

Self-Disclosure, Exposure and Community

The popular technique of self-disclosure can be seen in numerous books written by psychological therapists and others who believe in the importance of exposing the inner life. This self-disclosure invites the reader to enter the inner experiences of the writer for several purposes. Self-disclosure gives the impression that the therapist has experienced inner fears, thoughts and pain similar to that of the reader. It gives the impression that the writer is both approachable and knowledgeable about the inner life. And, it serves as an encouragement to the reader that exposing these fears, thoughts, and pain will bring greater self-understanding and thus psychological healing and health.

While it may appear that the writer is baring all and letting the reader see who he really is on the inside, the writer chooses what to expose and disclose for the purpose of the book. While he may appear to be letting his psyche show, he is actually revealing those thoughts and feelings he wants to talk about and wants the reader to think about. Moreover, it is a means of connecting with the reader in the same way that psychological counselors who have been influenced by theorists such as Carl Rogers attempt to connect with the counseling client. Rogers says:

I hypothesize that personal growth is facilitated when the counselor is what he is, when in the relationship with his client he is genuine and without “front” or facade, openly being the feelings and attitudes which at that moment are flowing in him. We have used the term “congruence” to try to describe this condition. By this we mean that the feelings the counselor is experiencing are available to him, available to his awareness, that he is able to live these feelings, be them in relationship, and able to communicate them if appropriate. It means that he comes into a direct personal encounter with his client meeting him on a person-to-person basis. It means that he is being himself, not denying himself.¹

This popular trend in writing gives the impression that the author is indeed in touch with his own inner life. He has progressed in bringing important aspects of his so-called unconscious into conscious awareness. He can now help others become both aware and accepting of the darkness and pain lurking beneath the surface. Writing in this mode is an attempt to reveal one’s inner life for the purpose of encouraging the reader to be willing to face what psychiatrist Carl Jung referred to as the “dark side.” Thus we read about haunting fears, feelings and thoughts expressed in the most wrenching, but eloquent terms—much like the sophomoric poetry we wrote as teenagers, focusing on inner pain and agony, even if there was only a modicum from which to draw. Somehow that seemed to be the only emotion worthy of poetry during those adolescent years. But now it is in vogue among adults who should have outgrown such maudlin self-focusing.

Crabb follows this technique in several of his more recent books. In his book *Finding God*, Crabb says, “In spite of passionate pleas for maturity, I’m still a mess.” Crabb continues in this vein for several paragraphs including the following:

For years, I have lived through seasons of self-hatred when I feel unwanted and unwanted. This self-loathing feels like a poisoned apple: Observe me from a distance and you may think me desirable. Get close enough to handle me and still I look good. Bite into me and you'll be harmed, perhaps destroyed. These poisonous feelings severely distort my thinking, drain me of productive energy, and shut me up in the perverse joys of sulking.²

But lest his readers get only a glimpse of his painful inside feelings, he assures them of his success as a person. He says:

People who know me would say that I am painting an unfairly harsh picture of myself. And, happily, I agree. All that I've said is true, but I'm not telling the whole story. I gratefully acknowledge that I am a generous person, often thoughtful, sometimes sacrificially kind. I work hard. I am deeply committed to my family. I am serious about my faith. I am neither dishonest on my tax forms nor immoral in motel rooms. I have made an impact on others' lives. I know more of God now than I ever have before.³

Notice the appeal. It is to Christians who might not think of themselves as problem-laden, as well as all those who agonize internally. Crabb presents a partial picture of his inner feelings and a partial picture of his outer life. He draws the reader into finding God by exploring inner feelings, but he retains his reputation, which is necessary for the reader to have confidence in his proposed plan for finding God.

