

Seeing in Others What They Do Not See in Themselves

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Chattanooga, Tennessee

Those of you who have had me in class know that I'm not a speaker. I'm a writer. And those of you who have read my books know that I'm not a writer. [Pause] While you were studying for your final exams and working on writing your final papers, I was working on writing you a letter---a love letter: [Pause] You may not know me, or you may know me as an old ethics professor or a diagnostician who simply states the obvious. What you *don't know* is that I have seen in *you* what you do not see in yourselves.

I have seen your many talents, and special skills, and leadership abilities. I have seen your enthusiasm, endurance, your perseverance, your dedication to a purpose. I have seen the way you balance your commitments---to your studies and to your work, to your families and your churches, and to your clinical training. You are younger, much brighter, more creative, and much more talented than those of us who have been your partners in education. You also have much *more to give*, and when you give *completely*, you will discover that there is *more* of you to give. And when you have *nothing left* to give, you will discover that the only thing left to give is to give *yourself*.

As my final charge to you, let me leave you with a paraphrase of the Great Commission¹ of Matthew 28:19-20, with my apologies to King James and any scriptural literalists who may be present: Go ye into all the world---into the majestic mountains and tourist towns of Tennessee, and into the glass towers and sprawling suburbs surrounding Atlanta, [Pause] and, yes, even into Buckhead and the corners of the Earth. Go ye into all the world and be *disciples*---preaching, teaching, and *reaching* others, but more importantly, *listening* to others---listening to the stories of others. Let God use your words to speak to others, but *more importantly*, let God use your ears to *listen* to others, because it is in your listening that *healing* occurs.

You are not only counselors; you are *Christian* counselors. You are not only Christian counselors; you are the *standard of excellence* in Christian counseling. You have not only earned Master's degrees in counseling; you have earned degrees in *both* counseling psychology *and* Christian theology---integrating the sacred and the secular. In the words of the great psychoanalyst Carl Jung, you have learned your books and theories well, and now it is time to put them aside when you touch the miracle of living souls.²

Fifty years of psychotherapy research---including 30 years of my own---have taught us three things that the Master therapist taught us 2,000 years ago: empathy, authenticity, and unconditionality³---the three necessary and sufficient conditions for therapeutic change.⁴ "*Empathy*, the ability to form an emotional connection, and forging an alliance with the client will create a far stronger foundation for positive change than any therapeutic technique validated by a series of randomized clinical trials,"[Pause] which I quote from one of my Jewish brothers and fellow ethicist, Jerry Koocher (2006), who is current President of the American Psychological Association.⁵ Is it not part of the Christian story? Seeing in others what they do not see in themselves and, in doing so, bringing into expression what they are *meant* to be? In other words, by fully *accepting* the other as he or she *is*, rather than how we would *want* them to be, we allow the other to *become* what he or she was created to be. [or, become what the Divine Creator created them to be]

To me, a clinical psychologist and not a theologian, the image of Jesus as a counselor is instructive---not only in its emphasis on the words that he spoke but also in its emphasis on the *people* to whom he listened. As many of you also do, the Wonderful Counselor⁶ taught how to counsel others not only by talking---but also by *listening*. The itinerant sage of Nazareth⁷ listened

to the scholarly scribe who came in secret to talk late at night, and he *listened* to the prostitute when she came uninvited to a dinner. He *listened* to the cry of the blind man in the dark world of a crowded noisy street. As the original secular humanist, who *completely* integrated the sacred and the secular, he *listened* to the pleas of the lepers, and the outcasts, and the condemned---when no one else would go near them. Jesus the Christ listened to a nameless thief hanging next to him when he was dying on the cross.

Some of us are called to die for our faith, but many more of us are called to *live* our faith---each day, day by day, *agape epiousios*.^{8,9} As you leave this room this afternoon, I challenge you to be *living* witnesses to the faith that brought you here today, and to be living testaments to the faith that will take you beyond any horizon that you can see tomorrow. *You* have been given the gift of seeing in others what they do not see in themselves and, in doing so, helping them *become* what they were *created* to be. As an empirical scientist, I *know* this. [Pause] I know this about *you*---because you have seen in *me* what I have not seen in myself, and in doing so, you have helped me become who I was *meant* to be---your trusted servant---Bill D.

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Ethics Professor
May 13, 2006

Note to the Reader: The bolded text shows words or phrases that were spoken with more emphasis during the address.

Notes

1. Matthew 28:19-20. "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19-20).
2. "Learn your books and theories well, but put them put them aside when you touch the miracle of the living soul." This statement is a paraphrase of the original quote from Jung, Carl G. (1953). *Psychological Reflections*. New York: Pantheon Books. Page 4. "Learn your theories as well as you can, but put them aside when you touch the miracle of the living soul. Not theories but your own creative individuality alone must decide."
3. Rogers, C. R. (1951). *Client-centered therapy*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.
4. Rogers, C. R. (1957). The necessary and sufficient conditions of therapeutic personality change. *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, 21, 95–103. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0045357>
5. "Many studies have taught us that empathy, the ability to form an emotional connection, and forging an alliance with the client will create a far stronger foundation for change and quality of life than any treatment manual validated by a plethora of randomized clinical trials." Koocher, Gerald P. (2006, April). On being there. *APA Monitor*. Page 5.
6. Isaiah 9:6 (NIV): "For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders, And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."
7. Funk, Robert W. & the Jesus Seminar (1998). *The Acts of Jesus: The Search for the Authentic Deeds of Jesus*. San Francisco: Polebridge Press. ISBN 0060629789. Jesus is described as the "itinerant sage who shared meals with social outcasts" and "practiced healing without the use of ancient medicine or magic, relieving afflictions we now consider psychosomatic," though some claimed he did this in the name of Beelzebul.
8. Agape (Greek, ἀγάπη, "love"): The word *agape*, which probably first occurs in the Septuagint, is believed to have been coined by the sacred authors from the verb ἀγαπάω, to avoid the sensual associations of the ordinary Greek noun ἔρως. It is used only twice in the Synoptics (Matthew 24:12; Luke 11:42), but often in St. John and the Pauline (especially 1 Corinthians 13) and Johannine Epistles, and ways of the love of God or Christ, or of the love of Christians for one another. From the Scriptures it passed into the vocabulary of the Greek fathers; it is usually translated in Latin by "caritas," hence the original meaning of "charity" in English. Source: Cross, F. L. & Livingstone, Elizabeth A. (Eds.) (1990). *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. New York: Oxford University Press. Page 23.
9. Epiousios (Greek, ἐπίουσιος, "for today," "Day by day"). Both the Matthew and Luke texts of the Lord's Prayer contain the obscure Greek word epiousios, which is the only time this word occurs in the entire Bible. In the third century, the Alexandrian Biblical scholar Origen (c.185-c.254) suggested that the word was coined by Matthew and Luke. In thousands of secular Greek texts, the word has been found in only one other text of uncertain date. Because the word is so rare, there has always been disagreement regarding its exact meaning. From its derivation, some have said epiousios should mean "for today" or "for tomorrow." Others have said it may mean "for the morrow" or "of the coming day," whereas still others have hypothesized a more ambiguous meaning such as "necessary." Sources: Arndt, W. F. & Gingrich, F. W. (1979). *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. Second edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Page 297, as cited in Earle, Ralph (1986). *Word Meanings in the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House. Page 6.

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