brains.

We can then communicate with that person via the fast track in 'real time' (this often involves looking at each other and/or holding each other). That communication is much faster than conscious thinking or speaking. The brain is pre-programmed to wait for such a person who can handle more in his thinking, and who shows 'himself' to us through attachment love. Such a person can also introduce us to

God. We then have a bridge to connect with Him in this way and to think with Him. Sometimes God also does it directly and from the beginning He has been the 'stronger' one who loves us so intensely and helps us spiritually-emotionally. Filling ourselves with memories of what we have experienced with Him often helps us on our way in this 'thinking with God'.

Formation and transformation

What the above practically means for spiritual formation therefore arises from the close connection that exists between attachment love, states of mutual attunement and character development. Through the fast track in the brain, we are able to tune or synchronize our thinking in real time with how someone else thinks and feels in his or her brain. When two people are connected by attachment love, the weaker of the two at that moment will take over some of the strength of the one who is 'stronger' in a certain situation (can handle more / is more mature). By following how someone with a 'stronger brain' thinks and feels during a state of attunement in loving attachment, the 'weaker' one can spontaneously think and react like the 'stronger' one. For example, if I am afraid and emotionally attune to someone who is calm and he/she reciprocally tunes in to me, the deep relational part of my right brain takes over some of his/her calm thoughts and feelings about that situation.

Alignment

This happens in a split second and usually without words. If these mutual states of attunement occur often enough, the weakest person becomes more and more similar in his thinking and feeling in such situations to the one who gives him life. It is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish who comes up with what. Both think and react increasingly the same. All this applies in interactions between us and other people and in interactions with God. Thinking with God/Jesus is different than what we are used to.

The above is therefore very different from conscious meditation. Meditation results from focusing our attention on something. However, conscious meditation on truth and God's character does not automatically produce a mutual state of spiritual-emotional attunement. God does not have to reveal himself for meditation to work.

Meditation can also be non-relational, but what we have described and need here is contemplation. As we mean here, it is relational. Contemplative prayer flows from an awareness of God's active presence. Contemplation involves thinking with God (in real time)

using mutual coordination.

Spiritual formation

I worked with Dallas to further develop an idea that has been central to thinking about spiritual formation since the origins of the first churches. The early Christians copied the spiritual exercises that Jesus used. Jesus especially practiced an intimate relationship with His heavenly Father, even as He served within His family of origin during His first 30 years of life. Imitating Jesus' prayer life and quiet time with God turned out to be necessary, but unfortunately not enough. Why do we need more than what Jesus Himself did? As humans, our identity formation begins in the womb. Growth often goes terribly wrong by the time we are five years old. We are not well developed, and we also lack important skills. And not only because of what others did not do (completely) well, but also because of wrong reactions from ourselves. This is in contrast to Jesus, who has matured as a complete human being. Jesus' 'spiritual exercises' only had to ensure that His attunement to the Father continued to function properly. We need more.

Ultimate maturity

Consider, for example, how Jesus prayed for His persecutors even in His tremendous suffering on the cross. That ultimate maturity

reflects great relational capacity in the brain's fast track. To become so mature, gentle and loving in our automatic responses (i.e. in the fast track in our right brain) requires a lot of practice, with God and/or others leading us in this. We need the relationship with God, and often also with fellow human beings. To develop a Christ-like character, our brains need attachment love between us and God, and between us and others of God's people. God intends for us to practice attachment love with Himself and with others. It's

like this: The combined development of our natural and spiritual maturity begins during our earthly life and is learned by our physical brain.

Practicing skills

Practicing the skills and patterns of normal human adulthood requires a mutual attunement and attachment to God and people. God uses attachment love – with Himself as well as with other people – to correct weak or wrong elements in our early formation. There are many things missing from our human identity and interactions with others. Dallas and I agreed that spiritual maturity includes all natural human maturity, plus elements that can only be added by the Holy Spirit. Jesus primarily entered into a loving bonding relationship with his disciples. In addition, He instituted a process of discipleship. Through both of these He gave them life and allowed them to grow in love. In this way He also restored the identity of His followers. Forming good bonding relationships between Himself and the twelve, and between them, turned out to be a difficult process. Training the disciples was similar to what Jesus did personally with the Father, supplemented with training within the group together.

Both human and Divine relationships are necessary

The interaction with each other, under Jesus' leadership, also contributed to their formation. This shows that spiritual formation combines transformative moments with God and formative practices with people. The essence of both is development from loving attachment relationships. As we align with God in our interactions with others, our thoughts, words, and actions begin to align with His, and we become more like Him. In this way, our entire life becomes an internship in the school of (internalizing) His Love.

Further depth

Starting a bonding relationship, like falling in love, can be quite easy with people we like. Maintaining attachment when things go wrong is the touchstone of emotional maturity. When someone suddenly feels more like an enemy than a friend (or suddenly starts to hate us) we discover the power of our attachment love.

The other as 'enemy'

Situations with such an 'enemy' also immediately reveal how deep our attachment to God goes. God is also attached (chesed) with love (ahabha) to such a person whom we experience at that moment as our 'enemy'. This means that if we are in communion with God at such a moment, our spontaneous response to that 'enemy' will be love. For Dallas, these spontaneous responses to “enemies” were the measure of spiritual maturity. For me, loving our enemies becomes the testing ground for attachment to God and others. Every identity error created by our early development will be exposed. The good news is that we are most open to transformation after we experience someone as more of an enemy for a moment, but in the meantime we work it out together through mutual re-attunement with each other, with God's help. This underlines that if our attachment to God (or one of God's

people) is strong enough, there are opportunities to continue to support the relationship in a state of mutual coordination, and thus to continue to grow.

God and you and me

When Teresa of Avila led the Carmelite reformation and developed the concept of contemplative prayer, she insisted that the contemplative life could only develop through loving attachment to others. Teresa also maintained that without the contemplative life there would be no transformation of our attachment to others. The two encourage each other. The spiritual life is a twofold kind of relational life.