Crabb's use of exposure has never been for the purpose of leaving people there or even for the purpose of only understanding themselves. His purpose throughout his books has been to use such exposure and psychological self-understanding for the purpose of change and growth in knowing and depending on God. The idea of God meeting the powerful motivating needs in the unconscious continues to be a theme. In *Finding God* he says:

It has been nearly two years since I prayed, "Lord, I know you're all I have, but I don't know you well enough for you to be all I need. Please let me find you." In that time it has become more clear to me that neither spiritual discipline nor self-exploration carries me where I want to go. Confessing sins, reconciling with estranged friends, and spending regular time in the Word are all necessary and right, But the more I wrestle with life as it really is, the more I am aware that living a spiritually disciplined life develops at best only a nodding acquaintance with God.⁴

Notice how the usual Christian disciplines set forth in Scripture are not in themselves enough for Crabb. He contends that something more is needed. It is still looking inside, but he has added another dimension in *Finding God*, and that is looking inside for the good as well as the bad,⁵ a theme he further develops in his later books.

Readers may be confused about Crabb's continued commitment to exploring and exposing the self when he says:

Exploring my motives more thoroughly or rummaging through my past to dredge up connections between childhood hurts and present struggles provokes more frustration than hope. This self-examination may help me to know *myself* better, but I want to know God.⁶ (Italics his.)

But, he is still not opposed to this activity, because “This self-examination may help me to know *myself* better.” It is not that he has discarded such self-examination. It is that he wants to go further. Thus he presents the way, which he calls “a third option—an approach that equips us to dive into the cesspool of the human heart, find hidden treasure, and come up laughing,” an approach that still “requires that we face the fallen structure in all of its loathsome, stubborn, wicked power and submit to a painful process of dismantling.”⁷

Crabb is still in the business of exposing the contents of the unconscious for the purpose of dismantling the hidden beliefs and motives that prevent one from fully trusting God. He proposes a psychologically contaminated means, which serves as a deceptive counterfeit to Ephesians 4:22-24 for putting off “concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,” being “renewed in the spirit of your mind,” and putting on “the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

Crabb reveals more about his own personal struggle in *Hope When You're Hurting*, which he coauthored with Dan Allender. He titles his first chapter “Why am I Still Struggling So Much?” He writes his early chapters in the first person singular and plural to help establish a connection of mutual struggle. After sharing his own struggles with fatigue, weariness and discouragement, he explores various places hurting people look for help. He leads his readers from one limited possibility of help to another. Crabb does not paint a very hopeful picture as he describes each category of limited help. The reader must read on to the end of the book in search of hope if he's hurting. But then, the reader ends up with the conclusion that until Crabb's “dream of what community could provide for its members” is realized, the only hope these days for people who can't find help by themselves, through their natural community, or God, is professional counseling.

Crabb's self-disclosure continues in his book *Connecting*, in which he includes the following quotation from Henri Nouwen, a priest who was trained “as a psychologist and a theologian.”⁸ Nouwen says:

That was a time of extreme anguish, during which I wondered whether I would be able to hold on to my own life. Everything came crashing down—my self-esteem, my energy to love and work, my sense of being loved, my hope for healing, my trust in God . . . everything. Here I was a writer about the spiritual life, known as someone who loves God and gives hope to people, flat on the ground and in total darkness.

I experienced myself as a useless, unloved, and despicable person. Just when people were putting their arms around me, I saw the endless depth of my human misery and felt that there was nothing worth living for. All had become darkness. Within me there was one long scream coming from a place I didn't know existed, a place full of demons.⁹

Following the quote, Crabb says:

Not many could describe it as eloquently as Nouwen, but most of us know what it is to look in the mirror and see someone despicable, to listen to the deep places we try to pretend aren't there and hear one long scream of despair.¹⁰

Nevertheless Crabb does wax eloquent. He relates how during lunch with a friend, “I chose to share that I was living in a tunnel of discouragement so dark that I had no energy left to keep moving,” and then remarks that people tend to be uncomfortable when faced with the inner life of another person.

We do not deny that people do experience agony in the depths of their being or the dark night of the soul. However, we believe that writing about it from a psychological perspective and explaining it from a mixed psychological-spiritual perspective is not useful or edifying to the body of Christ. Nor do we believe this is the biblical way of mutual ministry in the body of Christ.

Community or Encounter?

