

Course Leader Guide

CC201

***SoulCare Foundations I:
The Basic Model***

By: Dr. Larry Crabb

Updated 2015



**Our Daily Bread
Christian University**

Lesson 1 Study Guide

CC201

SoulCare Foundations I: The Basic Model

Introduction to SoulCare:
Getting Started on the Journey

Updated 2015



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Objectives

In this lesson, Dr. Crabb talks about our tendency to keep relationships shallow using the image of “not turning our chairs toward one another.”

When you complete this lesson, “Introduction to SoulCare: Getting Started on the Journey,” you should be able to:

- Describe and illustrate the importance of SoulCare to spiritual growth.
- Identify and explain the four longings of every human being to which SoulCare responds.
- Explain why this model is called a passion/wisdom model.

Transcript

Course Title: SoulCare Foundations I: The Basic Model

Lesson One: Introduction to SoulCare: Getting Started on the Journey

Your teacher for this course is noted psychologist, author, and speaker, Dr. Larry Crabb.

Let me read you an excerpt from a letter I recently received. “Dear Dr. Crabb, I have a friend in China who has a calling toward counseling, but doesn’t have a way to prepare herself to be a Christian counselor. Is there some type of training using your model that can be made available to her? She has the vision. We need help getting her there.”

Let me tell you the burden that drives me as I teach this course in SoulCare. I believe that most people fight their battles alone. They fight their worst battles alone. I believe that across the world there are millions of people, hundreds of millions, who struggle alone—people who fight personal battles of every description that no one else sees, and they themselves don’t understand. Many of these people are sitting in our churches every Sunday morning. Many are involved in small groups, and no one knows what is happening beneath the surface of their lives. Their interior worlds are a private matter in the middle of Christian fellowship. I believe that in every country on this planet there are thousands of good folks, like the lady in China, who would love to know how to enter people’s lives at a meaningful level, who would love to know how to move into the interior world of someone’s life, who would know how to move into their soul and do some real good and make a difference.

Some people call this kind of help “counseling.” Others call this help “pastoring.” And perhaps others think of this kind of involvement as what a friend provides for another friend. What I want to suggest is what people across the world desperately need, maybe more than anything else, is SoulCare—whether provided by pastors, counselors, or friends. That is why I have entitled this whole course “SoulCare: A Model for Pastors, Counselors, and Friends.”

SoulCare focuses on the inner life. It focuses on the interior world of where true spiritual formation takes place, where we become who we are intended to be, where we become who we long to be, who we want to be. SoulCare resists the distractions of making life work on the surface, and it resists the temptations to keep relationships shallow—and folks, that’s a huge temptation. You feel it; I feel it in my small group, over lunch with friends. I feel such a temptation to not get involved in somebody else’s soul, but to keep things pleasant, to keep things shallow. SoulCare resists that temptation. SoulCare believes that there’s no more vital work than deep personal renewal. It believes that churches, even successful churches—churches that are full of people every Sunday and the programs are good and everything seems to be going well, the churches where there is no deep personal renewal going on, where people are not meaningfully involved in deep, spiritual work in each other’s lives—that those churches are really houses built on sand and not on rock.

If you and I are going to do the work of SoulCare, if we are going to become effective at moving into each other's lives, then we are going to have to take a really hard look at how we talk to each other. Take a hard, and sometimes difficult, look at how we relate to one another, what our conversations are like. Most of our conversations are far short of what SoulCare could mean. Let me illustrate.

A long time ago, my wife and I were only married, I suppose five or six years at the time, and we moved to south Florida, to a little city north of Miami Beach by about an hour. We were all excited—a young married couple, living in Florida now, about to have a chance to go see Miami Beach, and finally we had a chance to get a sitter for two young kids, and get in the car and drive the hour, hour and a half, south to the beach—I'll never forget how excited we were. I'll also never forget the sight that greeted us and made the most impact when we actually got there. My wife and I were walking down a sidewalk that was in from the ocean by a little bit, and the sidewalk was in the middle of a city that seemed like it was a million miles from the sandy beaches and the blue skies and all the happiness of a resort town. We were in the middle of a noisy, dirty, busy street. And I recall, as Rachel and I walked down the street, we had walked by an apartment house—a big old apartment house that had a deck, a porch, on the front of it that was maybe ten feet deep and perhaps sixty feet long. On this deck, there were maybe one hundred chairs—wicker rocking chairs—as I recall. They were all lined up in perfect rows and perfect columns, nicely, rigidly placed. On these hundred chairs, maybe about sixty of them, were occupied with an older person. The apartment, we later found out, was a retirement center, and about sixty people were sitting in these rocking chairs. What became immediately apparent as Rachel and I walked past was that nobody was talking, nobody was even rocking in their rocking chair, nobody was drinking iced tea or sipping a cup of coffee, nobody was reading a magazine. Everybody was sitting very rigidly facing forward, not looking to their side, having no conversations of any sort. My wife couldn't take it. She turned to me and whispered. (I am really not sure why she whispered because nobody was listening.) She said, "I feel like breaking into a song and a dance just to wake these people up."

The thought occurred to me, "I wonder what the Spirit of God feels as He walks past our churches. I wonder what He feels as He observes the small groups that we convene in our living rooms. I wonder if He sees us the way my wife and I saw those retired folks in Miami Beach." Certainly there are differences. We talk to each other. Certainly we move a lot, but I wonder if we are a lot more like those folks than we think. Do we really talk in ways that cause a meeting of souls to take place? Is there an intersection of who I am with who somebody else is? Is there a soul-to-soul contact? Or do we really keep our inner worlds to ourselves? Do most of us, in fact, live alone? Do most of us come into our small groups with our interior worlds private and leave with our interior worlds just as private, and nothing has taken place at a deep, meaningful level at all? Maybe the Spirit feels like breaking into a song and a dance to wake us up so that we turn our chairs toward each other and learn to connect at the level of our souls. That is what this course is all about.

This course is all about, what does it mean to turn our chairs toward each other, and we are going to think in this course about why it is difficult to do that. Why is it that when something occurs to me in a small group that I am a part of, I censor it? I am very careful with what I share. What is the fear that keeps us from turning our chairs toward each other? And when you share something in the group that I'm a part of, why do I immediately, internally kind of clench up and feel inadequate and awkward and wish you wouldn't have said that? What does it mean to turn our chairs to each

other in a way that our souls really connect? Let me tell you the vision that I have. I want you to imagine for a moment, what would happen, what actually could happen if thousands of people across the world—maybe you who are taking this course—if thousands of people across the world became so safe (I wonder what that means. What does it mean to be a safe person?), if thousands of people across the world become so safe that others would be willing to risk sharing their secret struggles and willing to say things that they might not say to anybody else. What would happen if some of these safe people also became wise enough so that when somebody shared something that was tough that they actually had the wisdom to move into another person’s life and to say words that were inspired by the Spirit of God? What would it mean to be able to move into somebody’s life with a wisdom that knows how the soul works, how it gets in trouble, why anorexics do not eat, what the effects of sexual abuse are, what does it mean to move into each other’s lives in meaningful, deep, soul-connecting, chair-turning kinds of ways?