Woven threads

The threads from which a piece of fabric is woven go in two directions. When practicing strong attachment relationships with God and others, the attachment threads run in different directions, but the result is one piece of cloth. Wires running above constantly alternate, but always in both directions. Sometimes God's thread can be seen through it. At other times the threads of your life appear in me or mine in you.

The garment is God and you and I. One moment one wire is ahead and sometimes another. The strength of the fabric is determined by both the threads we see and the threads that are hidden. We think with God and God's people through mutual attunement and become new. God's patterns and colors emerge as we bond and become intertwined. Our spiritual life as individuals and communities (and there is less separation than we might think) becomes an eternal fabric of relationships.

11.10 THE IMMANUEL PROCESS

The Immanuel Process in the LIFE Model takes into account the correct sequence in relation to available recovery capacity in trauma recovery. Dr. Jim Wilder and Prof. Dr. Karl Lehman worked this out and recorded it in logical process steps.

The current method for phasing the resolution of trauma with regard to optimal brain function while maintaining capacity, as developed under the LIFE Model, by psychiatrist Karl Lehman MD and his wife and pastor Charlotte. This is called the Immanuel Process. The first step in this process is to achieve a stable mental awareness of connectedness by remembering and maintaining a strong appreciation. If necessary, relaxation exercises are used to maintain that confirmation. Under optimal circumstances, memories of moments when the person was aware of God's presence are used to create a secure sense of connection with God.

The counselor should focus primarily on facilitating gratitude with a stable brain configuration and not emphasize naming and resolving a specific trauma. One should not proceed if the client cannot maintain a sense of gratitude to God. Only the traumas that arise spontaneously and are now being experienced need to be addressed. This is an indication that the brain at that moment has the capacity to think through and process the events. If the stable functioning of the brain is disrupted, the feeling of connection and gratitude can no longer be experienced by recalling a memory, the process should be stopped and - within a few seconds of the start of the disruption - focused entirely on stabilizing the brain in order to save capacity. This works regardless of whether that person believes in God.

A simple way in which that safe Immanuel connection with God is learned can be found in the booklet Joyful Journey (Wilder 2015). The degree of appreciation (gratitude) is used for that secure connection

to test. Participants exchange short messages with God (similar to the computer program messenger or WhatsApp) to learn to experience how God sees their lives in different steps: I see you, I hear you, I understand you, I am with you and I will help you. These short messages are read aloud and used to build up the church by hearing what has brought the writer closer to God. These simple steps teach individuals and communities to expect God's active presence. See the details at https://www.stichting-promise.nl/categorieen/44-pastorale-onderwerpen/855-immanuel-dagboek-praktijk

When used for trauma recovery, the Immanuel Process is based on the promise that God is always with us (hence the name: Immanuel). However, in traumatic circumstances we feel alone and do not sense God's active presence. This already indicates that the experience has not been processed relationally by the brain. Before we begin to focus on the memories of the traumatic experience, the memories of God's active nearness and presence should be stimulated if possible. Or else there must be at least a stable relational memory of where you appreciated God, and then (while focused on that appreciation), ask God: What do You want me to know about that time when I did not experience Your presence?

The counselor in this process helps the client to write down what comes to mind and continues to check whether the client still experiences appreciation and gratitude towards God. If that gratitude (secure attachment configuration) is no longer experienced, all attention must be returned to the moment when it was previously perceived, otherwise one should not proceed any further. These steps should be repeated until the client is aware of God's active presence where he did not feel it before. The duration of this process is often less than fifteen minutes when emotional processing capacity is high and results in an immediate and deep sense of peace. Reduced capacity, just like the complications mentioned earlier, can extend that time considerably. Only when the client experiences a deep sense of peace

and no longer feels alone, he or she is encouraged to describe what changed after experiencing the presence of God (a safe sense of connection) again.

The client is encouraged to talk about the process of change (not the trauma itself), first to the counselor and then to the community he or she is a part of. This helps the client reintegrate into that community and spread hope that recovery from trauma is possible.

THE 6 STEPS OF THE IMMANUEL PROCESS

An example of a prayer for inner healing, which can take place without manipulations, visualizations or guided fantasy from the counselor, is the Immanuel approach of Dr. J. Wilder and Prof. Dr. K. Lehman. It is important that the promise of Jesus' presence, tested from the Bible, is central and that He can guide us in the healing of damaged deep emotions. In short, the steps in that approach are as follows

1. Return to a pleasant memory with God.

2. Ask Jesus to show you your pain/trauma (and ask about His feelings about it).

3. Return to Jesus (1) if you do not experience His presence.

4. Do whatever Jesus asks you to do to remove blockages.

5. Share the painful feelings you experience with Jesus.

6. Thank God in Jesus Christ for your healing.

EXPLANATION

Step 1. Return to a pleasant memory with God. Hold on to a clear memory. Remember the interaction when you previously received healing or loving touch, try to remember how you experienced Jesus at the end of the healing memory. Think of all the places in the Bible that call us not to forget His benefits. Don't continue with traumatic experiences until then

you have a clear, interactive, memory with God, and only then go to step 2.

Step 2. Ask from your experience how Jesus looks at the painful traumatic memory, where you were not aware of His presence. Focus mainly on yourself and your painful feelings. Be sure to ask about the negative feelings you experienced. These questions return in many Psalms.

Option a): Jesus takes the lead. The first goal is not to immediately solve the problem or the underlying trauma, but to practice being in the presence of the Lord, telling Him my troubles, and experiencing that He listens and is involved. If I immediately focus everything on the present, I forget that there are often old memories and feelings. The result is often that I experience no contact with the Lord. I need to experience the Lord's involvement in my triggers. Only when you have a strong connection with Jesus can you simply ask Him to show you His guidance and will; follow His guidance and it will lead you to step 6.

