

**Reflections on
Healing Care, Healing Prayer**

**PM 804 Pastoral Counseling
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I. How does this reading ring true to your experience and ministry?

There are two ways in which Dr. Wardle's writing rings true in my experience and ministry. The first is the need for transforming work of the Holy Spirit. "I will never be the same again" (Wardle, 36). This is certainly the type of deliverance statement that suggests the debris of sin that blocks the flow of the Holy Spirit in our lives has been cleared (Wardle, 102) and that "we need never walk in barrenness again" (Wardle, 97). The goal that Dr. Wardle gives for inner healing prayer is "to position people for a transforming encounter with Christ in the places of their deepest pain and greatest dysfunction" (Wardle, 140). A scripture which came to mind repeatedly as I read the statements above was 2 Corinthians 3:16-18:

"But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

Paul paints a vivid picture showing the transforming nature of a relationship with God when a person turns to Him (as signified by seeking counsel) and the veil is removed. Thus it is imperative that we listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit and rely on His power in the life transformation process. This is crucial to ministry impact.

Secondly, I have long seen the dualistic way in which many Christians live. The imbalance among feeling, thinking, choosing and doing haunts many believers (Wilson, 46) and causes false beliefs to arise about how to establish one's identity and promote well-being. Wardle speaks of overachievers caught in the performance trap at work, home and church. Church members who may do everything or seek to please everyone both in and out of the church are approval addicts, while others in the body blame

themselves or others in every situation and seem addicted to failure and unworthiness. The fourth group that Dr. Wardle mentions I have also seen in the other three groups. The false belief of “the shame trap” tells a person “you are who you are, and cannot change” (Wardle, 180). This fourth group can be, in my experience, the most difficult for ministry to confront with the full impact of the gospel message. Certainly when we become followers of Christ, we are called on a journey that is intended to transform us and those we come in contact with.

II. How does this reading challenge you or raise concerns for you?

The two challenges I found presented in this reading were quite direct. First, the caregiver must learn to recognize and respond to the presence of the Holy Spirit within the counseling setting (Wardle, 107). This clearly requires time and practice (Wardle, 111) on the part of the counselor and requires him to seek deeper roots in his/her relationship with the Holy Spirit. This challenge should motivate pastors and caregivers to resist the temptation to supply “easy answers” and “quick fixes” that may simply “eliminate the cause or silence the symptoms” (Wardle, 142). Another aspect to developing this depth of reliance on the Holy Spirit can be found in working as a member of the body of Christ. Knowing that you are one of many tools partnering with others with differing strengths and knowing when to refer shows that you have a firm understanding of who Jesus is and how His body works (Wardle, 130).

The second challenge I found presented by Dr. Wardle was the importance of “experiencing God in the storms of life’s difficulties” (Wardle, 132). As Dr. Wardle points out, “ours is a society that sees little use in suffering” (Wardle, 142). Throughout chapter 8, this writer perceived a challenge to assist others in expressing true emotions

even when these may be feelings of turmoil, grief and anger. The concerns raised through this reading were of a personal nature. Do I have the depth necessary to assist others as a “wounded healer?” Do I have an appreciation for pain in my life as a tool which guides me in my transformation journey? Will I invest time and energy with those I am called to partner in ministry with? Will I supply easy answers to alleviate problems or silence symptoms?

Certainly the journey that Dr. Wardle outlines as the path of a caregiver is one that requires the daily practice of spiritual disciplines and a sincere and ongoing relationship with the Lord. My concern from reading Dr. Wardle’s work is “do I have what it takes” and can I keep going on this road of daily devotion? The stakes are high.

III. How might you apply the understanding/insights from the reading to your life and/or ministry?

The application of Dr. Wardle’s approach is crucial to ministry. A few years ago, as a young pastor, I was given a copy of Dr. William Glasser’s book, Stations of the Mind by a fellow clergy member who framed himself as an experienced Christian counselor. The book left me feeling empty from a spiritual perspective. From the discussion of the old brain and new brain not in spiritual terms, but rather in terms of human evolution to the steps of reality therapy which as a high point asks “is this behavior helping you” (Glasser, 271)? I found no comfort from a Christian perspective.

The final conclusion of this book states:

“The mere fact that I have this relentless, random, creative system continually idling or churning inside fills me with wonder. Perhaps if we continue to probe for how it works it will reorganize and in some way reveal itself. If it does, it may also shed some light on the ancient philosophical question – which we have avoided in this book because so far it has no answer – who is it who builds my inner world” (Glasser, 280)?

Dr. Wardle, without question, knows who intends to build our inner world and his writing has provided me with both an academic framework to work from and a spiritual dimension to draw strength and guidance from.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is crucial to vital ministry in all of its forms including counseling. To receive guidance on how to rely on the tools that God has provided for us to use in counseling is a crucial step for me personally in gaining confidence; not in myself but rather in God's ability to use me, guide me and allow me to be a vessel for His ministry. Matthew 12:25a says, "Jesus knew their thoughts." In my life and ministry this needs to be a theme that I teach and preach on. In this passage of Matthew 12, Jesus teaches on the importance of listening to the Holy Spirit. This needs to be the source of ministry and is the deep well from which our thoughts are known and our lives are brought into order.

Dr. Wardle's work compels the minister and counselor not to simply settle for being a manager, but rather a mystic (Crabb, 143). This is what I am called to be as a pastor and counselor and this is what is needed to see God's transforming presence in our world.

Works Cited

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