That is what the course is all about. I want you to know that I offer this training in SoulCare, with a prayer that it might spark a revolution, a revolution based on an understanding that there really is a new way to live. There is a new way to think, and there is a new way to relate that the word “SoulCare” captures.

There is a basic assumption that I make as I begin this course on SoulCare, and let me offer this assumption to you and have you think about it for a bit. The assumption is this: there is a certain kind of relating that can deeply touch another person with life-giving power. There is a certain way to relate, a certain way to connect, a certain way to listen, and to hear and to think and to speak, that if we move in these ways incredibly important and powerful things can happen.

Let me put it a little bit differently. I believe that every human being was intended by God to live in relationships where four things happen: 1) where they are known, deeply known; 2) where they are explored; 3) where they are discovered; and 4) where they are touched. Now, let me tell you what I mean by that. I want to unpack those words for just a moment. You and I were meant to be known. It is frightening, I know, I’m scared of being known, just like you are. But I was intended to be known. I was intended to be a man, just like you were intended to be a man or a woman, to go to our graves with no secrets. We were intended to be known to be fully transparent, not with everybody—that is asking a little bit too much—but to be transparent with at least one other person, maybe a couple, to live our lives with no deep secrets based on shame. You see, when you keep secrets, you keep deep parts of your soul away from the touch of grace. What is the first thing Adam and Eve did when they sinned? They were covered with a sense of shame and they felt like, “If anybody sees me, they are going to reject me. I need to hide, I need to back away, and I need to cover up.” Is it not true that most of us in most of our relationships make it our central agenda to find some way to cover up, to find some way to not be known? And yet, we long to be known.

We also were designed in such a way by our Creator that we long to be explored, to have at least a few people warmly and thoughtfully curious about who we are. Think back to the number of times in your conversations over lunch or in your small group where you made something known that was a bit of a door opener; it was a bit of a tease, if you will. “Here is something that I think somebody might be interested in,” and nobody asked a question. Nobody moved toward you. How did you feel? See, you and I were meant, not only to be known but to be explored, which is the further step in being known. When I say something, I would love to have somebody ask questions

and say, “Larry, you are a person of value, what’s happening in you matters to me. Can I explore, can I probe?” I am not looking for somebody to be intrusive and to rip away all of my secrets in one fell swoop, but I am looking for someone to be intrigued and curious about whom I am. So few people follow up what we say with a genuinely interested question. Share something personal and most people stiffen or get away from it quickly by saying, “Well, I’ll offer a word of prayer about that,” or “here’s a piece of advice, here is a Bible verse,” as opposed to, “I’m not sure what you meant by that. I would really love to know.” We are meant to be known. We are meant to be explored.

Thirdly, each one of us longs to be discovered. And this is important. I’ve shared with some people in the past, and I will share it with you now, that there are times that I think of myself, that I have an image of myself, as a bright shiny red apple in the middle of a fruit bowl in the center of a table. And when people look at me they sometimes see the shiny red apple and say, “That looks pretty good.” From a distance, I might not look too bad. I might look like a shiny red apple, and then maybe somebody takes a bite. And the first bite might be sweet. Get to know me a little bit, and I might be a pleasant guy and friendly and interested and involved and might even be helpful. But there is something inside of me that says if you take a second bite or a third bite or maybe a fourth bite, eventually, you are going to bite into the worm that is at the center of my being. Because of the Gospel, I believe theologically the center of my being is not a worm. The center of my being is a magnificent recreation by Christ. And I would love for somebody to believe it is there and to know me and to explore me and discover that core center that is in the absolute middle of every person who is a redeemed Christian. Known, explored, discovered, and then touched.

What is best within us comes alive only when somebody touches us, only when somebody moves toward us with the life that is within them and speaks to us in a way that something springs up within us. You know, you’ve had so many conversations where people have said things to you and had attempted to be nice to you and kind and give advice or give perspective and you have walked away from the conversation and nothing was different. But you had a couple of conversations where after some words that were very simple, perhaps, that were said to you that something was invigorated. Something came alive. What does it mean to be touched? You and I were made to be known, no secrets, explored with profound curiosity, discovered what God has put in the center somebody actually sees, and touched with a part of me that is most deeply alive actually becomes more alive. I think we can now state a very basic definition, a very beginning definition of SoulCare.

SoulCare is what happens when one person knows, explores, discovers, and touches another person. It does not happen often. It does not happen in every conversation. But when it does happen, life erupts. Or to put it in Jesus’ terms, the springs of living water begin to bubble up, they gush up.

And something inside of me knows I am more alive, because somebody has cared for my soul. Somebody has known me; somebody has been safe enough for me to want to be known. Somebody has explored me; somebody has been curious, and I have shared even more. Somebody has discovered the deep work that the Spirit of God has done in my life, and somebody has touched me with their life.

Now I want you to think about what I believe are the two basic requirements of SoulCare. If SoulCare is a certain kind of relationship where people are known, explored, discovered, and touched and if you are taking this course saying to yourself, “I really want to provide that kind of relationship; I want to be someone who cares for other people’s souls; I want to know what to do,” then I want you to think about what perhaps could be conceptualized as the two basic requirements of SoulCare. Think of it this way. Let us be very, very simple. Let us start with a picture of you talking to another individual. This other individual shares a burden, and says to you in some way about some particular detail, “I’m struggling.” Think back to the last time that that happened. Think back to the last time that you were having lunch with a friend or perhaps you are a pastor and somebody came into your pastor’s office and made known a struggle. I want you to ask yourself two key questions. When that person shared a struggle with you, what was happening inside of you? Do not start by asking, “Well, what do I say? What do I do? Give me techniques of SoulCare.” Do not start there. Start rather with the question, “What stirred within me? What was I feeling about myself? What was I feeling about myself as somebody who was talking to me about their problems?”

I recall when I first began private practice, a long time ago, when my very first client that came in professionally to see me as their therapist. I remember the whole time feeling so apologetic. I wished he had gotten somebody experienced. How did you get stuck with me? That was happening inside of me. What is happening inside of you when somebody shares with you their struggles? What do you feel about yourself? What are you hoping to accomplish? How do you feel toward your friend? This first question highlights the issue of the passions that stir within the one providing SoulCare. That is Question One.

