



NEW DIRECTION Mustard Seed

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Dear Friends,

The nature vs nurture argument has long been a philosophical query within the template of psychology dating all the way back to 13th century France. While we don't know how much of who we are today has been determined by our DNA or molded and shaped by our life experiences, we know they each play a role. It is important to note: these are only two among several other variables.

Is a concrete imprint set once an individual has been traumatized?

Is it nature or nurture that bears most importance?

Or are they equal?

Is it only these two or a plethora of other variables which have created an individual's steps?

What determines destiny?

The population with whom we work in the Mustard Seed Project come from varied walks of life. A good many of them were abused or neglected as children and gravitated toward relationships which matched. For some of these ladies substance dependency set in whether nicotine, alcohol, or drugs. Children were born. Fathers either walked out or mothers found the need to flee with the children due to a never ending cycle of abuse.

Others, however, were raised in safe, structured Christian homes. In a vulnerable season of life they found themselves entangled in relationships with males who were unsafe. Years into the marriage and with each addition of a child, the reality of living under an oppressed tyranny could no longer be denied.

Let's begin by adding FREE WILL as a pivotal, third variable. As long as we believe we are passive recipients of being dealt a bad hand in what might be mistakenly thought of as a game of life, then we bear no responsibility for choices we make.

We are living in a day and age where victimization is tantamount. The problem with this is it keeps people held prisoners of an event or a person. This is not to minimize the suffering of being a victim. However, once a person has been victimized, this does not have to become a life-time trajectory. I find great hope in this belief. And I do believe it matches what is biblical.

You have to admit, in America, we have crossed over into a dimension where there is a tendency to offload the blame onto others for why our lives are not thriving. There is nothing new under the sun. It began in the Garden of Eden in which each blamed the other for their individual choices.

So, then, free will and resultant choices are pivotal elements in each of our time lines. Add to this the reality that we are spiritual beings, created in the image and likeness of God. Add that each of us are on this earthly plain in the middle of a spiritual battle. Satan's goal is to "kill, steal and destroy". Jesus came to earth to disarm the works of the enemy. He invites us to walk with Him as "the Way, the Truth, and Life Abundant".

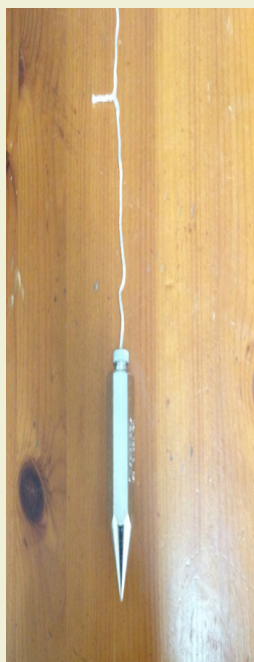
The work of the Mustard Seed is a committed 2-3 year relationship with single mothers in which each of the following is possibly needed: legal representation for custody of children; supplementation of income (most work 40 hours in service industry); financial budgeting; licensed professional counseling. We have covered the legal and financial aspects of our work in past newsletters which are posted on our website. This writing will focus on the counseling piece.

My role as a licensed professional Counselor is to walk with these women forward in life as we sort through the pieces of their past. Most describe themselves as being stuck in a sink hole, covered over by the consequences of their and other's choices. An immobilization of sorts has set in as the past is riddled with regret and the future with fear and anxiety.

I would be greatly limited if not able to practice as a Christ-centered rather than person-centered therapist. In the latter I could only help them connect the dots and teach them techniques. This is not to underplay the role of relationship in therapy, or any other heart to heart, face to face interaction, as it is in the context of safe relationship one can begin to process and heal. Even this I see as God's beautiful design for human beings to help other human beings.

Upon initial meetings, the mother tells me her story usually beginning with present or most recent history which has brought her to this point of crisis. In most cases due to living under such constant duress and chronic stress decisions are made out of reactivity. With such lack of ease it is difficult to actually process information. Most are simply living in survival mode.

A few years back my husband and I were traveling across the state of Georgia from South Carolina to Alabama. Uncharted territory for us. As we were headed down a two lane highway our GPS demanded we "turn right, turn right, turn right." We glanced to the right and saw a pot-holed dirt road seeming to lead either to nowhere or straight into a trap. We continued moving forward and then heard: "turn around; turn around; turn around." This continued until we ripped the GPS out and threw it into the back of the car. One last: "take a right, take a..... eeked out before it died.