Crabb contends that Christians must talk about their inner life with one another if there is to be genuine help and authentic growth. Moreover, he sees that much good can be accomplished in the church if certain resources were to be released. He declares:

I have been captured by the idea that God has placed extraordinary resources within us that have the power to heal us and our relationships. If released they could do a lot of good that we now think only trained specialists can accomplish.¹¹

The resources to which Crabb is referring are the so-called God-given abilities for connecting with one another in community in such a way that people will be able to tell their stories in an environment of acceptance so that their badness may be faced and their goodness brought to the surface. While it is true that God has indeed “placed extraordinary resources within us that have the power to heal us and our relationships,” Crabb’s resources include psychodynamic overtones of talking about ourselves, exposing what lies hidden beneath the surface, repenting from unconscious strategies to protect ourselves from pain, and the release of gems of goodness that have been buried with all the pain of unmet needs.

There are some distinct similarities between Crabb’s goal for community and the encounter movement. One of the basic assumptions of most encounter groups through the years has been that it is emotionally beneficial to be totally transparent and open. Self-exposure became a therapeutic absolute during the encounter movement and continues today in groups that attempt to connect people with one another in such a way that people will change and grow. Psychiatrist M. Scott Peck fondly recalls his encounter group experience. He says:

We were a very diverse group of people, we sixteen. The first three days were spent in intense struggle. It was not boring. But it was often anxious, often unpleasant, and there was much anger expressed, at times almost viciously. But on the fourth day something happened, and I remember the suddenness of the shift. Suddenly we all cared for each other. Thereafter some cried and a couple wept. . . . I felt very safe in the T-group.¹²

Peck recalls that on the tenth day he felt depressed and the psychiatrist leader reminded him of their mutual beliefs as psychiatrists that depression could mask anger. The leader began pressing him into facing and expressing his anger. He broke down and wept openly, for the first time in many years, in this contrived community of the encounter group. In looking back on the event he says:

Once again I had stumbled into community; and quite apart from the joy I felt, the freedom to be myself, the experience had changed the course of my life. For the first time I became aware of the healing power of genuine community. Many are aware of this power.¹³

Peck says:

My T-group experience was a part of the “sensitivity group movement” that swept this country in the sixties and early seventies. That movement has largely died. One of the reasons for its death is that a great many people found their sensitivity group experiences profoundly unpleasant. In the name of “sensitivity,” confrontation was more encouraged than love.¹⁴

Nevertheless for Peck his encounter group experience was an inspiration for his book on people connecting in communities for healing. A number of therapists have been searching for a kind of community that was briefly experienced in encounter groups where people could be open, because they, along with Crabb, believe that we need to tell our stories, be open about our feelings and fears, and face our hidden inner forces in the company of people who will accept us no matter what we say.

While Crabb would be critical of various aspects of the encounter movement, he appears to be creating an environment for openness similar to the encounter groups. Only he wants to develop an environment of acceptance for the openness to bring forth the gems of goodness buried beneath hidden pain and strategies. As with those who saw some of the errors of the encounter movement, Crabb nevertheless seems to be looking for a similar kind of environment for change that Peck found in his encounter group experience.

Connecting in community is Crabb’s expanded way to help people. He contends that “the absolute center of all powerful attempts to impact people for good is connecting.”¹⁵ We thought the absolute center was Christ, but for Crabb it is his psychospiritual process of connecting through community.

Telling our stories is Crabb’s means of connection, not just for the purpose of getting to know one another better, but for the purpose of revealing inner pain, doubt, and strategies to deny the pain and then releasing what he refers to as our “lost glory.” As people tell their stories according to Crabb’s system, they try to help one another probe deeply into the inner person to expose the bad and release the good.

When people share their hurt and pain, they often end up sharing the sins of others. Crabb begins the first chapter of *Connecting* by exposing the failures of his son Kep. Usually when people are encouraged to talk about themselves, they talk about how others have hurt, failed or disappointed them. But in this instance Crabb uses it to model the way a powerful person can connect with another by accepting him in the midst of sin.¹⁶

Crabb believes that powerful people can help God transform the saints by probing around on the inside. He says:

I recommend that we probe to discover what God is up to and join him in nourishing the life he has already given. It may be necessary to face what’s wrong, not to make the wrong better, but to cut through it to find what’s right.¹⁷

Thus probing is still part of the process.