Question Two: What did you think was going on inside of your friend? As your friend was sharing the struggle, “You know I am really burdened, my wife and I aren’t getting along and I am just kind of mad at her, and things aren’t going well in our marriage and whether its heading toward a divorce I can’t really tell, but things are not really good,” you are thinking first about the passion stirring within you, but then you are asking the second question: What is happening inside of your friend? Now break that down into two categories. The second question of what is happening inside of your friend, break it down into two categories. Category one: What is happening between you and your friend at that moment? Is there something your friend is wanting from you? Is there something your friend is scared of, as he is sharing this with you? Is there something happening in the interpersonal moment between the one who is sharing the struggle and the one who is longing to provide SoulCare in response to the struggle. What are you being pulled, by your friend, to say or do?

We have all been in situations where a friend will share with you something like, “You know things are tough at home with my wife.” And you’re a fellow guy talking to this guy. You know that what your friend is wanting you to do is provide support for him. Your friend wants you to take his side. That is the pull your friend is having on you. Are you aware of what is happening in the moment between you and your friend? Call that the first part of wisdom, the wisdom to see what is happening in your friend as he is interacting with you.

But the second part of wisdom is: ask the question, what is happening beneath your friend’s struggle. Why is he so angry? Why is this young woman so depressed? Why is the woman that I

have worked with recently, wanting to take her life? What is going on inside of a human being that would make them say, “I really don’t want to live anymore?” Do you know how to think about that sort of thing? You see, that is the second category. The second category is wisdom. First we talk about the passions that exist inside of the person who provides SoulCare, the passions of the one who provides SoulCare. Then we start thinking about the wisdom to know how to move into the other person’s life, the wisdom to understand what is happening inside of another individual.

Let me say all that very, very simply. Passion can be put as simply as this: What is happening in you as you listen to a friend share his struggle—the passions within the one providing SoulCare? And again, understand something very important here that your temptation, just like mine, is going to be to ask the question, “What do I do? How do I help? What do I say? Teach me the techniques of SoulCare. Teach me the techniques of counseling. Teach me how to move into somebody else’s life.” And what I am going to insist on really strongly is that you are not going to become effective at providing SoulCare until you start by asking what is happening inside of you. Do you feel inadequate? Do you feel angry?

There were times in my counseling practice, when I was in professional counseling ministry, where a client would come in and, let me put it bluntly, I didn’t like them. I felt angry; I wish they wouldn’t have come. What do you do with that? I mean it’s a reality; you’ve got to take it into account. I recall the first time, let me say this to my shame, a rather well known Christian called me and said, “Would you see my son? He’s struggling.” Why did I want to help that person more than I wanted to help my previous clients? What is happening inside of me? You have got to start with that. Are we trying to impress, are we trying to, what a lot of people who provide SoulCare do, is try to get through an hour without looking too stupid? You just want to think about what is happening inside of you, Topic #1. Topic #2, wisdom: What is happening inside of your friend? What is happening inside of the person that is sharing the struggle with you?

If you and I are going to provide effective SoulCare, if we are going to be part of a revolution in the way Christians relate in the body of Christ, if we are going to become part of a revolution where we meaningfully turn our chairs towards one another and actually connect—as opposed to keep our distance and keep things pleasant and keep things shallow and turn our churches into country clubs, where we just have a pleasant time and everything is fine—if we are going to do more than that, then we are going to have to think about what is happening inside of this person’s soul. Do you know how to think about that? Do you know how to enter a soul? That is the topic of wisdom.

We are going to have to be filled with the passion that other people will discern in a way that will make them feel safe. Did you catch that? What are the passions happening inside of me that if they are really driving me as I talk with you, something in you says, “You know, I would like to share who I am with this person. I think I am willing to share my secrets. I would like to be known.”? Nobody ever becomes known without inviting another person to know them. What are the passions inside of me that caused you to invite me to know you, to discover you, to explore you, to touch you? What are the passions?

We will have to be guided by a passion-understanding. And secondly, we will have to talk about what it means, as providers of SoulCare, to have a wisdom that allows us to meaningfully enter souls. You know how you feel—I feel the same way so much of the time—when people share

things, I do not know what to say. I say things that come off simplistic and somewhat pat on occasion. What does it mean to have the wisdom that allows one to meaningfully explore the interior world of another? Remember my initial thought. I was very, very burdened by the fact that most people, most people live their entire lives with interior worlds that remain unknown. That is a tragedy.

What I am hoping to do in this course is to invite you into the messy, exciting, adventurous, meaningful, difficult, sometimes confusing world of SoulCare. I want you to study with me a passion/wisdom model of SoulCare that I believe can prove useful to you, whether you are a professional therapist, psychologist, psychiatrist, social worker, marriage counselor, whether you're a pastor, somebody who is involved in people's lives, hopefully more than just behind the pulpit. (And by the way, I know a fair number of pastors who are scared to come out from behind their pulpit, because that is where they are in control.) What does it mean to come out from behind your pulpit and talk to people meaningfully? Do we have the wisdom and the passion to be effective in our role as pastors, as counselors, or maybe just as friends, people who deeply desire to enter other people's lives with a power to do real good?

In our next class, we are going to start looking beneath the surface at the passions that stir within us as we seek to do the effective work of SoulCare. We are going to consider what it means to turn our chairs toward one another.

Discussion Questions

Dr. Crabb talks about our tendency to keep relationships shallow using the image of “not turning our chairs toward one another.” Why do you believe it is so difficult for us to “turn our chairs”? Why are we so scared to let anyone really know us? Discuss several possible reasons and then give examples from your own life that demonstrate which reason most keeps you from turning your chair towards others.

Dr. Crabb believes that most people fight their personal battles alone. Do you agree? Why or why not? If you agree, explain why you think people struggle alone.

How does Dr. Crabb describe wisdom as it relates to SoulCare?

Lesson 2 Study Guide

CC201

SoulCare Foundations I: The Basic Model

The First Task in Learning
to Provide SoulCare:
Knowing What You're After and
What It Takes to Get There

Updated 2015



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Objectives

In this lesson, Dr. Crabb discusses the radical nature of the proposed goal for SoulCare—to arouse an appetite for God that is stronger than all other appetites.

When you complete this lesson, “The First Task in Learning to Provide SoulCare: Knowing What You’re After and What It Takes to Get There,” you should be able to:

- Describe the fundamental goal of SoulCare and its importance.
- Explain how “helping people do what’s right” or “fixing what’s wrong” prevents the goal of SoulCare from being reached.
- State the compelling vision of SoulCare and explain why it is vitally important to effective counseling.

Transcript

Course Title: SoulCare Foundations I: The Basic Model

Lesson Two: The First Task in Learning to Provide SoulCare: Knowing What You're After and What It Takes to Get There

Your teacher for this course is noted psychologist, author, and speaker, Dr. Larry Crabb.

