

GIVE ME THAT OLD TIME RECOVERY

Are you co-dependent? Have you been victimized by an addiction? Do you come from a dysfunctional home? Well there is hope! Call your nearest Psychological clinic, New Age center, or evangelical church, and you can be plugged into a recovery group that specifically meets your need.

The counseling craze is exploding all over, and the church has not been left in the dust on this one. In fact, Christian counseling is one of the most sought after ministries in the church. No longer is the preacher the attraction of a church, but rather it is the high-tech counseling and recovery groups that draws the crowds.

However, there is something strange about this new form of Christianity. A monstrous paradigm shift has taken place, and there are precious few who are calling "foul!" This new form of Christianity appears to leave some of the elemental ingredients out of its recipe. And yet the church thinks it has made monumental strides in "ministry."

I don't mean to rain on the parade, but counseling without Christ is not Christian. Recovery without confession and repentance is not Christian. Support groups that gather without prayer as the hub are not Christian. A psychological sanctification that leaves out the Word and the Spirit, and only seeks to make ME feel better about ME is not Christian. Any ministry that only seeks to make me better for my sake is not Christian!

We have exchanged our supernatural weaponry of Word, Spirit, and prayer for a few worldly-wise placebos (Jas. 3:13-18; 2 Cor. 10:4-6; Eph. 6:10-20; Phil. 4:4-7). In both form and function this type of new ministry forsakes the Biblical, historical means of grace for contemporary claptrap. Do we really think that our problems, just because they wear new labels, are unique in history? Or worse yet, do we think our solutions are unique?

"My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water" (Jer. 2:13). This is exactly what we have done. The goal of recovery and counseling is a better me for me. But Christianity knows no such me-centeredness. On the contrary, Paul says "for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's" (Rom. 14:8). And again, "He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and arose again on their behalf" (2 Cor. 5:15).

Is there a place for counseling? Yes! A Christ-centered counseling ministry that seeks to get peoples' lives in alignment with the Word, under the control of the Spirit, and pleasing in the sight of God is good. Recovery that talks in terms of responsibility, confession, and repentance, with a view to spiritual growth for the glory of God is good. Support groups that gather together, in koinonia, to lift one another up to the Throne of Grace is good. Any ministry that is Bible-based, and helps me better live my life for Christ is good. The problem is that the

counseling and recovery movement is a stranger to these things.

Bible study, prayer, and obedience still do wonders in the lives of broken people. So why make our own cisterns, fashioned after the world's, and drink stinking water, when we could have living water? It is a grand mystery whenever the church forsakes her God-given resources in favor of an inferior product. And not only mysterious, but also heretical and potentially damning, is the self-ism that replaces the worship of true God. The old gospel song had it right, "Give me that old time religion, it was good for Paul and Silas, and it is good enough for me." Unless of course, Paul was co-dependent.