When you see me filled with doubt and self-hatred, when you observe me during my worst seasons of discouragement and failure, I want to be filled with both anguish (weep with me as I weep) and hope, not the empty hope that says trite things like “It’ll all work out” or “Just hang in there—I’m sure you’ll feel better soon,” but a hope that exists because it sees something in me that is absolutely terrific.¹⁸

Once again, the humanistic focus is on what is “absolutely terrific” in “me.”

Crabb’s earlier teaching about people being image bearers, who somehow retain something of worth not sinful in itself, is repeated here as “lost glory in ourselves”:

What would it be like if we had a vision for each other, if we could see the **lost glory** in ourselves, our family, and our friends? What would the effect on your sons or daughters be if they realized that you were caught up with the possibilities of restored glory, of what they could become—not successful, talented, good-looking, or rich but kind, strong, and self-assured, fully alive.¹⁹ (Bold added.)

The idea of worth (expressed in two needs) in Crabb's earlier books is here transformed into "lost glory" from Adam and Eve having been created in the image of God. But, when Christians are born again they do not regain a "lost glory" in themselves that they once had and later lost. Furthermore, this concentration on the goodness of the person instead of the goodness of Christ comes from the influence of psychology on Crabb's teachings.

Crabb declares:

The deepest urge in every human heart is to be in relationship with someone who absolutely delights in us, someone with resources we lack who has no greater joy than giving to us, someone who respects us enough to require us to use everything we receive for the good of others, and because he has given it to us, knows we have something to give. The **longing to connect defines our dignity** as human beings and our destiny as image-bearers.²⁰ (Bold added.)

He says, "Everyone shares the same longing."²¹ Crabb's early teachings about the universal need for worth is now recast as the "longing to connect" that "defines our dignity." In other books this is stated as longings for relationship and impact. Thus, Crabb continues a similar theme related to needs resident in the image of God.

In this expanded probing, the sins of others are exposed along with the person's own pain and sinful strategies to deny the pain so that the goodness of the person is revealed. Thus even as Crabb teaches that there are "two sets of urges within us, good passions and bad passions"²² and that "these urges seem to have a life of their own,"²³ exposing other people's sins helps a person discover his own goodness.

According to Crabb's dream, the church must become a community, somewhat like that described by Peck in his book *The Different Drum*. Only then, as people tell their stories will they be able to connect with God and with each other. Crabb says:

Beneath all our problems, there are desperately hurting souls that must find the nourishment only community can provide—or die.²⁴

Crabb rightly sees that individual counseling falls short of what the church can do, because there is a much deeper problem that psychological counseling cannot touch. He says:

We must do something other than train professional experts to fix damaged psyches. Damaged psyches aren't the problem. The problem beneath our struggles is a disconnected soul. And we must do something more than exhort people to do what's right and then hold them accountable.²⁵

Crabb is partly correct in saying, “The problem beneath our struggles is a disconnected soul.” Indeed, those who are disconnected from God are “dead in their trespasses and sins.” Only God can save them from the horror of separation from God and he does that through what Paul refers to as “the foolishness of preaching.” It is God who saves and sanctifies, but not through a community that has learned the twentieth-century techniques of encounter groups or other psychological experiments in community.

And, we agree that “we must do something more than exhort people to do what’s right and then hold them accountable.” The Bible has been clear all along, without the help of Rogers’ positive regard teachings, that the essence of being a Christian can be summed up in the word *love*. Jesus said, “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you” (John 15:12).

This love among the saints is generally absent in professional counseling. For years we have contended that people unnecessarily pay so-called experts to do what believers are called and already equipped to do, if they are growing in their walk with the Lord and walking according to the Spirit as presented throughout the Gospels and Epistles. However, Crabb writes this book as though believers do not know how to love one another for the complete work of God to be accomplished, as if they need help from the psychological community in order to learn how to connect.