Let me ask you to write down three names, three names of people who have perhaps recently let you know that something was wrong. They were struggling with something in their lives. As you ponder those three names and as you are writing them down, even right now as I speak, I would like you to right next to each name, just in a word or phrase or short sentence, summarize the concern that they shared with you. Now we have an opportunity for SoulCare. We have a person, a friend perhaps, who has shared a struggle with you and you are thinking about that person now—you have three names. What I would like you to do as you are jotting down those three names—summarizing quickly the nature of the concern that they shared with you—I would like you to look at those three names and circle the one who shared, in your mind, the most difficult concern.

I can recall years ago when I was in private practice, I had my very first case of a young lady struggling with anorexia. She was referred to me by a friend of mine who was a physician. She came in to see me and sat down across from me, and she was obviously very, very thin. Her anorexia was fairly progressed actually. And as we sat to chat, I said to her, “I know that Dr. so-and-so has referred you and that you’re not eating all that you should.” She said, “I’m not hungry.” And she said, “The reason I don’t eat is not only that I am not hungry, but I am also fat.” I remember looking at this girl who weighed, as I recall, about eighty pounds, and saying to myself, “She is not fat.”

How can somebody perceive that they are fat when they are as thin as she is? I did not know what to do. I remember thinking my whole purpose here, the only purpose that I am chatting with this young woman in a professional capacity, was to get her to eat more. I began talking with her about her diet and asked her what she was eating, and it turned out she was eating maybe a half of a sandwich every second day. If I skip my morning snack, I am starved. I could not relate to her, I could not understand her. I could not resonate with what was happening in her soul. What does it mean to provide SoulCare for this young woman? What does it mean for me to enter her life meaningfully and to know her and to explore her and discover and touch. All I could think of was, I gotta get this girl to eat more. After listening to how much she was eating, or how little she was eating, I said to her about after a half an hour of conversation (and you need to understand that this was done very early in my career—I think I might do a little bit better now—but after maybe a half an hour or longer of conversation), I said to her, “You know, I think I know what you need to do.” And I said it with no power—there was no passion inside of me that excited her to curiosity. Her eyes stayed pretty well fixed on the floor, but she said meaninglessly, “Well what?” My response was to say, “I really think you ought to eat more.” There was no power to that at all. There was no change. All I could think about was here is the goal: she ought to eat more and did not know how to get there.

When you are sitting down with somebody and they make something known to you, perhaps the first thing that you need to think about, and this is what I want to talk about in this lesson, is, what are you after? All I could think of was getting this girl to eat more. And because I had what in my mind— and this will sound strange to some of you—was a superficial goal, trying to change her on the outside without ever dealing with her soul, I was lost; I had no idea what to do. What does it mean to go beneath the surface of an anorexic’s life and get into her soul and understand the processes that are going on?

What do you do when a friend comes to you, as one did to me some time ago, and says, “I’m really, really struggling and I would like you to guide me in my spiritual journey”? I said, “What’s happening?” And he said, “My wife just left me . . . after a number of years of marriage . . . and we have a number of children. My wife has left me, and I don’t know what to do. I just feel lost.” What is your goal, what are you trying to accomplish?

Well, you have written down three names, names of people that perhaps recently have made known a concern. Maybe if you are a professional counselor or a very concerned friend that has something as serious as anorexia, or as serious as a divorce, or might have been something much less than that, but somebody has made known to you a concern, and you have circled the name of the person that has made known the concern which strikes you as the most difficult. Now again, just keep in mind a very simple sketch, and we will keep this sketch in our mind in a very obvious kind of a way. Here you are, and you are the one who has longed to provide SoulCare. You have an opportunity now to move toward somebody else in the provision of SoulCare. Why? Because this individual has said to you, “I’m struggling.” They have made known some sort of a concern, and as they have made known that concern you have a chance to provide SoulCare. The simplest, most classic opportunity for SoulCare is one person talking to another who shares a burden. And you would like to do something that meaningfully moves into their life.

Think about this. As you sat with that person whose name you have circled, what was on your mind? What were you wanting to do? Something I have observed a thousand times—and I really hope you get the point of what I am about to say—I have observed a thousand times that when people tell me that they feel reluctant to make known a concern to somebody, I have had so many times people have said a burden to me in my professional setting as a therapist and I have said, “Well, who else have they shared this with?” and they said, “Well, nobody.” And when I ask, “Well, why not? You have friends. You are in a small group. You have a pastor. You have a spouse. You have other people that are close to you. You’ve not made known this difficulty to anybody? Tell me, why not?” And the answer I so often get is, “When I share my burden with somebody, all they want to do is fix me. They want to change me.” I wonder if my anorexic client years ago knew that I had nothing in my mind, but finding some way to get her to eat more. I am going to change that girl; I am going to see to it she is different. What happens in you when you know that my central agenda is seeing to it that you are different? What people have said to me many, many times is, “I don’t feel safe, because the people that I envision myself sharing with don’t want to join me on the journey. They want to fix me so they can become more comfortable.”

It was not too long ago that a good friend, over coffee, told me that he had been struggling with some pretty significant discouragement that had reached serious levels of depression and despair. And he said that it was just a few weeks ago—he told me over coffee—that he had come to a point where he was not sure whether he wanted to live. He found a day, when he was able to do so, and

went off to a secluded area near his home, and he told me he sat for maybe five or six hours just pondering his own life and pondering what was happening in his own soul and pondering whether or not he wanted to keep on living and whether he could think of a reason to keep on living. Over coffee when he shared this with me, I said to him, “Well, who did you take with you when you went to the mountain top to sit by yourself for a couple of hours?” I knew he had taken nobody, and he said that. He said, “Well, I took no one; I went by myself.” And I asked, “Did you ever think of taking somebody?” And he said, “I would have loved to have had somebody there with me to share the burden and to walk with me on the journey.” And I said, “Tell me why you asked no one to go with you.” And these were his words, “I couldn’t think of anybody who would simply join me. Everybody I could think of would be so unnerved by my problem that they would try to help me. I didn’t want to be helped. I didn’t want to be fixed. I didn’t want to be repaired. I didn’t want to be pressured. I wanted somebody to be with me, as opposed to somebody imposing a solution on my life.”

In this lesson, what I would like us to focus on is what I call the first task in becoming an effective provider of SoulCare, the very first task. As you are sitting with this friend whose name you have listed, whose name you have circled, the first task that I want to suggest that you ponder in providing SoulCare for this individual is to ask, “Do you have a compelling vision for what could happen in their lives that goes way beneath the obvious?” Do you have a compelling vision for what could happen in the woman’s life who is anorexic that goes beyond eating more? Not that that is not important; of course, that matters. Do you have a compelling vision for your friend who is getting divorced? Do you understand what it means to move into that person’s life? This gentleman who has gone through this very difficult divorce said to me recently, “You know, most of my friends have said to me now that I have been divorced for several months, I need to get on with my life and get back to dating. Their vision for me is that I recover from the divorce as evidenced by the fact that I date or maybe get remarried, and that frustrates me. Nobody’s with me, nobody explores me.” What is your compelling vision for people who are going through struggles? What is your vision for the person whose name you have circled?