Option b): Ask Jesus to help you, to make you aware of His presence in the painful memory you want healed. If you quickly become aware of Jesus in that memory, go to step 5. If you do not receive Jesus' presence in the painful memory, go to steps 3 and 4.

Option c): Someone should guide you to a better connection. If you're having trouble connecting with the painful memory, try praying with someone you trust. It sometimes helps to talk about the memory until you experience contact with the images and emotions. If you experience contact, ask Jesus to help you become aware of Jesus in the memory, at which point you go to step 5. If you cannot receive Jesus' presence in the painful memory, go to steps 3 and 4.

Step 3. Return to Jesus (1) if you do not experience His presence. If you cannot experience the presence of Jesus when you explore the painful memory, return to a memory where you do experience Jesus. Think about at the same time

both emotions, on the one hand the memory where you are aware of Jesus' presence, and on the other hand the painful memory. Talk to Jesus from the memory where you can experience Him about the memory where you cannot (yet) experience Him.

If you don't see Jesus in the painful memory, ask Him to help whatever is preventing you from experiencing His presence in the overwhelming event.

If the traumatic experience causes you to forget or lose everything about the memory and presence of Jesus, go back to step 1, the memory of Jesus. If it happens repeatedly, pray about the memory with someone who can help you through this process

holding on to Jesus while thinking about the traumatic experience. Your prayer partner will often remind you of this when you ask Him what is keeping you from experiencing His presence in the traumatic memory.

It helps to keep a journal of the thoughts you have when you ask Jesus, “What is keeping me from experiencing you in this memory?” If necessary, go to your first memory and talk to Jesus about what happened to you and what you are thinking in this traumatic memory.

Step 4. Do everything Jesus says to remove that blockage. Often it has to do with a trace of memory of something that prevents you from experiencing His presence, sometimes it is decisions or choices you have to make, or you have to explore other memories first. Return to the path of memories where you can remember things, and where contact and communication back and forth with Jesus is possible, when you cannot perceive God's blessing, response, voice or feeling (promises made, images, triggers).

Step 5. Share the painful memory in the active presence of God. When you are at the point where you can experience the traumatic memory in the presence of Jesus, take time to talk with Him until the moment where you can rest and even enjoy and share your thoughts together.

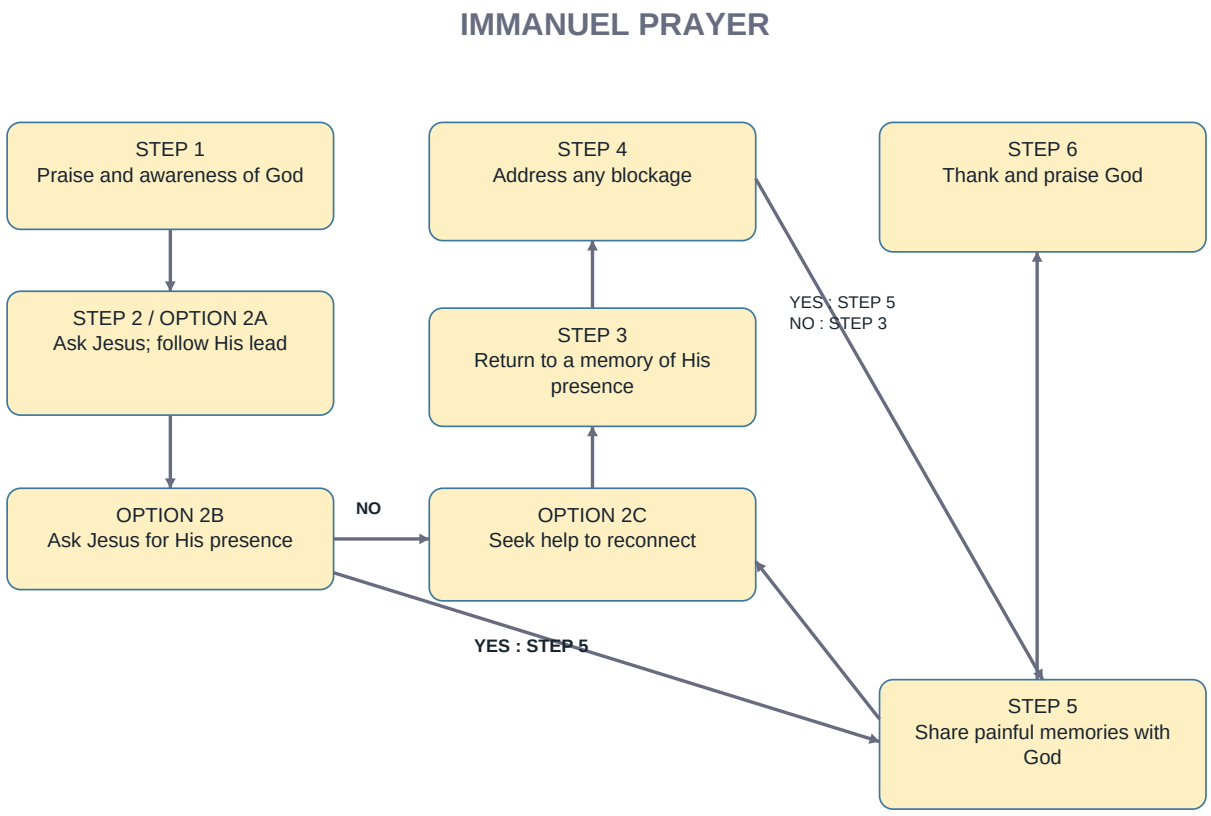
rejoice. Sometimes this will mean Jesus telling you that He wants you to look elsewhere first (focus your attention), but most of the time we move too quickly to other thoughts and abandon unresolved issues and miss the return and build up to joy and peace that we need after healing.

