

# Recovery or Transformation?

**Therapy can help you manage symptoms, but it is Jesus who ultimately heals us.**

Mild panic erupted when the pilot's voice suddenly came over the intercom. "We have an engine light on. We're heading back to Cincinnati. Sorry, folks, but we can't fly with engine problems."

The woman behind me began to breathe heavily. "Will we be OK?"

The guy next to me started to curse. How dare the pilot upset his plans?

Looks of worry blanketed most passengers, but I sat there in peace. It was unnatural. I should have been anxious and tense. After all, my oldest brother was killed on an airplane.

Safely back in Cincinnati, we filed off the plane and received our new flight assignments. I was fortunate to be booked on the next flight. After boarding, I settled down next to a tall, expensively dressed man who recognized me from the previous flight.

"Why are you flying to South Bend?" he asked me.

I explained that I was on my way to a Midwestern college where there was grave concern over the growing number of eating disorders reported on campus. I was going to consult with faculty and administration and speak to the students.

After a long, intellectual discussion about eating disorders and psychology, I said to my seat partner: "OK, your turn. What do you do for a living?"

He was a Harvard graduate who headed up an investment-banking firm in New York City that had lost 25 percent of its business since 9/11. His office was located right at Ground Zero, opposite the Twin Towers.

He confessed that after watching the horror and devastation from his office windows, he still suffers night terrors, flashbacks and other symptoms related to post-traumatic stress. He was struggling to find significance in life.

After we had worked through a few symptom-reduction strategies, he stopped. "OK, do you really think a shrink helps? Psychologists were sent in to Ground Zero to help us, but I haven't found them very helpful."

I thought about my own experiences with trauma. Though my psychology training had helped me cope with trauma, it hadn't brought complete healing.

So I leaned over and smiled, "You know how people panicked when the engine light went on during our last flight? I should have panicked too.

"My brother was killed on an airplane, we think by a terrorist's bomb. The fallout from that experience in my life was tremendous. I learned to manage symptoms related to grief, fear and anxiety, but I was never free from the fallout until my faith entered the picture."

"Oh, are you religious?" he probed.

"No not really," I replied. "But I do have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Because of Jesus, I am finally free from the traumatic effects."

I went on to explain. "Therapy can help you manage symptoms, get you through the day or night, bring relief, help you understand the root of your problems, offer change strategies and even provide helpful tools. In fact, therapy is very helpful, and I am grateful for my training.

"But it is Jesus who ultimately heals and frees us. When He spoke truth to me, when I experienced His love and power, I was no longer in recovery. I was transformed. That's why I could sit on our earlier flight and not panic. God gave me an overriding sense of peace.

"Yes, I know how to manage anxiety when it hits. I can practice a number of useful techniques that work for the moment. But God brings lasting peace. That's freedom, not recovery!"

The door of the plane opened. The traveler was contemplative and thanked me for the conversation.

As I walked down the jet way, I thought about how often I had settled for simply managing my emotional pain. Why? Jesus came to set the captive free, to heal the brokenhearted and to open prison doors for those who are bound. It's time to declare freedom!

Loose those chains that bind you. He has given you what you need: the transforming power of the gospel, His presence, His Word, the Spirit of truth and the Light. Freedom is waiting!

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