It may be that many Christians have not grown in their love for God or in their love for one another, and it may be that many who profess to be Christians have not truly been born again. But, what Crabb presents in *Connecting* is contaminated with his commitment to psychological teachings about the nature of man and how he changes. While Crabb does not say that the sources for these ideas are from the psychological community, one can see the specter of psychology behind much of what he says. For instance, Crabb says:

It’s about time to free ourselves from the pressure that moralism creates and to tone down our preoccupying fascination with our internal workings, whether with psychological dynamics or with the subtleties of idolatry, a fascination that therapy often encourages.²⁶

What does Crabb mean by “the pressure that moralism creates”? Does that mean we are to dismiss the moralism found in Proverbs and other sections of Scripture so that we won’t feel guilty and pressured to repent? Humanistic psychologists have turned such words as *moralism*, *should*, and *ought* into bad words. Thus, Crabb says, “It’s about time to free ourselves from the pressure that moralism creates.” However, he only says to “tone down our preoccupying fascination with our internal workings, whether with psychological dynamics or with the subtleties of idolatry, a fascination that therapy often encourages.” He says only to tone it down because it is still necessary according to Crabb’s scheme. However, here he indicates that he has even more to offer than professional counseling, which he strongly supports.

Crabb still encourages people to look inside, to tell one another about what’s hidden beneath the surface and to talk about the sins committed by others against them. He says:

I want us to be honest about the insecurities, fears, and inadequacies that lie hidden in our hearts, beneath the appearances we may present to others. I want us to speak with neither shame nor pride about the dark nights of our soul. I want us to be able to tell the stories of our abuse, rejection, or failure to a few special people who will listen and know they can’t take the pain away, to people who will not think something is wrong with us that a therapist can fix and who will not simply tell us to get a grip on things.²⁷

Crabb is still encouraging people to look beneath the surface, to expose and disclose the deepest parts of one's inner being. But now, in addition to doing this in the counseling office, Crabb has a dream for this to be done in the church where people can tell about their "abuse, rejection, or failure to a few special people who will listen and know they can't take the pain away, to people who will not think something is wrong with us that a therapist can fix and who will not simply tell us to get a grip on things."

Training Powerful People for Community

Crabb declares, "Ordinary people have the power to change other people's lives." He has said this from the very beginning, but it has always been qualified regarding who can do what and what training might be necessary for the deep inner work. In this book he says that "only a few people seem to possess" the power to powerfully change the life of a person with deep needs.²⁸ He asks:

What does it take to be a powerful person, someone who connects so deeply with another that power comes out of my being that enables the other to rise up with a new sense of vitality—and maybe with a "cure" for whatever psychological disorder was thought to be present? Can we all become powerful enough to stir up life in one or two others?²⁹

Crabb proposes a plan to equip those he refers to as powerful people in the body of Christ to do this very thing. His plans to train pastors, elders and other Christians are clear in the name of his organization: the Institute for Biblical Community, formerly called the Institute of Biblical Counseling. In addition, he is conducting seminars to teach Christians his methods, referred to as "a better way."

The ad for two of Crabb's 1998 seminars, presented by his Institute for Biblical Community, asks: "What should the church be doing to meet the discipling and counseling needs of its people?"³⁰ Then he lists:

- Refer to professional counselors?
- Strengthen support groups?
- Hire more pastors?
- Develop lay counselors?
- Structure more discipling programs?

In answer to those possibilities, the ad says:

In addition to using these methods, **MAYBE THERE IS A BETTER WAY** that we've overlooked. God has placed within His people the Power to change lives that is released when we learn to relate in ways that only the gospel makes possible when we learn to **CONNECT**. (Emphasis his.)

Observe that the "BETTER WAY" does not cancel referring to professional counselors or cancel developing lay counselors according to Crabb's methods. Instead, Crabb's "better way" is like his other "better" ways. Once again it is combining what he knows of living the Christian life with what he knows from studying psychology. He has attempted to make psychological counseling better by adding the Bible. He has attempted to make Christianity better by adding psychology. This is a further attempt to improve on Christianity by adding the psychological means of connecting in community.