What were you thinking could happen in your friend’s life who made known his or her burden? Perhaps your friend, a woman perhaps, shared how distant she feels from her husband. Maybe you are a woman who is having lunch with a good friend and she simply said to you, “You know, my husband is so obsessed with his work. He is forgetting my birthday. We are not involved with each other’s lives. He comes home late. We barely talk. We deal with the kids. We do what has to be done household wise, but we are just so far apart.” What is the first thing that occurred to you? What was your compelling vision? That this woman would learn to feel somehow intimate with her husband? Is that as high as your vision goes?

Maybe there was a teenager that you were chatting with, a teenage boy who was mad at his dad. And he shared with you, the youth pastor, he shared with you how angry he was. Did you find yourself thinking, “The vision I have for this kid is that he learns how to forgive his father. That’s the key. I want him to forgive his father and be kinder toward his dad and to have a better relationship with his dad”? Is that the way you wanted to fix things? It is the way I think a lot. Maybe it is the way you think.

Maybe you have talked with a friend who, in a very vulnerable moment, shared with you—a couple of guys, maybe after eighteen holes of golf, you are having your lunch afterward—and your friend

says, “Can I let you know something?” You are good buddies. “I travel a lot, and when I am in hotel rooms I can’t resist putting on the pornography. And I know how awful it is, and I know how wrong it is, but I am doing it regularly.” What is your vision for this guy? What are you thinking? Are you thinking, I’ve got to find some way to get this guy off pornography? Is that as high as your vision goes?

Maybe you are talking with somebody whose life has fallen apart. And they feel angry toward God. Are you looking to encourage this person to trust God in the middle of suffering, and are you trying to find some way to make that happen?

In my judgment, perhaps, the greatest obstacle in good conversations—the greatest obstacle to providing effective SoulCare—is limited vision, a vision that is too low. We aim too low when we want to get involved in people’s lives as counselors—I have been trained as a professional counselor. As counselors, our job is to get people changed in their symptoms so that they do not have any more panic attacks, so their obsessive-compulsive disorder is relieved, so that their depression is gone and they feel better. We work very hard at making things different. We have a vision for what should be, and I am afraid that so often in our attempts at SoulCare we go after an objective to which God is not committed. We go after something that we cannot depend on God to use His resources to make happen. We decide that this is what ought to be, and so as Christian carers of the soul we move into people’s lives with a vision of what should be, and we expect God to cooperate with our expectation of how this person ought to change.

I want you to think out of the box for a moment. Here is the anorexic girl, here is your friend with the divorce, here is the person that you have circled. Suppose that as you are sitting with that individual, you were saying to yourself, “These problems could be used—maybe not solved—these problems could be used to change this person’s interior world to become more like the interior world of Jesus.”

Take that apart for just a moment. You are talking to an individual who is struggling with “whatever” and you are saying to yourself, “Maybe I don’t know how to get her to eat more . . . maybe I don’t know how to comfort this man in his divorce and get him over his hurts so he is willing to take a risk to date again and perhaps to remarry . . . maybe I don’t know how to counsel this woman to respond to her husband in ways that draw him into a more intimate relationship . . . maybe I don’t know how to solve the person’s problems.” But maybe the problems that have come into this individual’s life can be used, maybe not solved (if they can be solved, praise the Lord, that’s wonderful); but maybe, more basically, they can be used so that this person’s interior world actually begins to resemble the soul of Jesus.

What does it mean to care for a soul? What does it mean to cure a soul, to relate in such a way that the soul of the individual with all of these problems actually becomes more like the soul of Jesus? What does that mean? Well, I suggest two things that it means. I would call these the two basic goals of SoulCare. I would call the next two things that I want to talk about, the compelling vision of SoulCare—what needs to be inside of me, what needs to be inside of you as we are sitting, talking to people who are struggling.

The two goals of SoulCare, the compelling vision of SoulCare are these: Effective SoulCare arouses an appetite for God that because of the Gospel is already there in a Christian. Meaningful, effective

SoulCare arouses an appetite for God. I use the word “appetite” very intentionally. If you are hungry, you have an appetite for food. If you like Italian food, you have an appetite for lasagna. There is an appetite within you that just longs for something that you know will taste good and bring satisfaction. Effective SoulCare arouses an appetite for God, such that in the middle of life’s struggles the person actually is aware of their longing to know God, to glorify God, to please God, to enjoy God—an appetite that is already there because of the Gospel. And an appetite that, at least potentially, is stronger than all other appetites. That is the first goal of SoulCare—to arouse an appetite for God—one that is already there because of the Gospel in a Christian, an appetite that literally is stronger than all other appetites.

Imagine that woman who is not enjoying her relationship with her husband, having an appetite to know God that is stronger than having her husband come home and be romantic. That would change her soul to resemble the soul of Jesus—because what was His appetite? Certainly He wanted many things, but His deepest appetite was to please the Father, to reveal the Father, to be in communion with the Father. The first goal of SoulCare: to arouse the appetite.

The second goal of effective SoulCare I would put like this: to provoke a consuming experience of God—not just to arouse an appetite (that’s goal one), but now to provoke a consuming experience of God that reduces all other appetites from demands to desires—to second things, not first things. Can you imagine what it would be like to have an appetite for God that just drives you? My heart pants after God as the deer pants after the water brooks. And then to actually have an experience of God where you taste God, where the reality of who God is enters your soul, and you have a consuming experience of the reality of the person of Christ that is so fulfilling, that is so alive, that is so real, that every other desire—may be legitimate and strong—become no longer demands but desires.

Several years ago, I was diagnosed with cancer. And I am grateful to God that one of my desires was realized—I had a good surgeon who was able to cut all the cancerous material out of my body, and I have been declared healthy. But I also am very aware that the cancer could come back. Is that a demand or a desire? Do I have an experience of God that says, “I know Him well enough that I would rather know Him than remain healthy”? I would like to remain healthy too, do not misunderstand me.

I have a very good friend, who after spending some time with me (he was dying of cancer), and he laughed and he said, “Lord, I feel like I know Larry better than I know You. That is a tragedy. God, if it takes the cancer’s progression to deepen my consuming experience of you, so that my enjoyment of you and my knowledge of you means far more to my soul (I know you better than I know a good friend), if it takes that, then that is what I want.” He had an appetite for God, and God, I believe, met him in a very profound way.

