

## **Christ-Followers Should Be Therapeutic People**

For you know we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom of glory.

I Thessalonians 2:11-12

I don't remember most of the lectures I heard in seminary, but one remains etched in my memory and has proved to be a practical ministry guide for me over many years. The essence of the presentation was that Christ-followers ought to be the kind of people who help others get better (hence the word, therapeutic). When our students or others are around us, are they glad they are with us? Do we bring out the best in them? There are some people, when we are with them, bring out the worst in us. At the worst our thinking, attitude, language, and sometimes actions change. At best, they make us feel depressed and create some sense of hopelessness in our lives.

On the other hand, there are some people we are with who help us smile (at least inwardly, if not outwardly); who make us feel special, and think the best kind of thoughts. We leave their presence with our spirits refreshed and energized. We ought to be those kind of people and especially in the pivotal role we play in students' and our families' lives.

The important question of course is how do we make sure we have therapeutic personhood? Let me share a few points of that professor's lecture and some insights gleaned over the years. First, when people are with us, we need to work on giving them our full attention. Most of us are multi-taskers. When we are with someone it matters to them that we are not also doing something else. Do they have the benefit of countenance communication? Are our eyes on them? Do we have a comforting facial expression? Are we listening with our heart as well as our ears? Do we use good body language?

Second, are we learning to ask the right kind of questions when people share experiences and problems with us. Have we learned when NOT to ask questions or give "advice, "but just listen? Often it is not our answers they want, but a caring presence. We may have an opportunity to help people put their concerns in proper perspective and think about options, which is far more beneficial than us being "fix-it" people. What may seem simple and easy for us may be a far more encompassing issue for them.

Do we offer to pray with them and make a genuine commitment to keep praying for them? Last, are we willing to speak the truth in love? Sometimes students, friends, and family members need to be "care-fronted" with decisions they are making or a direction they are headed. Unless we love and genuinely care for a person we are probably not the one to confront them. Tough love is often needed, but our words should actions should be motivated by no other reason than love.

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