Crabb's approach is different from the way Christianity was lived throughout the centuries. Aspects of his approach are concurrent with the current psychological trend of building community and of emphasizing what is good in the person, as well as exposing the pain of the past and the so-called ego-defense mechanisms. The ad refers to Crabb's "RADICAL NEW APPROACH to helping all of us deal with our personal struggles, an approach that depends for its power on SUPERNATURALLY CONNECTING in relationships that are possible for every believer." While he says that this "RADICAL NEW APPROACH" depends on "SUPERNATURALLY CONNECTING," his "RADICAL NEW APPROACH" also depends on psychological theories.

Notice also that this is for all believers. Crabb's "RADICAL NEW APPROACH" is for every believer, not just those who are experiencing difficult problems. He wants all believers to delve into the depths of the psyche to find the unmet needs, pain, disappointments, and strategies to avoid the pain (ego-defense mechanisms). He also wants them to find that "there is something good beneath the mess."³¹ Here we have an extension of Crabb's psychological means for sanctification. He presented a "better way" of sanctification in *Understanding People* and *Inside Out*. He presented a "better way," which he referred to as "a third way" for finding God. And now he presents his "better way" for all believers to relate powerfully with God, self and others.

For Crabb the gospel of Christ "connects us to God, to ourselves, and to others."³² But, where in Scripture does the gospel connect a person to himself? That is an addition from psychological theories about the nature of man and how he changes. The gospel gives new life and declares the old man dead, but there is no indication in Scripture that a human being is to connect to himself. While some of Crabb's goals for believers may appear admirable, his doctrines and his vision for the church are psychotherapeutically bound. They are what we call psychoheresy.

Crabb admits that he has "put a great deal of stock in self-awareness"³³ and justifies it by saying that God's "Spirit does search our hearts for hidden matters that interfere with trust."³⁴ But if God's Holy Spirit does the searching, there is no need for Christians to do that to one another. Yet, Crabb has relied on psychological means to expose the so-called unconscious and bring its contents to awareness. He continues to do so through his "better way" as he shows people how to develop community. While God does indeed work through members of the body of Christ, His pure revelation of Himself and of each individual is through His Word and Spirit. When God uses His church to expose hidden sin, it is through His Spirit and Word, not through psychological means of confronting and exposing in an atmosphere of Rogerian unconditional positive regard. Moreover, the sin is not hidden from the person in some dark cavern that can only be opened by some psychological open sesame.

Gospel of Self-Revelation

Crabb calls for the church to become a community with powerful people who can deal with the hidden realm of the psyche. He believes that God reveals Himself through those believers who understand and reveal their own inner selves and who will help others to become aware of all that lies hidden beneath their problems, i.e. in the unconscious. He says;

*But the absolute center of what he [God] does to help us change is to reveal himself to us, to give us a taste of what he's really like, and to pour his life into us. And a critical element in the revealing process is to place us in a community of people who are enough like him to give us that taste firsthand. If that is true, if a powerful experience of God comes through others, then connecting plays a vital, indispensable, powerful role in effectively addressing the **core issues of our souls, the issues that lie beneath all our personal, emotional, and psychological problems.***³⁵ (Italics his; bold added.)

Crabb thus uses God in his plan of revealing the hidden cavern of the unconscious. Crabb not only involves God in what he is doing, but he has added to the Word of God so that people can see God in the same way Crabb sees him.

In establishing his idea of community, Crabb reduces the Eternal God who is One God in Three Persons to an “the Eternal Community.”³⁶ The Bible speaks of “the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3:11), but Crabb presents his own version of how the Godhead established these eternal purposes. He refers to the “the Eternal Community” calling “a meeting.”³⁷ Then Crabb has the audacity to script the words he imagines were spoken by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In addition to contriving a script for God speaking, Crabb adds the accompanying human emotions, “and here the Father’s voice broke.”³⁸ While it may seem that Crabb makes God approachable, his script also trivializes God’s majesty and holiness by reducing the Trinity to a community of three operating by consensus.