Keep in mind then the two basic goals of SoulCare. And folks, I understand this is out of the box. This is not how we think about talking with people who are anorexic or who are divorced or who are having difficult marriages or whose kids are breaking their hearts. We think about how to solve all these problems and how to use biblical principles and, forgive the phrase but, use God to make all of life more comfortable. Most of us have a compelling vision of making our lives better. The Spirit of Christ comes along and says, “My compelling vision for people is that they have an appetite for God, to know Him as the source of the deepest pleasure and that they have a taste of

God (not the full meal, that's not until heaven), a consuming experience of God, which makes their other desires become less."

Understand that if you are dealing, for example, with a gentleman struggling with pornography—and perhaps to the point where the label “sexual addiction” is not unreasonable—if you are dealing with that, that if you were to provide effective SoulCare and you were to reach this compelling vision where this pornographer, this man with sexual addiction, actually began to become aware of a thirst for God that was stronger than his appetite for sexual pleasure, and if he began to experience God in a way that said, “that’s more important to me, that’s more alive to me, that stirs something deeper in me than the pornography stirs,” then you would find that the sexual addiction problem is resolved. Do not go after solving the sexual addiction; go after the two primary goals of SoulCare, and you will see good things happen in people’s lives.

Let me describe it this way for you: a friend lets you know the true interior world that he occupies, the true condition of his interior world, he lets you know he is worried. He does not look like it on Sunday morning—he is happy and cheerful. He has let you know he is discouraged—maybe he is complacent, he is superficially happy, whatever. What I want to suggest to you is that the work of SoulCare begins with a longing that springs up within you. Think about what Paul said in Galatians 4:19: “I am in the pains of childbirth until Jesus, until Christ is formed within you, until your soul resembles the soul of Jesus, until your interior world becomes like the interior world of Jesus.” Imagine you providing SoulCare, listening to your friends share the struggle and becoming aware of the passion within you like the apostle Paul’s and saying how wonderful it would be. Yes, it would be wonderful if the marriage improved, if the anorexic began to eat—that would be so important— but even better, how wonderful it would be if beneath the surface of all these struggles, the soul of this individual developed an appetite for God stronger than all others. How wonderful it would be if they had a consuming experience of God that reduced all other desires, not to demands that seem necessary to happiness and health, but only to desires. In a word, vision that SoulCarers have for the folks for whom they are providing SoulCare is maturity—an appetite for Christ, stronger than all other appetites, and an experience of Christ that reduces all other appetites to second-thing desires, not first-thing demands.

As I read the testimonies of some of the great saints (and I love doing that—I love reading the records and the writings of some of the great saints in the church), I discover that many—I wish more, I wish more in our generation, I wish me, but many—in the history of the church have proved that this is possible—have proved it is possible to actually want Christ more than anything else, and it is possible to experience Christ as a greater pleasure than all other experiences. I long for that to be the case.

Some of you know the story of Augustine whose sexual addiction—and I think that is a fair phrase to use for the struggle that he made known in his book on “Confessions,”—was actually cured, if you will, when he had an experience of what he called “sovereign joy,” that in his words pushed aside his desire for sexual pleasure to a second thing and made it resistible because his appetite for Christ, and his experience of Christ became stronger than anything else. That man was the recipient of SoulCare.

Think for a minute about what that means. Suppose that your vision for people for whom you are providing SoulCare really were as lofty, as high, as seemingly unattainable as the one I am

describing. If your vision for people for whom you are providing SoulCare is an appetite for God, an experience of God that is stronger than all other experiences, let me tell you what will happen within you. You will give up. You will give up depending on your own competence. You will give up the pressure of having to make it happen, because you will know that you are out of your league. SoulCarers are out of their league when they are moving toward the compelling vision to which the Spirit is aiming.

Think of yourself caring for the father of a teenage son who is rebellious. And this man is sharing with you in a SoulCare appointment or over lunch, whatever the setting, and he says to you, “My son came home last night at 4:00 in the morning, and he stumbled in the front door and he was drunk.” How do you feel? What do you want to see happen? The father is full of guilt, “What have I done wrong? Where have I failed my boy that he would at age 18 be an alcoholic, be a drug abuser? Where have I failed?” He is full of guilt and you are saying, “I want this man to be relieved of his guilt. Or, maybe he has been a failure as a father. I want to teach him how to be a better father, but I don’t know how to do that. What do I do? I’m providing SoulCare, but I don’t know what to do, I’m lost.” Maybe the father is mad; maybe he is full of anger, not guilt. “How come a kid like mine would turn out like this? I’ve read him the Bible, taken him to church. I’ve been a good dad. And look what he is doing to me? This drives me nuts!” What is your goal as a man providing SoulCare? Suppose the man is spiritually confused, “I have been living for God, but where are the answers? I don’t get the answers to prayer. What does all that mean?” Can you see that your attitude, as you seek to engage with this man at the level of his soul, would be very different if you thought like this?

Suppose you were saying to yourself, “Could this man’s desire to honor God at 4:00 in the morning, when his son stumbles in the door, could this man’s appetite for honoring God, enjoying God, glorifying God, revealing God, being intimate with God, actually be stronger than his desire to see his son straighten out?” Not that the desire would be weak—it would be very strong. But could there be something stronger? Think of the difference it would make if, because of your SoulCare relationship, that compelling vision were reached to this man’s life.

Maybe you are getting the point that SoulCare is not a technique to master. It is not a list of how tos—i.e., here is the ten steps to effective SoulCare, here is the right sentences to say. SoulCare is something that grows out of a vision for a reality that requires spiritual power to come out of you. What is it going to take for you and me to develop and release that spiritual power as we engage with others in SoulCare so that the compelling vision of becoming more like Jesus actually happens?

In our next lesson, we will begin taking a look at what happens inside of me, inside of you, as the one who wants to provide SoulCare, so we can actually be used of God to reach that compelling vision.

Discussion Questions

Consider the radical nature of the proposed goal for SoulCare (“To arouse an appetite for God that is stronger than all other appetites”). Discuss whether you think this is a reasonable goal.

When we talk about “an appetite for God that is stronger than all other appetites,” that means you can actually long to know God more than you long for anything else (i.e. good health, a good marriage, godly kids, good feelings about yourself, etc.). To what degree do you believe you *want* this in your life?

Reflect on and discuss the following sentence. A compelling vision for SoulCare (as discussed in the lecture) will decrease your passion to help and increase your passion to pray.

Lesson 3 Study Guide

CC201

SoulCare Foundations I: The Basic Model

A Personal Search:
Beginning with an Inside Look

Updated 2015



**Our Daily Bread
Christian University**

Objectives

In this lesson, Dr. Crabb emphasizes the importance of being a “safe” person in order to enter the interior world of another person and to “go beneath the waterline” in that person’s life.

When you complete this lesson, “A Personal Search: Beginning with an Inside Look,” you should be able to:

- Explain the importance of being a safe person in a SoulCare relationship.
- Define what it means to be a powerful person in a SoulCare setting.
- Discuss the exterior and interior worlds of individuals including the significance of each for SoulCare.
- Explain what needs to precede encouragement, advice, or support in providing true SoulCare to an individual.