Step 6. Thank the Lord Jesus. Take time to experience a deep sense of gratitude. This is good, also to calm your nervous system and God also has great joy in this.

If you experience that the Lord was with you in the negative thoughts and feelings and you notice that He listens to you, understands you and is happy to be with you, then your relational circuits will improve.

When I do this myself, I invite the Lord into my pain and ask Him to help me experience His presence, and then I tell Him about my thoughts and emotions. Most of the time I immediately experience the Lord's presence and sense that He is listening without first reviewing the positive memories with Him, but when I don't feel emotionally connected, my relational circuits are turned off. When I feel stressed, it is easier for me to tell Him about my pain first than to do the positive memory exercises first. These exercises are often important first because they help me calm down and reactivate my relational circuits, and also connect me

emotionally with the Lord. Occasionally I combine grateful memory exercises and in between I tell the Lord about my emotional pain.



Complete wording of the steps and options follows.

STEP 1

Praise God, for example: Colossians 1:5; Ephesians 1:3; Philippians 3:11. Try to become aware of God's active presence. Do not immediately focus on or push toward the problem. A stable emotional state is needed to activate the Immanuel process. Also attend to physical relaxation. Keep returning to a stable state of appreciation. Recall earlier encounters with Jesus and His good deeds in the Bible. Gratitude, SMS, writing things down (a journal). "I hear you; I see you; I understand you; I am near; I help you."

STEP 2

Ask how Jesus sees the problem, at the point where you were not aware of His presence. Take your time. Focus especially on your own feelings. Helper: if necessary, ask further questions about negative feelings.

OPTION 2A

Jesus takes the lead. The aim is not to solve the problem, but to practice awareness of His presence: telling Him about my difficulty and experiencing that He listens. Focus especially on the old feelings. Experience connection with God within your triggers. Keep asking for His guidance.

OPTION 2B

Ask Jesus to help in the painful memories through His presence. Does this work? If yes, go to Step 5. If no, use Option 2C.

OPTION 2C

Someone needs to guide you toward a better connection. Talk and pray about it with someone, especially about images, memories and promises. If this does not work, go to Steps 3 and 4. If it does work, go to Step 5.

STEP 3

If you do not experience Jesus' presence, return to the memory in which you did experience Him. If this does not work, ask what prevents you from experiencing those feelings. If the traumatic experience makes you forget everything, return to Step 1 with your prayer partner's help. If helpful, keep a journal of what blocks you. Also keep seeking connection with Jesus in Step 1.

STEP 4

Do everything Jesus says in order to remove any blockage, and return to decisions, choices, promises made, images or triggers. Does this work? If yes, go to Step 5. If no, return to Step 3.

STEP 5

Share all the painful memories in God's active presence. If this works, try to talk about them together with Him. Sometimes He makes it clear that you first need to look at something else, but take care not to escape too quickly into other thoughts. Does this work? If yes, go to Step 6. If no, return to Option 2C or Step 3.

STEP 6

Thank God. Praise His name for His love, healing, joy, nearness and promises. Pray, testify and proclaim His good deeds.

Immanuel diary exercise

Communicating with God through writing

Introduction

In this article I want to provide an important tool for those who would like to practice the Immanuel lifestyle themselves; in other words: who would like to learn to live more from the awareness that God is with us always and everywhere. John & Sungshim Loppnow (www.presenceandpractice.com) have derived some simple steps from Exodus 3:7-8 that teach us to see our lives through God's eyes and to listen carefully to Him even when times are tough. They are also described in the book Joyful Journey by Jim Wilder, Anna Kang and John & Sungshim Loppnow © 2015. Healing is found, not in the absence of pain, but in the presence of Immanuel. Immanuel Journaling is designed to help you commune intimately with God, who is happy to be with you and able to help you.

Listening to Immanuel

First, take a moment to:

take a few big breaths of fresh breath,

to be fully there for God's presence, and

ask the Holy Spirit to ground your mind in the love of God.

That will help to 'rhyme' your thoughts with God's.

Then start writing, following the steps below.

STEP ONE – Interactive

Gratitude.

Think of something you are grateful for and begin sharing your heart with God.

Dear God, I am very grateful for....

Then take a moment to listen to God's response to your gratitude and write down your impressions of what God is saying to you.

Beloved child of Mine,....

STEP TWO – I'll see you.

Describe from God's perspective how He sees you now, your situation, your environment, your physical sensations, and what else you feel

E.g. I see you sitting at your desk. Your breathing is shallow and your shoulders are tense....

STEP THREE – I hear you.

Remember that God hears all your thoughts, both spoken and unspoken. Write from God's perspective what He hears you saying to yourself.

E.g. You wonder if I will speak to you and how you will ever know. You are discouraged and tired...

Or: You woke up full of energy this morning. You are ready to go out into the world. It's buzzing inside...

STEP FOUR – I understand how big this is for you/how you feel about it.

How does God view your dreams, blessings, difficulties, or confusion?

E.g. I want you to know that I care about the things that concern you. Your desire to honor Me brings Me great joy...

Or: I understand that you experience being frightened. This situation consumes you so much that you feel like you are drowning...

STEP FIVE – I am happy to be with you and treat your weaknesses with tenderness.

Imagine God lovingly calling your name and simply being happy to be together. How does He speak to you in a friendly,

tender way? How does God express His desire to participate in your life? Take a moment to enjoy His loving presence.

Your dreams are precious to Me. I fill you with life every day and I take joy in your desire to...] Or: My dear one < your name >, I see your discouragement after crying inside again. The moments when you are frustrated and tired are the moments when I want to be close to you...

I like to just sit together and talk.

STEP SIX – I can do something about what you are going through right now.

What does God give you for this moment?

E.g. Come with Me. I offer you moments of refreshment, new energy and vision...

Or: I will give you strength. Do you remember how encouraged you were after you saw your boyfriend/girlfriend? With Me you are not alone…

STEP SEVEN – Read what you wrote out loud (preferably with someone else).

