

# The Counseling Zone: A View from a Transparent Saint

## By Julie Gossack

Do you love your life? Most of us do.

While studying the Word the other day I made some interesting connections that caused me to both ponder and repent. I was actually studying the character of Satan; not a pleasant area of study, but a doctrine of which we need to be aware. As I read, I noted a certain susceptibility to Satan's tactics for those who "love their life." Let me explain.

Reading in Revelation 12:11, I noticed that the saints of the tribulation overcame Satan by two means: 1) the blood of the Lamb, and 2) the word of their testimony. These saints overcame Satan through the blood of the Lamb of God—Jesus Christ. Jesus is triumphant in power and authority over the Devil and, when the saints testified of their belief in Jesus' sacrificial blood, their own testimony reigned triumphant over the enemy. Indeed, He who is in us (Christ) is greater than he (Satan) who is in the world (John 4:5). Surely, the victory that overcomes the world and its Prince is our faith that affirms "that Jesus is the Son of God" (I John 5:4-5).

What I thought was most interesting about this passage is the phrase at the end of verse 11: "and they did not love their lives to the death." This is a profound statement. What did loving their lives have to do with overcoming Satan? Then, I remembered a verse from Job chapter two. In this chapter, Satan, speaking to God, makes an interesting remark about his observations of mankind. Satan says, "... all that a man has he will give for his life" (Job 2:4b). This comment came right before Satan's suggestion that God allow him to touch Job's body with illness and physical suffering. Interesting.

### THE LIKELIHOOD OF SUFFERING

My thoughts drifted to the life of the Apostle Paul. One of my favorite Pauline phrases is found in Acts 20:24. Paul's noteworthy remark came after hearing that trials and tribulations awaited him in Jerusalem. Paul responded to these prophesies with this amazing announcement: "But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God." And with that attitude, Paul packed his bags and went up to Jerusalem (Acts 21:15). He continued his ministry to declare the "whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27) and was not hindered by the impending likelihood of suffering. Remarkable.

Now, you should know that my studies that day were not just theoretical, being only academic in nature. No, I was fighting for the territory of my heart (Proverbs 4:23) and seeking counsel from the Word to do so. In days previous I despaired because of nagging physical pain, discomfort, and life's difficult circumstances. My faith was weak and wimpy, scarcely a wisp. I doubted God's goodness and care. My sinful heart was spilling over onto others and I desperately needed the Lord's counsel.

And so, when I read that last portion of Revelation 12:11, "and they did not love their lives to the death," I thoughtfully compared myself to these saints of God: *Julie, you do love your own life!*



Satan's observation of mankind is accurate; we highly value our own lives—to a fault, so that when put to the test we are tempted to curse our Creator to His face (Job 2:5).

I was guilty as charged. Tempted, tested, and found lacking... succumbed to and overcome by the sins of pride, selfishness, anger, and fear. Wanting to protect my own life and secure its own physical comforts as I had defined them, I became a willing victim of the crafty assaults of the adversary—as well as the world's deception and my own fleshly desires. I walked right into Satan's trap and the jaws clamped hard. The fiery darts hit their mark. Miserable wretch!

### ENTER . . . THE KING

*Do you not know it is the kindness of God leads you to repentance (Romans 2:4)?*

Through this last year and a half of cancer treatment I have not cursed my God. I have loved Him and trusted Him and He has given me a faith that has amazed me. But when the road got harder—more pain and discomfort, troubling uncertainty—my love for my own life triumphed over faith in my King.

*I abhor myself and repent in dust cloth and ashes (Well, not literally. I sit in my kitchen in sweats and sneakers.) But how could I have doubted His goodness? His kindness? His love? His sufficient provision? I have believed lies about my God!*

*Lord Jesus, You alone are worthy. You are sovereign. You can do everything, and no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You.*

*Who am I to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to Him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" Does not the Potter have power over the clay?*

*Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? For of You and through You and to You are all things, to whom be glory forever, Amen.*

*For a righteous man may fall seven times and yet rise again... So now, once more, I take up the shield—the faith that quenches fiery darts. I again wield the powerful Sword—the counsel of my heart, the Spirit's arsenal. This time, it is the words of my King:*

### LOSE YOUR LIFE

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it." (Matthew 16:24-25)

These words penetrate. As a follower of Christ I must lose my life, denying my own self-protections, pleasures, and comforts. Like the saints in Revelation 11, I must not love my own life to the death. Doing so leaves me vulnerable to the testings and temptations of Satan.

