

Do You Have the Courage to Be Healed?

Absalom, David's son and prince, killed his half-brother, burned his uncle Joab's farm, led a rebellion against his own father and raped 10 women from David's harem. What could possibly make any of that horror show less evil than it was? Nothing. Ever. He did what he did, and no postmodern equivocation can blunt the jagged edge of such wickedness.

Nevertheless, Absalom's sins, as monstrous as they were, beg a haunting question. Was there a point where he might have been helped? Were they the sins of a sociopath? Or was he a wounded soul who, at some point on his descent into fratricidal rage and incestuous rape, might have been helped? Was there some landing on the descending staircase of his wretched life where he might have paused, found healing, reversed course and begun the rugged climb back up to the light of wholeness and sanity? If Absalom had seen a gifted counselor after the rape of his sister, Tamar, might the whole wretched story have been different?

We will never know, of course, but the question remains. If some sins flow from the poison spring of a wound—and some do—were the wound to be healed, what would be the impact on the sins? Sins must be and, if we are to believe the promises of the gospel, can be forgiven. The altar for Protestants and the confessional for Catholics is the place for that. Where is the place where we say, “Yes, that is forgiven, but why did it happen? Why did I do that in the first place? Why might I do it again or even again and again until it becomes a bondage? What is the toxic source of all the nastiness within me, and can I be healed?”

When I need forgiveness, Jesus meets me as “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29b, KJV).

Someone, a pastor, an evangelist or a priest in the confessional, takes me into His presence to meet Him as the Lamb.

When I need healing, Jesus meets me as “Wonderful Counselor” (Isa. 9:6b, MEV). Likewise, someone, a counselor (small c) leads me into His presence where I encounter Him as Counselor.

I have spent much of the last two decades researching the process by which the wounded and sinful soul negotiates the torturous climb back up the dreadful staircase by which he descended in the first place. How do the best counselors lead the hurting upward? How did Jesus do it? And, more importantly, did He ever do it? If Jesus is the Wonderful Counselor, some ask, why didn’t He do some counseling?

In Scripture, Jesus demonstrated repeatedly why He is the Wonderful Counselor. In one counseling session, Jesus guided a Samaritan woman from lonely, used-up sinfulness to bold, anointed evangelism. He helped her face her past and see who she could become. That’s counseling.

In one brief counseling session, Jesus healed a woman caught in adultery and called her into newness of life. In another, He helped a tradition-bound teacher see eternity in a new way. In John 21, Jesus restored a fallen Saint Peter and gave a tour de force demonstration of inner healing.

It is encouraging indeed to all who do counseling that even Jesus had sessions that did not end as He hoped. Witness the rich young ruler. We’ve all had clients who “went away sorrowful” (Matt. 19:22b).

In my newest book, *Courage to Be Healed*, I present accounts—biblical and contemporary—of those who made the journey back toward wholeness. I say “toward” advisedly, for some make the journey more completely than others. Counseling, going through it or doing it, is no country for lightweights.

These stories, some of which are hard to even read, are all different. Some are about sexual trauma; some are about emotional deprivation. Some are about haunting hidden fears that limit lives and damage families. Some find full healing more quickly than others. Some struggle pathetically to even begin the journey into wholeness. Some only begin at all because their own sins have done so much damage; they must either get healed or get out.

What binds all these stories together is one surprising similarity: courage. At least, it surprised me. We in the Christian world speak much about the faith to be healed, but I believe we have forgotten that it takes courage, often great courage, to face the monsters lurking in the darkness of our own inner selves. It takes courage to let Jesus inside, to let Him see the nasty stuff we've let lie there for way too long. It takes courage to face the truth of us, to admit who we are, what we've done and what was done to us that made us the toxic souls we've become.

Of course, faith is always a factor in healing, but this I've come to deeply believe. When it comes to inner healing, to healing scars no one can see, when it comes to soul restoration, the healing of deeply wounded and tortured souls, it takes courage to be healed.

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