This helps you remember it better, so that it is useful to you when you are having a hard time or experiencing struggle.

Literature

E. James Wilder, Anna Kang, John & Sungshim Loppnow, Joyful Journey – Listening to Immanuel, Shepherd's House, East Peoria IL USA, 2015; ISBN 978 1 935629 17 7.

Based on an English original by John & Sungshim Loppnow

Dutch translation and editing: André H. Roosma

APPLICATION: 19 SKILLS FOR MORE JOYFUL COMMUNITIES

When we apply the theory from the previous lessons, we can identify 19 skills that are necessary to flourish as people and among people. Application will ultimately be more joyful in individual lives and in communities.

12.1 SKILL 1 – SHARING JOY

Mutual reinforcement of joy through nonverbal facial expressions and tone of voice communicates, “We are happy to be together.” This allows us to connect with others and also develop a well-functioning brain.

The technical description reads: Right brain to right brain communication of our most desired emotional state is developed by looking joyfully at each other.

12.2 SKILL 2 – SOOTHING MYSELF

This is about lowering my own energy levels, and in the moments when I need it, so that I can take a rest from joyful and painful or confusing emotions, gives me a



stable feeling. This skill of calming myself is the best guarantee for good mental-emotional health for the rest of my life.

Technical description: direct release of serotonin by the vegetative branch of the parasympathetic nervous system calms both positive and disturbing emotional states.

12.3 SKILL 3 – CONNECTING ME WITH ANOTHER

This skill is about synchronizing connections. The essence of secure attachment is being able to synchronize our attachment centers so that we can decrease or increase our distance at times that are mutually satisfying. Synchronized attachment centers provide a basis for easy transfer of brain skills and learned characteristics.

Technical description: Bidirectional attachments involve simultaneous activation of the attachment centers (Control Center Level 1) between two people. This activation helps establish a state of synchronized thinking at the level of the cingulate cortex (Control Center Level 3) that can only be maintained through direct face-to-face contact with one other person at a time.

12.4 SKILL 4 – CREATING APPRECIATION

High levels of the emotional state of appreciation closely correspond to the healthy balanced state of the brain and nervous system.

> *Instilling a strong sense of appreciation in yourself or others relieves unpleasant conditions and stress.*

Appreciation is very similar to the relaxation reflex that causes the milk to flow during breastfeeding and the warm, satisfied feelings that follow for mother and child.

12.5 SKILL 5 – FORMING FAMILY TIES

This means: connections between three or more people. Family bonds allow us to experience joy when people we love have good relationships with each other. We experience what they feel and understand how they view our relationships through this three-way connection. Joy bonds between two adults form one pair bond, building joy in a community requires connections for three or more.

Technical description: The prefrontal cortex (Control Center Level 4) includes our ability to hold three points of view simultaneously. When this area is well developed we can understand how others see us and participate in relationships between others. We are also able to do that

correct our misconceptions about ourselves and how we see others.

12.6 SKILL 6 – IDENTIFYING THE VALUES OF OUR HEART FROM SUFFERING

This concerns the main pain and characteristics of our heart. Everyone has things that hurt or bother him or her. Looking at these lifelong issues helps identify the core values of each person's unique identity. We suffer more the more we care about something. Because our deepest values often cause us to feel the most pain, most people see these characteristics more as vulnerability than as valuable qualities.

12.7 SKILL 7 – SYNCHRONIZED STORYTELLING

If our brain is well trained, our capacity is high and we are not triggered by our past, our entire brain works well together. Being able to tell 'four+' stories in a way that requires the whole brain to work together is a simple test of how well our brain works and also a method of training the brain.

Technical description: the four levels of the control center in the right hemisphere work together and give the bonus (the plus +) that our words in the left hemisphere match our experiences. When an emotional

and mental blockage is resolved, our entire brain works in a synchronized manner. By selecting stories we can test and train our brain in dealing with specific aspects of life and relationships.

12.8 SKILL 8 – IDENTIFY LEVELS OF ADULTITY

We need to know our ideal level of maturity to know if our development is disturbed. Knowledge of our general level of maturity tells us what the next tasks will be in our development. Knowledge of our current level of maturity at any given moment lets us know whether something that just happened has prompted us to respond from old response patterns or whether we have encountered a "gap" in our development that requires restorative attention. Observing when our level of maturity is slipping tells us that our emotional capacity, or that of others, is depleted.

12.9 SKILL 9 – TAKING A BREATH

Knowing when it is good to take some distance. Sustained closeness and trust require us to stop and rest before we become overfed and also when we become tired. These short breaks to unwind and recharge take just seconds. Those who pick up the non-verbal signals well and let others rest are rewarded with trust and love.

Technical description: all the moments when the brain develops through mutual synchronization of brain states, and relationships are built through trust, require the connected brain to take a moment's break when the first of the two gets tired, overloaded,

approach or is stimulated too intensely. Those who quickly let go at such a moment and give the other person some rest will be rewarded.

12.10 SKILL 10 – NONVERBAL STORYTELLING

If we want to strengthen relationships, resolve conflicts, bridge gaps between generations or cultures, we can go much further with the non-verbal parts of our stories than with words.

Technical description: This 'training session' for the non-verbal control center in the right brain develops all the timing and expression skills necessary to develop good emotional and relational capacity.

12.11 SKILL 11 – RETURN TO JOY FROM THE SIX DIFFICULT EMOTIONS

Although we live most of our lives in joy and peace, we must learn how to stay connected and find peace in our distress when things go wrong. If we take good care of our relationships, even when we are having a hard time, our distress will last less long and the other person will not drive away. We resolve our “not happy to be together” moments quickly.