And so, let each of us take up our spiritual armor that we may overcome through the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony. . . losing our lives that we may find them in the end!

# THE COG

## Community Of Grace Biblical Counseling Ministry

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# FOOD FOR THOUGHT BY PASTOR BLAKE SHAW

## "The Highest of Human Courts-Part One"

### Freud: Ruling the world from the grave

More than likely you have heard of Sigmund Freud. If not, you should know that Sigmund is recognized as one of the fathers of modern psychotherapy. Much can be said about Freud. Books have been written by him and about him. Suffice it to say, Freud has had an incredible influence on the psychotherapeutic and counseling world. So much so that David Breese rightly listed him as one of the seven men who rule the world from the grave.

Sadly, Freud's influence didn't stop with the world system. It didn't stop outside the door of the church but rather was embraced by the church at-large. For decades, the church was influenced by Sigmund Freud. Popular Christian authors, such as Dobson, Crabb, etc., have been influenced by unbiblical Freudian theories. In recent years, Freudian thought has lost most of its importance in the psychology world. At least that is what some students who study at Montana State University in the Psychology Department say.

Back some time ago, I interacted with a woman studying psychology at MSU and when it came to the issue of Freud she explained that Freud is basically a thing of the past. "We don't really consider Freudian thought that much in our studies now," she noted. Granted, it may have been the teachers she studied under or it might be that the professors at MSU, as a whole, don't consider Freudian thought much anymore. In other readings of blogs and books, it does seem that Freud is mostly relegated to the last century. Nevertheless, there seems to be a hangover effect from imbibing in Freudian thought. Because of that, I want to discuss Freud in this edition of The COG. Something he promoted and believed is a launching point for the next number of "Food for Thought" articles.

### Freud's Three Personality Entities

Freud was not stupid. Was he perverted? Yes. Dumb? No. Did he appreciate God and religion? No. Was he religious? Very. You see, every human is religious. Freud would deny that, but like every person who walks the planet, Freud worshiped something or someone. What is it about this hater of Christ that would lead me to write about him for a biblical counseling newsletter? Allow me to explain.

Freud was an observer of people. In developing his philosophy of humans he viewed human personality as being made up of three entities: The id, superego, and the ego. To Freud, the id is the primary component of the personality. The id is driven by the pleasure principle, which strives for immediate gratification of all desires, wants, and needs. If these needs are not satisfied immediately, the result is a state of anxiety or tension. Stay with me here. For Freud, the fullness of one's personality, the real person, would be expressed by the id, totally unrestrained by other forces. The id would love to live unrestrained. Because of Freud's perversion proposed that the id would say something likened to, "I want to take off all of my clothes and run down the street." (Actually that is a more sanctified illustration of the id than what Freud would state, but the idea is the same). The id wants

to live an unrestrained expression of the sexual urges.

But there is a problem in the human personality—at least under Freudian thought. The person has what is called the superego. The superego stands in the way of the id giving full expression to itself. The superego would respond to the id's statement concerning streaking saying, "You can't do that. That would not be right." There is a conflict within the personality between the id and the superego. Enter the ego. To resolve the conflict between the id and the superego, the ego would come up with a compromise. The ego might say, "Instead of streaking I'll just look at pornography."



### The Bible and the Superego?

Now, if you are inclined to think biblically—which you should be—you probably thought to yourself something like, "The id sounds a lot like the sin nature. And the ego almost sounds like the sin nature with some restraint. That restraint is there in order to protect the individual from doing something against society's standards, ethics, and values, so as to avoid being arrested, rejected, or thought to be abnormal. Maybe you also thought, "The superego sounds a lot like something we call the conscience." I believe you would be correct in that assessment if those are your thoughts. What intrigues me most is the "superego." Because of that, I want to spend some time looking at, not at the superego, but at what is more accurately labeled the conscience.

Some who have specialized in studying Freud and his writings suggest that Freud was not speaking of the moral conscience when he developed the idea of the superego. Either way, it matters not to me. I simply would say that how Freud and his followers spoke of the superego leads me to believe that what Freud was toiling with was what we would more accurately label the conscience. Under Freudian thought, the superego is the problem in the human personality because it holds the id back from its true and free expression of the person. If you want wholeness, according to Freud, you have to get rid of or silence the superego.



## Training Opportunities in Biblical Counseling

Third Annual Biblical Counseling Conference  
July 16-18, Grace Bible Church.