Our GPS needed to be recalibrated. This is so very true of the ladies when we first begin working with them. So accustomed are they to operating out of what they have known and finding themselves in the same defeated spot over and over again. How can such a rigid cycle be broken? Step by step through a responsive walk with Jesus Christ and a

renewing of the mind through integration and life application of the Word of God.

Scripture tells us: “For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any double- edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.” Hebrews 4:12

It is living. A powerful spiritual probiotic. Nothing of this world could ever accomplish such deep, spiritual, life-changing movement; not a day at the spa or three days a week of yoga or daily meetings with a guru. Only the Word of God can reach the deep recesses of the soul and zero in on the lies that have held one captive.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is a popular form of secular therapy which teaches folks to begin examining distorted thoughts that lead to dysfunctional behavior. Negative thinking begets negative emotions which lead to behaviors that will sabotage healthy living.

Psychological theorists were not the first to arrive at this realization. The Bible has much to say about the mind and our thinking. “As a man thinks in his heart so he is.” “Think upon the things above” “be changed by the renewing of your mind.”

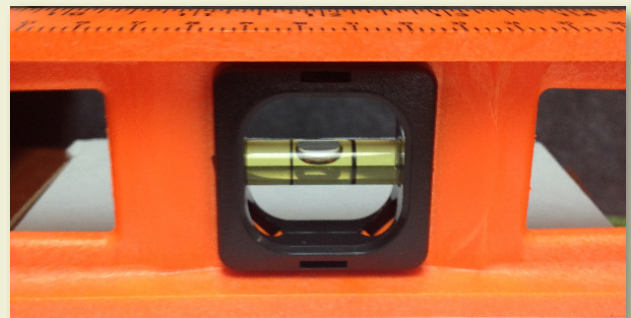
A client once told me “I keep praying God will change my thinking. I am tired of being depressed”; to which I replied “what we think is our responsibility not God’s.” God does not astral project people from point A to point Z. But rather when one comes to the end of self and realizes a need for a Savior, then begins an incremental step by step walk of faith, does one begin to experience the all sufficiency of grace through Jesus Christ.

None of us thinks according to a perfect plumb line of truth. The Word of God is that plumb line. Jesus is the Word made flesh.

What all of these ladies want is the same thing we are all searching for: love, grace and peace. They are tired of living out of chaos. Tired of sleepless nights and exhausted days. Tired of racing minds. They begin to realize they have been operating out of emotion rather than conscious decisions. Using terminology such as

“I feel my life is ruined.” Actually they are thinking their life is ruined which is causing them to feel sad, defeated, angry. When they begin to write out what they are thinking it helps them to actually see how out of sync from the plumb line their thinking is. Oftentimes “I don’t think God cares for me because if He did.....” BIG LIE. Tendency is to perceive God through life experience rather than what is true about Him.

Long ago I felt I needed a visual to help folks understand the concept of soul balance: “it is well with my soul”. Saying it is one thing. Living out of this place of security is quite another. This is when the idea of the level with the bubble in the center came into play. We mistakenly believe that when the events and people on the horizontal are cooperating with our expectations.....the bubble will be in dead center.



This is not reality. And as long as this is our belief there will be a tilt and the bubble will move either to the left or to the right. Sometimes it will be erratically moving all about like the uncalibrated GPS.

It is only when our thinking is properly aligned with the sure foundation of Who Jesus Christ is and in the walking with Him...in dead center.....that bubble is in the middle. And even then, there may be a tilt as we walk on this earthly plain. But we will begin to recognize that shift as anxiety caused by focusing on circumstances. As soon as we begin to get that “Peter walking on the water and then sinking” feeling.....we will turn our eyes back to Jesus in the Center rather than what is on the perimeter.

“Grace and Peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him Who called us by His own glory and goodness. Through these He has given us His very great and precious promises so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.” 2 Peter 1:2-4

Thank you for walking with us

The Mustard Seed Family

From one of the mothers with whom we have worked for two years



There is no sweeter place to be than walking in God's abundant peace. The peace that is promised to us in Jesus Christ. It sounds so simple but it takes action on our part and sometimes help to know where to look in God's Word to walk in that peace and stay there. When I first started counseling my life was in turmoil, my mind was in turmoil because I had lived in a state of chaos for several years and it was learning to take to take the Word of God and apply to my daily life. That peace means no more worries about tomorrow, no worries about where my future is going or what God has in store for me. No more worrying if my needs are going to be met or how they would be met. Trusting in God's promises and God's plan for my life and to know that what's up ahead is His perfect plan for my life." MS



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Encompassing Hope and Care For Families.