Transcript

Course Title: SoulCare Foundations I: The Basic Model

Lesson Three: A Personal Search: Beginning with an Inside Look

Your teacher for this course is noted psychologist, author, and speaker, Dr. Larry Crabb.

So far in our thinking about SoulCare, we have introduced two fundamental ideas. Idea 1: SoulCare is not a technique that you learn; it is a relationship you offer. When I was in graduate school learning to be a psychologist, that thought never occurred to me. I wanted my courses and my supervisors to teach me what to do. I wanted to become competent. When you understand SoulCare, not as a technique to master but a relationship to offer, then the issue does not become competence quite so centrally. The question is not, “Am I a competent person?” so much as the question becomes, “Am I a safe person? Am I a safe person in a relationship so that you will invite me to know you, to explore you, to discover you, and touch you? The issue has less to do with competence and more to do with a kind of person that I am. Am I safe?” And that raises a whole host of questions. What makes people safe?

Now in some obvious ways, we can answer that. I can recall being in a group of guys where one fellow was making fun and telling jokes about a particular sexual perversion. And I recall wincing, sitting there thinking if somebody in this group of guys is struggling with that, he is going to take that reality and hide it more deeply than ever before. Months later, one of the other fellows in that particular group did talk to me and let me know that he was struggling with that perversion. And what he said was, “I would never tell ...” (and he listed the name of the fellow who made known that concern). What does it mean to be a safe person? That is a very, very huge and important question.

So the first major idea we are developing so far is: SoulCare is not a technique that you learn, a procedure that you master. It is rather a relationship that you offer. A relationship, which makes it possible for someone to be known, explored, discovered, and touched. That is Idea 1.

Idea 2: SoulCare is not primarily about fixing problems. Now, if you hear that, it will take the pressure off. It will add a different kind of a dimension, but it will take off the immediate pressure. SoulCare is not about fixing problems, of getting the couple to relate more intimately, of getting the dad to deal with his son so he straightens out and gets off drugs. SoulCare is not about fixing problems. And that is really important, because I know what I felt as a counselor or psychologist for all these years, so many times people would come, wanting me to fix their problems, asking me, “Well, how do I parent my child? How do I love my husband? How do I love my wife?” thinking that I know. Do you understand that people with all this fancy training so often really don’t know? We do not know how to fix a lot of problems. But, maybe there is a way to move differently into people’s lives. Maybe the issue is not, “I’ve got to become a renowned expert who knows how to fix problems”; maybe the issue is something very different in SoulCare. SoulCare is about pursuing a compelling vision. That is what I talked about in Lesson Two.

SoulCare is about pursuing a compelling vision so that when I am involved with you, the effect of our time together has less to do with solving problems and more to do with nourishing an appetite for God that is in the core of your soul because you are a Christian, and guiding you in a spiritual journey with wisdom, so that you actually develop a consuming experience of the reality of God that becomes stronger than all other pleasures. Therefore, all other desires become lesser; they become second place, but still wanted, still desired—good things, like godly kids that do not do drugs. Of course you want that, but now that becomes secondary; and the primary appetite of your soul, and the primary experience of your soul, has everything to do with God. You see, what I am really saying here is that SoulCare is all about a new way to live that the Gospel makes possible. SoulCare is all about helping people to live a new way that the Gospel makes possible when we live in a way that is all about God and not all about us.

So now we have two beginning ideas in our minds, two foundational thoughts, as we are beginning to develop this understanding of SoulCare. First, to repeat it, SoulCare is not a technique practiced by skilled experts; it is a relationship offered by a safe person. Secondly, SoulCare is not about fixing problems in order to make life more comfortable. It is about entering someone's interior world with the power to stir someone's appetite for God. And as that happens, the person begins operating from a different center; not for success or impressing other people, but they are operating from the center of wanting the deepest core of their being to know God and to glorify Him.

So those two ideas: 1) not a technique, it is a relationship; 2) it is all about a compelling vision to know God, not to fix problems. Those two fundamental ideas in forming our direction as we think about SoulCare leads to two very obvious questions that if you thought about two ideas, you must ask. The first question is this, what makes a person safe? Or to personalize it, are you a safe person?

If I knew you, if I knew you in a small group of mine, if I knew you from a lunch conversation, if you were in my Sunday school class, if you were a buddy of mine, a neighbor of mine, would you be someone that I would say, "That person is safe. I think I could say anything to him. I could say anything to her without fear of being scorned or judged or dismissed or rejected or backed-away from"? What makes a person safe? Huge question, if we are going to understand SoulCare.

Second question that grows out of my two fundamental ideas is this—what makes a person powerful? People who provide SoulCare effectively, meaningfully, are both safe people that invite others into a relationship where they are known, explored, discovered and touched. And people who provide SoulCare are powerful people who have the wisdom to move into other people's lives and to see the appetite for God stimulated. So we are going to ask these two questions: 1) what makes a person safe? and 2) what makes a person powerful?

Now, to answer these two questions well, we are going to have to take a journey. It is a journey that is difficult to take, and it is a journey that in our culture not many want to take. But it is a vital journey. It is a journey into our own interior worlds. You cannot become an effective provider of SoulCare by simply studying (as a clinician) what is happening in the other person, and what their psychopathology is, or what their internal emotional battles are, and what the proper procedures are to help them become different.

The first thing that must be done on the journey towards SoulCare is to realize the journey takes us first into our own interior worlds. What is happening inside of me? What is happening inside of me in terms of my motives? What are my energies as I talk with you? Even as I talk to you now in this course, what am I trying to do? What is my interior world like even at this very moment? Am I trying to speak well, so that you will be impressed with me as a teacher? Am I trying to be clear so that you will tell your friends, this man makes things clear? Or is there something in me that has an appetite for God that is ruling within the deepest part of my soul as I share it with you? Now, that is a very challenging question, because I know that my interior world is a bit of a mess. I know that all sorts of strange, unworthy, difficult things are happening in me that just are not good at all.

Why was it the case that when one particular person came to see me that I very much felt a pressure to help that person and do a better job with that person versus this other person. Do I succumb to the gold ring philosophy that James talks about? Am I more interested in taking prominent people or wealthy people and making an impact on them, instead of an ordinary person who has no money and no status and stature? What are the motivations happening inside of my interior world? Difficult questions. Why is it that when a counselee said to me some time ago, “I don’t really think this is helpful, and I think that I may be going to see ... (and she mentioned another counselor),” why inside of me did I immediately shut down and feel angry? What is happening inside of me? What is going on inside of my soul?