A brief reading of Crabb’s rendition of God establishing his plan reduces God to three very human-sounding people meeting together to develop a plan in which God will create creatures with needs that cannot be met in the state of disconnection. But the Father will send the Son to bring these creatures into community. Jesus says how painful it will be, so painful that Crabb has Jesus say, “I cannot imagine what the actual experience will be like of not seeing your face.”³⁹ What does this say about eternity, foreknowledge, and knowing the end from the beginning? Crabb even has the eternal Son, while yet in his perfect deity and without yet becoming man, question God’s plans by asking, “There is no other way?”⁴⁰ Crabb also has the Son and Spirit express how delighted and thrilled they are to follow the plan set forth in the meeting. Thus, as in communities that work together, there is consensus.

Crabb ends his imaginary script with the Eternal Father saying, “It’s time to get started. Let’s see what we can do with this bit of clay. I have a vision for what it could become.”⁴¹ Does this even match what God, who is outside time and knows the end from the beginning, might say in one’s wildest imagination? But Crabb’s script works well for making his plan for community look the same as God’s eternal purpose.

Where did Crabb get this extrabiblical “revelation”? From his own imagination! At the least it trivializes God and anthropomorphizes Him in a manner that Scripture does not. Worse yet, such writing is a dangerous encroachment on God’s very being, a worldly handling of the holiness of God. Crabb misrepresents God’s holy essence and eternal purposes.

Whenever people attempt to integrate psychotherapy and its underlying psychologies with Scripture they are in serious danger of distorting the gospel. The Bible is clear in its presentation of the human condition and God’s solution through the gospel. While man was made in the image of God, every aspect of the image was tainted with the depravity of sin. Thus, the appeal of human worth, as if it is based on humanity being originally created in the image of God, is a distortion that came from secular psychological theorists who believe that a person’s problems are based on a deep need for worth. Thus adding the psychological wisdom of man affects the true understanding of the human condition and how God saves and sanctifies.

The assumption that secular psychological theories about the nature of man have something helpful to add to the Bible undermines the Bible as the sole authority regarding who man is and how he changes. The Bible is the authoritative document on the doctrine of man, his fallen nature, salvation, sanctification, faith, and obedience. Adding extrabiblical notions about the inner workings of man from the opinions of unredeemed minds actually takes away from Scripture.

The confusion that arises when people try to integrate psychology with Christianity is not only an unclear gospel; it is a distorted gospel, even another gospel. At one point the writer may state the gospel in very biblical terms, but at other points the addition of psychological ideas distorts that very gospel. Throughout Crabb's books he has added psychological theories to the understanding of man. These may come across as theological statements. For instance he has Adam and Eve, "in their unfallen state, to long for grace that cannot yet be revealed."⁴² Scripture does not support such longing before the Fall. Crabb's theories are about longings (needs, functioning powerfully from the unconscious) that originally existed in man when he was created in the image of God. Throughout his books, Crabb has presented man with powerful needs/longings/passions that motivate behavior outside the person's awareness. This Freudian-Adlerian-Maslowian notion lurks behind Crabb's theological understanding of the human condition.

Even though Crabb says that man sins, psychology distorts or confuses the nature of the sinner. Rather than clearly stating that the depravity of sin has tainted every part of man's being, Crabb presents sin as man's attempt to meet his needs apart from God. The needs/longings/passions are not presented as sinful. Instead, man's strategies for filling the needs and denying the pain of unmet needs are the sins. Thus, to stop sinning one must uncover what lies hidden in the psyche.

There is also a lack of clarity regarding human goodness. While on the one hand Crabb agrees that "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags," some goodness seems to remain that needs to be found again, such as our "lost glory," which after salvation becomes "restored glory."⁴³ Crabb says about all people, saved and unsaved:

The center of a biblical theory of personality is the idea of two sets of urges within us, good passions and bad passions, bad passions that exist because of the fall, good ones that are reliably present under the new covenant.⁴⁴

Crabb further asserts that "these urges seem to have a life of their own"⁴⁵ and says:

The bad urges in non-Christians, it should be noted, sink no lower than the bad ones in Christians, but the good ones don't reach as high.⁴⁶

In other words the "good urges" of unbelievers are still good, but not as good. Elsewhere Crabb says:

Christians now have two sets of inclinations, bad urges coming out of our flesh and good urges arising from our new hearts, the spirit that God has put within us.⁴⁷

These two statements do not fit together unless there are good urges coming up from the flesh. This is just one example of how psychology distorts one's theology about the nature of man.