Registration forms available throughout  
the church and at the church office.

## “The Highest of Human Courts - Part One”

[Continued from cover page]

### The Conscience: A kind gift

The Conscience is a marvelous gift from God. Sure, we know Freud would reject that idea, but we know from Scripture that God created humans with a basic knowledge of right and wrong. Even atheists and the most unspiritual humans have a conscience. God says in Romans 2:14-15, *...for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them...*

God has built within the fabric of humanity a general sense of right and wrong. People who have never read the 10 commandments will say, “Murder is wrong. Leaving your spouse and having sexual relations with another married person is wrong.” That’s the general idea of Romans 2:14-15.

I remember as a younger person hearing about a man who left his wife for another woman. I remember hearing another man in our community who had no religious affiliation say, “That’s wrong. He can’t be doing that.” As I reflect back 30 years I have to wonder, “Where did this man come up with the idea that was wrong?” I would suggest there was something built into the fabric of his being, a sense of right and wrong. He had a conscience.

### Defining the Conscience

In this edition of the COG, let’s give some definition to this wonderful thing called “the conscience.” In following editions we’ll examine the conscience more closely, considering how it relates to counseling and discipleship. The Puritan, Richard Sibbes, wrote in his commentary on 2 Corinthians, that the conscience is the soul reflecting upon itself. The conscience is one of the distinguishing marks of humanity. Animals don’t have a conscience. Humans, on the other hand, have the ability to contemplate their actions

and then make a moral evaluation of that action. John MacArthur writes,

The conscience is an innate ability to sense right and wrong...The conscience entreats us to do what we believe is right and restrains us from doing what we believe is wrong. The conscience is not to be equated with the voice of God or the law of God. It is a human faculty that judges our actions and thoughts by the light of the highest standard we perceive. When we violate our conscience, it condemns us, triggering feelings of shame, anguish, regret, consternation, anxiety, disgrace, and even fear. When we follow our conscience, it commends us, bringing joy, serenity, self-respect, well-being, and gladness. (The Vanishing Conscience, 1994, pages 36-37).

The Greek word “conscience” can be found more than thirty times in the pages of the New Testament. That word, *suneidesis*, literally means “co-knowledge.” MacArthur explains,

Conscience is knowledge together with oneself; that is, conscience knows our inner motives and true thoughts. Conscience is above reason and beyond intellect. We may rationalize, trying to justify ourselves in our own minds, but a violated conscience will not be easily convinced. . . (The Vanishing Conscience, 1994, p. 37).

We must understand the conscience. It is an amazing resource we have as humans. Beyond defining it, we have to unearth many aspects of how the conscience works. In future editions of the COG we’ll attempt to consider various issues about the conscience, such as, how one hardens his conscience, how one trains his conscience, and how one might have to deal with a weak conscience. As we work our way through these various topics, it will be abundantly clear how the conscience relates to Biblical Counseling and to your life as a believer in Christ.



## Q&A continued...

Second, please understand that when a person seeks counsel, we want to fight for them and provide true and biblical help for them. In order to give them an answer to their problem we have to know what their problem is. In fact, Proverbs 18:13 tells me as a counselor that if I dole out an answer before I hear I am practicing folly and shame. Therefore, it is essential that I understand the situation before I start spouting off answers. For far too long, Christians—well-meaning Christians, very caring Christians—have had opportunities to bring God’s glorious truth to a struggling believer, yet oftentimes, they hear only few details of the situation and then tell the person what God says about their problem. Far too often we have practiced folly and shame.

### In counseling, we must hear the story.

In counseling, we must hear the story. We need data; the PDI is merely a way to help us collect data. It’s not the only way to collect data, but it is one way. The PDI is a tool, and it has been a very helpful tool to give a counselor a lot of data before the person even arrives for counseling. Not only that, the form serves to expedite the data gathering process. Do we need the PDI form? No. I suppose the church got along really well without it for about 1980 years. But can the form be helpful? Yes.

Now, in fairness to the person asking the question, we certainly understand how the use of a PDI form can make it seem like the person is going to a professional for counseling. Within the context of the church family and body life it seems like the form is not needed. However, I have discovered that when some folks in our church family have used the forms, they recognize that we take the counseling seriously and we really want to come alongside to help. I’m sure there are some who don’t care for the form, but others have told me they like it.