Technical description: the brain is equipped – 'wired' you might say – to feel six unpleasant emotions. Fear, anger, sadness, disgust, shame and despair are all signals that something specific is going wrong. We must learn how to calm each of these 'wirings' individually and maintain our relationships at the same time. Training under these six emotional conditions covers the full range of our emotional needs.

The six difficult emotions discussed are:

1. Anger.

2. Fear.

3. Sadness.

4. Disgust.

5. Shame.

6. Despair.

Common thoughts may include:

I just want it to stop.

I want to leave.

I have lost something in my life.

This is not good for me (this does not give life force).

I don't bring you joy.

I can't do it within the time and resources I have.

12.12 SKILL 12 – ACTING LIKE MYSELF IN THE SIX DIFFICULT EMOTIONS

Part of maintaining our relationships when we're struggling is learning to act like the same person we were when we experienced the joy of being together. A lack of training or poor examples leads us to damage or withdraw from the relationships we value when we become angry, afraid, sad, averse, ashamed, or desperate.

12.13 SKILL 13 – SEEING WHAT GOD SEES

This indicates looking with our heart.

> *Hope and direction come when we see situations, ourselves and others as they were meant to be instead of just seeing what went wrong*.

This spiritual vision guides our training and recovery. Even forgiveness comes from seeing people's purpose as more important than their missteps and makes us a recovery-oriented community rather than an accusatory one. Through our hearts we see the spiritual vision as God sees it.

12.14 SKILL 14 – STOPPING THE SARX

This Greek word sarx (also written as sark and translated as 'the flesh' or 'the old man') refers to seeing life according to our image of who people are and how everything should be. The belief that I can determine the right course of action is the opposite of seeing with our hearts from skill 13. For Sarx, people become what they have done (the sum of their mistakes) or what we want them to become for us. Blaming, accusations, condemnation, gossip, resistance, legalism, self-justification and self-righteousness are signs of the sarx.

12.15 SKILL 15 – INTERACTIVE REASSURANCE

Signals we see on a person's face, especially signals of fear, help us know when we are asking too much of others. Sometimes we want to maintain a high energy state without going 'over the top', like knowing when to stop tickling to keep it fun. Fast recognition of facial signals and response to them means optimal interactions and energy.

Technical description: Use of the ventromedial cortex which is part of level 4 of the Control Center, together with the intelligent branch of the parasympathetic nervous system, allows us to control the highest levels of arousal. Rather than taking us all the way to rest/peace, this type of reassurance allows us to

operate at high energy levels and provides just enough rest to prevent us from becoming overloaded. This system controls aggressive, sexual, and predatory tendencies so we can avoid harmful behavior.

12.16 SKILL 16 – RECOGNIZING HIGH AND LOW ENERGY RESPONSE STYLES

Many characteristic responses to emotions and relationships are strongly shaped by our tendency to have high or low energy responses. Recognizing who usually responds with high energy

(emotions based on adrenaline) and those who prefer to withdraw help us to attune our brain to that of others and bring more constructive variation to our own response patterns.

> *Technical description: Joy, anger and fear are all energy producing emotions (sympathetic) while sadness, disgust, shame and hopelessness all lower our energy levels (parasympathetic).*

Tendencies to activate or deactivate often result in chasing and withdrawal or anger and tears, rather than healthy relationships.

12.17 SKILL 17 – IDENTIFY ATTACHMENT STYLES

Secure attachment bonds bring joy, peace, resilience, and flexibility as we mature.

Insecure attachment has three forms. A hypo- or under-active attachment pattern (avoidant attachment style) leads to underestimating the importance of emotions and relationships. This group usually thinks that everything is going well and that it is not that bad. A hyper- or overactive attachment style (baffled; anxious-ambivalent) leads to excessive intensity and an exaggeration of emotions, pain and needs. This group always feels hurt or thinks others are upset when they are not. The third style (disoriented/disorganized) is afraid of getting close to the people they love and need.

12.18 SKILL 18 – INTERVENING WHEN THE BRAIN IS STUCK

By being able to recognize the characteristic pain at each of the five levels of the brain, we can identify difficulties and find a solution when someone gets stuck. The type of pain gives us a good idea about the type of solution we need

when someone 'can no longer get or keep it all together', 'is broken' or 'gets stuck' as we call this type of loss of synchronization in everyday speech.

Technical description: There are five levels in the brain, if we count the four in the control center in the right hemisphere and add the left hemisphere as the fifth. By knowing the characteristics of each, we can recognize when a level is stuck and what interventions will help. For example: explanation will help at level 5, but will not stop a level 2 fear, such as fear of heights.

12.19 SKILL 19 – RECOVERY FROM COMPLEX EMOTIONS

Handle combinations of the six emotions. Once we can return to joy and act as ourselves in the face of the six difficult emotions, one at a time, we can begin to learn how to return to joy and act as ourselves in the face of the six combined in many ways. Shame and anger combine to create humiliation. Fear and hopelessness (along with almost any other feeling) constitutes despair. These combinations of feelings can be very exhausting and difficult to calm down.

12.20 IN-DEPTH: RETURN FROM DIFFICULT EMOTIONS

This part of the lesson is an extension of skill 11 and is adapted from the practice of Dr. Jim Wilder. It serves as an explanation of returning to joy from negative emotions.

Returning to joy from anger

Most doctors and care providers do not see anger as something that improves the relationship, and there is no desire to make contact with someone who is angry. We are so often exposed to anger that comes from a 'toxic' motivation that there is to some extent a legitimate fear about what anger can bring about. Few care providers have been confronted with a particularly angry person who has...

had not closed relational circuits and who did their best to improve the relationship. There are few care providers who affirmed the value of the angry patient, who sometimes reduced his anger to allow the other person to process it and at the same time be open to the other person while he is angry. As with many emotions, anger has a right brain version and a left brain version.