Crabb has added psychological ideas from need psychology about the nature of man, what must be changed and how it is to be changed. Rather than presenting people as sinners who must be given brand new life and a brand new heart, Crabb presents people as having to be convinced of God's love and His ability to meet their needs/longings/passion. Then once they are convinced the Holy Spirit's job is to "incline their hearts toward loving me [God] so that obedience will become a joy and not mere duty."⁴⁸ While on the one hand he says that Christ died for man's sins, Crabb stresses the purpose of Christ's death to be for convincing people of God's great love for them more than the purpose of Christ's death being an absolute necessity for God's holy justice to be fulfilled at the same time as His great mercy. God is love, but he is also holy, righteous and just. Every aspect of his nature was satisfied by Christ's propitiatory death on the cross. One must be careful not to give the impression that Christ's death was for the purpose of making God acceptable to man rather than making man acceptable to God, such as when Crabb has God saying:

"Son, at just the right time I'll send you to become one of them and to accept the guilt for their sin. Then (and here the Father's voice broke) I'll break our connection and let you experience the death of separation from me that all sin deserves. When they see the extremes to which we will go to bring them into our community, the yearning we'll build into their hearts to be loved like that will draw them back to loving us fully and trusting us with their very souls."⁴⁹

Nothing is even mentioned in Crabb's speaking for God about how grievously man sinned against God and violated His holiness or about the requirements of God's justice. Instead, Crabb has Christ die for "all that sin deserves" to let people "see the extremes to which we [Father, Son, and Holy Spirit] will go to bring them into our community." Nothing is said about people being convicted of sin as in the presentation of the gospel in Acts 2:37, where the people were "pricked in their heart." Instead the emphasis is on people being convinced of God's love and accepting Him as their meeter of needs and releaser of capacities. Also, how is it that people who are dead in their trespasses and sins can be drawn "back" to loving God, when the Bible says nothing about people loving God to begin with but everything about the inborn rebellion of every sinner?

Crabb's gospel presents mankind with an innate hidden yearning for God, which God fulfills by convincing people of His great love for them and by causing them to seek to have their needs met through Him. He emphasizes mankind's yet to be realized hidden worth and goodness and diminishes the depravity of man's sinful condition. This further diminishes the great work of Christ on the Cross and the full spectrum of God's glorious nature. Crabb's numerous psychological explanations and additions to God's Word and His saving and sanctifying work in the believer add up to a man-centered gospel. Crabb has transmogrified the truth of God by psychologizing the faith.

Notes:

1. Carl R. Rogers, "Interpersonal Relationship: The Core of Guidance" in Carl R. Rogers and Barry Stevens, *Person to Person: The Problem of Being Human* (Lafayette, CA: Real People Press, 1967), p. 90.
2. Larry Crabb, *Finding God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993), pp. 70,71.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
8. Philip Yancey, "The Holy Inefficiency of Henri Nouwen," *Christianity Today*, Vol. 40, No. 14 (Dec. 9, 1996), p. 80.

9. Henri Nouwen, *The Inner Voice of Love: A Journey Through Anguish to Freedom* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), xiii, xiv, quoted by Larry Crabb in *Connecting* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997, pp. 24,25).
10. Crabb, *Connecting, op. cit.*, p. 25.
11. *Ibid.*, p. xiv.
12. M. Scott Peck, *The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1987), p. 47.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Crabb, *Connecting, op. cit.*, p. 43.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 1-6.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*, p. 65.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
24. *Ibid.*, p. xvi.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.*, p. xvii.
27. *Ibid.*, p. xviii.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
30. Ad for Institute for Biblical Community seminars on "Connecting," *Christianity Today*, Vol. 42, No. 5, (April 27, 1998), p. 5.
31. Crabb, *Connecting, op. cit.*, p. xviii.
32. *Ibid.*, p. xx.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Ibid.*
36. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
37. *Ibid.*
38. *Ibid.*, p. 59.
39. *Ibid.*
40. *Ibid.*
41. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 59.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 65.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
46. *Ibid.*
47. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 59.
49. *Ibid.*

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