### We take People’s Problems Seriously

Let me develop the concept even further. We have been blessed to counsel many people from outside of our church family. With these situation it as prudent for people to have an understanding of our counseling philosophy, and to agree to what we hope to accomplish through counseling. (This is part of the cover letter of the PDI.) Further, the PDI allows us to get to know the person a little bit prior to the first counseling appointment. Whether or not it appears to be a “professional” relationship to the person seeking counseling or not, I’m not sure, nor am I all that concerned about it. What is important is that the person understands we take their issues seriously and we want to understand the full scope of the issues.

People seek counsel for all types of reasons and every person comes into counseling with their own of what counseling looks like. Sadly to say, most people in the church, when they think of getting counseling from the church, their perspective is, “You’ll get simplistic answers and you’ll get answers before the person has truly heard the story. Normally, the person doing the counseling in the church will hear a little bit of the situation and will have a Bible verse to confront the sin in your life.” That’s a sad reputation for the church, but sometimes it is true. For this

reason, many people go outside the church for help. At GBC, we want to communicate that we care deeply about people and we want to hear their story. The use of the PDI form can be helpful to learn more about their story and communicate our care and desire to help..

### Moving beyond Band-Aids and toward change

There is one other issue to address and it really has very little to do with our use of the PDI form, and that is how people in the body of Christ view change and getting help from another person. It is my opinion, that for far too long the church has offered Band-Aids to people who need surgery. For some in the church they see their problems, they know they need help, but they don’t want to get too serious about help. Consider which is more humbling: Ask the pastor to help with a little struggle with anger, or ask the pastor to help put back a marriage that is crumbling because of terrible anger issues. Without a doubt the second is more humbling. Back a few years ago a fellow believer whom I’ve know for a few years asked me for help. I had an opening in my schedule so I told him we could meet at a particular time of the day. In the phone conversation he stated to me, “Blake, I want to meet as friends. I don’t want it to have that professional feel to it where you are the counselor and I’m the counselee.” I assured him that I would meet as a friend. That was a mistake. Twenty-twenty hind-sight is golden, isn’t it? The interaction was good but it was more likened to two guys being accountability partners. Frankly the counseling went no where and after some time our meetings came to an end. From that experience I learned a valuable lesson: If someone calls seeking for help, whether they call it counseling or not, I will approach that situation with full confidence that, by God’s grace, and with His Word and His Gospel, I will bring true biblical help to the person and speak as one who has authority (Titus 2:15). In other words, knowing what I know now, if we could back the truck up several years, I would still agree to meet with this person and to meet as a friend, but I wouldn’t hesitate to say, “I’m up for meeting and for meeting as your friend. But please understand, if we are going to maximize our time and truly deal with the issue(s) which you are seeking help for, I will expect you to do some homework in between our meeting times. Change doesn’t take place in our one-two hour meeting. It will take place in between those sessions when you take God’s glorious truth and practice what God has told you to do. So I want to reserve the right that, though we meet as friends, you are seeking help and the best way I can help you as a friend is to not only hold you accountable, but also, with authority teach God’s Word to you and require that you do homework during the week so as to bring about the most change in the shortest amount of time.” What I’m trying to do with that is to maintain a relationship that is more like friends but at the same time to communicate that when it comes to dealing with the issues that continue to claw at the person’s life I mean business and really want to use our time wisely and bring about change quickly.



## Q&A with Pastor Blake Shaw

**Question:** Why do you use the Personal Data Inventory Form for those who want to be counseled at GBC? This form makes counseling feel like a professional relationship.

### Answer:

First, I’d like to thank the person who asked this question. I think it is one that needs to be answered and it also touches on an issue in which biblical counselors want to be sensitive. Some folks believe the use of the Personal Data Inventory Form (PDI) as a compromise in becoming like the world. I certainly can understand that concern and I don’t want to ignore that perspective. Certainly, we do not want to be conformed to the world system; that is a common concern. Romans 12:2 says to “not be conformed to this world.” In other words we are to not let the world pour us into its mold. We are not to let the world be our boss. So we have to ask:

Is using the PDI necessary, or is it ‘of the world?’

### Gather Data to Avoid Folly and Shame

To answer that, let me clarify why we use the PDI. When a person comes for counseling, we have to evaluate a couple of things. First, we have to evaluate how well we know the person. I have counseled dozens of people from our church family or from the community whom I know really well and have not asked them fill out a PDI. A couple times I used the PDI with people that I knew fairly well, but it really wasn’t necessary.

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