> *The right brain version of anger is a response to a threat that we cannot escape (such as escaping from a lion) or a threat that we must stop, such as someone hitting our child. The left brain version of anger is a result of a certain way of thinking that is exacerbated by affirmation.*
>
> *“My wife is stupid and disobedient and she needs a good beating to listen to me.” If we allow/condon how angry the husband must be with his wife, we are adding fuel to the fire. Right brain anger is different and can be seen as a direct response to a situation. When this right brain anger is missing, it gives the person a feeling that something is not right. An example: if the neighbor constantly molests a woman's children and she does not get angry at all and says very calmly after what has happened: "I don't get angry when he abuses my children." In this example we immediately know that something necessary is missing. Some people have tried to distinguish righteous anger from unrighteous anger, but this distinction has nothing to do with the "left or right" versions of anger. If someone is angry because their children are being molested and that is recognized as a permissible appropriate emotion, it is more likely to calm the person down.*
>
> *As with all relational skills of the brain, the return from anger to joy can only be learned from someone who has those skills, not through words alone.*

Think about who you would like to have with you when you are dealing with people who are angry with you, and who you would not. Think about who you would like to talk to when you are angry. The best person would be someone who can get angry and yet treat others in a kind way, so you would want to record this and play it for others who have difficulty with anger. There are people with the ability to return from anger to joy. The best learning experience is when you can share your anger with such a person and ask how he or she would act in your place.

RETURN TO JOY FROM FEAR

Right brain anxiety can be caused by a sudden loud noise behind us, regardless of what we were thinking at the time. For example, left brain anxiety is caused by us thinking that a police car driving fast behind us is chasing us, until we discover that the police officer was speeding to get a sandwich just before closing time. Most therapists are quite adept at moving people from fear to joy. It becomes a little more difficult when the therapist himself is anxious. Most care providers have never learned how to deal with threats in mental health care. Most counselors will see an anxious person as a valuable human being who needs their help, who is worth understanding and who needs to have better relationships with others. The therapist will feel that he can contribute to this process if he himself can assume a certain degree of fear. What therapists may not have learned is when to share, validate (objectify), and comfort, calm, and when to change thoughts or

emotional triggers to remove and when connection needs to be repaired. To change thoughts you need almost no relational skills of the brain, while repairing connection (attachment) requires almost all relational skills. It

providing empathy and comfort lies somewhere in the middle of this. If a therapist does not have a chart to assess how far the fear has been processed by the brain, it becomes difficult to judge which intervention is the next step to bring the fear back to joy.

RETURN TO JOY FROM SHAME

Nowadays, most therapists are familiar with the concept of toxic or poisonous shame. Far fewer people have heard of healthy shame, which plays an important role in personality development. Healthy shame is a way to achieve good socialization and prevent narcissism. In the revised version of DSM (*), narcissism has changed from a single disorder to a clinical feature of many disorders. Narcissism is still one of the most difficult personality defects to repair and narcissism often arises from an inability to return from shame to joy.

(*) DSM is an abbreviation of Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. It contains an overview of all psychological and psychiatric disorders. The first DSM was published in 1952 and we have been working with the DSM-5 since 2014.

Because shame is essentially a message of “I am not happy to be with you”, it is a kind of 'anti-joy' message, because joy is the awareness that the other person is happy to be with you. A fourteen-year-old boy was referred to me by a female therapist after he got up and urinated on her couch during the first session. It was his deliberate protest because he felt forced to go to her. The wet bench produced

a 'low joy' feeling for the therapist, who could hardly be happy with him. It is clear that with such behavior the boy would arouse the same feelings in others, in church, at school or in a department store, as in the therapist. No one will be happy if he expresses displeasure through this urination behavior. However, learning from shame experiences is essential for good socialization.

TOXIC SHAME

'Toxic' shame occurs in two variants: firstly from the left hemisphere, where shame means being 'not valuable', and secondly when it remains present for too long (as a rule: longer than 90 seconds) in the right hemisphere. This shame arises when someone is disapproved of as a small child and no one helps the child to distinguish between wrong action and being wrong. However, staying stuck in feelings of shame for longer has in the past given rise to 'motivating' and punishing those who do not comply with laws, social rules and norms. Deliberately reinforcing and expanding shame ("You had to be ashamed") to get a desired behavior is "toxic" in both the left and right brain variants and certainly does not work.

The therapist is charged with the task of helping people to socialize, but this is most difficult with patients who suffer from a chronic sense of shame, or who want to avoid it at all costs. Think of the hostile patient who comes into the office with the words, “You're the sixth bastard my so-called legal wife has dragged me to for my precious

wasting time and money.” His tone is full of contempt and his view of 'his wife' is demeaning and hostile. It is clear that we are dealing with one or more lives with very low joy levels.

How should we respond to bring the feelings of shame and shame that exist in relationships back to joyful relationships? We might feel a mountain of shame (he's not happy being with me) that lingers in our minds for a moment and can lead to the thought, "Oh, how quickly he can produce toxic shame! He must have a lot of experience with it and has caused a lot of damage in relationships that he can't repair. This guy is lucky to be here because he can learn a lot here."

It is not so much about what words we speak or 'proclaim', but rather the fact that when we feel shame, our relational circuits remain 'on', while at the same time looking for opportunities to improve the relationship so that it can bring joy. For example, you could respond like this: "I understand that you don't want to be here (validation) but at the same time I wonder if you appeal to a lot of people the way you just did (curiosity). I understand that you don't care what happens between us because you just want to leave (validation), but how do you imagine being happy with your wife and children again if you treat them like this?" (all the while leaning forward slightly with a slight smile and genuine curiosity about his answer, trying to tune in to any change in his inner state).

> *The dialogue itself is not the most important thing, but the willingness of the man's brain to see the connection as more important than the problem.*

And the experience of seeing that with a well-trained brain (of the therapist) it is possible to go back from shame to joy through non-verbal signals. This is a skill every therapist needs, because who hasn't dealt with a hostile partner, a rebellious teenager, or a narcissist who uses shame to manipulate you? Because

narcissists tend to accuse therapists, returning from shame to joy is the best course of action.

RETURN TO JOY FROM DISGUST

There are many humorous videos showing fathers changing diapers who have to overcome their horror, only to forget about the baby altogether. This is funny because it is recognized that educated mothers can cuddle and talk to the baby while handling the baby's poop. The relationship of being happy to be together does not have to be swept away by disgust or horror. Anyone who grew up on a farm has learned to be themselves and still feel disgusted. Yet disgust is often used incorrectly by adults when raising children. Parents often try to motivate their children to behave differently by making the disgust even greater. A 'toxic' motivation can play a role in encopresis (relieving one's needs by children aged 4 years and older), enuresis (wetting the bed), nose picking, thumb sucking and self-satisfaction.

RETURN TO JOY FROM DESPAIR

In the left brain, hopelessness is often a product of a calculated conclusion about circumstances. In the right brain, hopelessness is an almost immediate realization that we cannot control something with the time and energy we have. This ingrained reaction prevents us from trying to catch a bus, for example. The disciples felt hopeless when Jesus told them they had to feed 5,000 people, and rightly so! Moses faced the same feeling when he sat between the Red Sea and Pharaoh.

But if we rejoice that God is with us, even when we do not have the strength or time, we are not alone and we can even experience joy because God is with us.

Dr. Jim Wilder says: "Over many years of consultation with other doctors and therapists, I have found that many doctors have little or no ability to return from despair to joy. A 'toxic' motivation of hopeless feelings is often used by suicidal patients to motivate care providers. Nothing works, you could almost say that the patient is trying very hard to prove that nothing will help. Everything has been tried, nothing helps for a long time, there is no affordable solution and everything the desperate doctor has tried leads to even more In the meantime, the doctor or therapist tries very hard to maintain hope and wait for a 'sudden breakthrough'. For example, by consulting another expert in the hope that he or she can provide that breakthrough. The doctor or counselor will identify the patient's hopeless feelings and explain how he or she is doing his or her best to regain hope. 'toxic' and exhausting way) to avoid hopelessness at all costs.

After an introduction by the doctor or care provider who explains how much they have already worked together and how she admires the patient (we call her Jane), she explains that they are now stuck at a difficult point. This is often followed by a list of reasons by the therapist why the patient should be happy that I am there.

And then the interview with the patient/client could proceed as follows.

Me (Dr. Wilder, to patient/client Jane): “Tell me about your problem. It sounds very complicated.”

Jane: “Oh yes (followed by a 3-5 minute argument about everything that is wrong and not working. The doctor nods, and sometimes adds something to her argument. Jane pauses and both look at me).

Me (to Jane): “That's a lot of problems, but I imagine the problem might be even bigger.”

The doctor adds, leaning forward and smiling, “But there is hope!” There is something (insert the doctor's favorite interventions here) that helps.

Me (to the doctor): “Often a solution does not help because it is not as big as the problem. Let me first look further at how big the problem can be,” (and to Jane): “Is there anything more you want to say?”

Jane: (looks a little relieved for the first time) “Yes, there's a lot more!” (this is followed by another 3-5 minute story about problems, while the doctor occasionally looks at me nervously. Sometimes the doctor tries to interrupt her by giving her hope and ideas about things that pass by.) (Eventually Jane pauses again).

Me (to Jane) “Oh, you mention a lot of problems there. It must often make you feel hopeless. I even wonder if there isn't more.” (Jane nods)

Doctor (to me) “I told Jane there is hope. What could you suggest that would help her?” (often there is an urgency in the doctor's voice and sometimes even a short lecture on how important hope is, sometimes in combination with how difficult she is having at this point).

Me (to Jane): “The doctor has a good point when she mentions that you often feel hopeless. How bad does that get?” (Jane collapses as the Doctor watches in terror and leans back and watches as if she falls into a deep abyss. The Doctor's mind is in a state of deep despair, lacking any sense of relationship or possibility of recovery or even being herself in the relationship. The Doctor has always successfully tried to prevent Jane from entering into such intense feelings, although Jane often feels this way.)

What follows in the first 30 minutes is a blood-curdling conversation for the doctor who is confronted with despair. The care worker's eyes may bulge, her knuckles may turn white, she may feel very unsafe, but for Jane it is a rich experience to notice that when she feels intensely desperate, she is no longer alone. The doctor is also undergoing brain training for the first time to return from hopeless fear to joy, but she will need more experiences to master these skills. In the THRIVE training we take two years to practice mild feelings before we go to the depths in which Jane felt. While this consultation helps Jane, the doctor begins to discover why they were 'stuck'. He or she had never learned during training how to deal with hopeless fear and despair. In the follow-up consultation with the doctor, we explored the possibilities of remaining relational with hopeless fear by practicing this missing skill. For further depth, read the translated books by Dr Jim Wilder on archippus.nl

You can find many articles at www.complementaire-gezondheid.nl and www.stichtingpromise.com and https://www.kclehman.com/

Articles about the Immanuel lifestyle:

www.immanuel-levensstijl.nl

Prepare for joy: prepare4joy.nl

Lifemodel works: lifemodelworks.org

> *I encourage all therapists to think further about how they can become better personally trained by practicing relational brain skills in a variety of communities and cultures, in a way that they can also pass this on to future generations. In this way, perhaps we can once again become part of a more*

joyful society.Dr. Jim Wilder and Gerard Feller

Sources consulted include:

Books by Jim Wilder, including Rare Leadership and Joyfully Being a Man.

Living according to God's plan (the LIFE Model), with Jim Wilder, James G. Friesen and others.

Books by Karl Lehman, including Outsmarting Yourself and The Processing Pathway for Painful Experiences

Previously published articles at Promise Foundation, see www.stichtingpromise.com and www.complementaire-gezondheid.nl,: www.archippus.nl







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