There is a good man who was sitting recently in my office with his wife, and I noticed that whenever his wife talks, he gets quiet. When I probed a little bit and said that I noticed that when your wife goes on for awhile, you tend to kind of hush up a little bit, you tend to retreat, you back away. I would just like to observe that. And he said, “Well, you know, I guess she annoys me a little bit.” And when he said that, his wife bursts into tears and tells me that she feels hated by this guy. I can recall at that point in our SoulCare hour that I just felt a deep sense of inadequacy. I do not know what to do. What is happening inside of me?—an important question.

Before you and I are going to be able to move in a relationship where SoulCare happens, before you are going to be able to talk to that friend whose name you circled a little while ago, somebody who shared a problem with you, and you want to move into their life and offer them SoulCare, before you can do that, before you can even think about doing that, you must begin with an inside look into your own interior world. I want us to start that in this particular lesson; I want us to start the idea of an inside look.

And to do that, let me employ the very familiar image of an iceberg, an image that you all know about that can be very easily sketched. Here is a picture of you. You all know what an iceberg is. You all know that an iceberg is a mass of ice, a little bit of which is visible above the water, but most of it is invisible beneath the waterline. So let us use that simple metaphor to describe me, to describe you, and to suggest in each of our lives that we all have an exterior world. We all have a world that we are quite willing to make visible to others. We all have a world that we are happy to share with others when somebody at a party says, “Hi, what’s your name?” we are willing to share. “My name is Larry Crabb,” we are willing to share. “My name is Sue Smith. What do you do?” We are willing to share certain things. “Are you married?” We are willing to share certain things. “Do you have kids?” It is all part of our exterior world. But are you aware that there are certain things

that are hidden from other people, and you work hard to see to it that they stay hidden, just like I do. Call that your interior world. Beneath the waterline, there really is an interior world. There is a world beneath the surface that I want to hide from myself, and I certainly want to hide from you. I do not want to face certain things inside of me. I want to make sure certain things that are unpleasant about who I am—that I do not pay much attention to them—and that certainly you will not know about them. Most of us live in hiding. Most of us have things that are true about us that we want nobody else to see. Call that our interior world.

Now, would you agree with me that most conversations, most conversations even in good small groups, most conversations over lunch with good friends, most conversations have more to do with sharing our exterior worlds than with ever really getting meaningfully into the depths of our souls?

We simply do not do that. We are a culture that has learned to make it without becoming deep. We are a superficial, shallow culture to a very significant degree. I think it was James Packer, who, when he arrived from England to America, observed us as he looked at our country that, “American Christianity,” he once said, “is a thousand miles wide and one inch deep.”

What he is saying is that most of the conversations are no different than the kind of conversations that we have with a waiter in a restaurant. The waiter walks up and says, “Can I help you, what would you like to drink?” And we say, “I would like a glass of water with a twist of lemon.” Are we sharing much? The answer is no. And the waiter says, “Fine, I will get it for you.” And we say, “Thank you.” Is it possible that a lot of our conversations in the Christian community really have no more depth, at least not significantly, not substantially, than the conversation that we had the other day with the waiter?

I would like to drive this point home a little bit. I do not think we are going to get far in thinking about SoulCare without coming to a pretty strong conviction, a pretty strong agreement, that our conversations, even when they seem vulnerable and open, really are not—that our conversations really are more above the waterline than they are below the waterline.

Reflect on a conversation that took place in a small group recently, and see if you agree with me that this conversation really is not very different than the conversation between the waiter and the diner, who asked for a glass of water with a twist of lemon. In this one particular small group, a man named Frank, who was an associate pastor, decided he wanted to become vulnerable and what he said to his small group one evening was this. He said, “I’m losing confidence in myself. I have been in my church now for a number of years, and I used to be asked to preach on a fairly regular basis by our senior pastor. But in the last six months, I have not been asked at all to occupy the Sunday morning pulpit and I am not sure why. Maybe I haven’t done a very good job.” He was in touch with some of his insecurity, and he was sharing that with his group. He also added, “There are fewer people in my church who are calling for me and asking to talk with me. I guess I am wondering if I’m on the shelf, or losing my effectiveness. I don’t know.” He shared this, and I suppose if we are in a small group we are thinking, “Man, that’s rich. That’s heavy. That’s deep. You are really getting into it. That goes way beyond, ‘I’d like a glass of water with a twist of lemon.’” And then he adds something that even seems perhaps more personal and difficult and vulnerable; he says, “You know, to top it all off, my oldest daughter, Megan, just told Ann and I,

my wife and myself, that she really hates church. She doesn't want to go any more. Things aren't going so good right now." And he makes it known to a small group.

Now clearly this is fairly vulnerable communication. I would not want to deny for a moment that this is meaningful conversation to Frank. He is making known something very, very real. But what would it mean to provide SoulCare for this gentleman, who has shared these struggles? What would it mean to become the kind of person who is safe enough, where Frank would say, "I'm willing to let you know all that is going on inside of me. I'm willing to have you explore what's happening inside of me in the middle of this crisis of sorts. I'm willing to have you look so deeply to discover that maybe there is something within me that's alive that this discouragement cannot kill. And I would love to have you touch the deepest part of my soul, so I leave tonight encouraged with an appetite to know God and to glorify him that is stronger than my appetite to be a well received preacher, and even stronger than my appetite to have a daughter who loves God and loves church and thinks I'm the best dad and best pastor she's ever seen. I'd love to have an appetite stronger than that."?

What would it mean to have those kinds of conversations? Well, let me tell you what actually happened in that group. A woman named Sue in the group responded by saying this; she said, "Oh Frank, I know Megan really well. I have been involved with Megan in the youth group for actually a number of years. I taught her in Sunday school class for a long time. Oh Frank, Megan is just such a wonderful girl, she really is. I think it's just a phase she is going through. Most teens go through it. Frank, she'll be fine, you don't need to worry."

Have you ever received that kind of encouragement? What did Sue just do? Did Sue not essentially dismiss, maybe trivialize, the significance of Frank's concerns? Notice the obvious; Sue did not ask one question. She did not turn to Frank and say, "I'm so intrigued by what you are saying. I'd love to know more." She came up with an answer. Sue tried to fix the problem. She showed no interest in knowing Frank, no interest in exploring Frank, no interest in discovering Frank. All she wanted to do was touch Frank. But until you do the first three, touching is very superficial.

There is a principle that grows out of this, and you might want to note this. It is a very important principle that most of us violate much of the time. Encouragement that is premature—which I define as encouragement that precedes hearing someone, encouragement that precedes knowing and exploring and discovering someone—stops movement toward an inside look and therefore never invigorates the soul with the energy of God. I believe Sue, with all of her good intentions, failed in providing SoulCare for Frank.

Robert, another gentleman in the small group, took up the refrain from Sue and he said, "Frank, you mentioned that you are concerned about your inadequate preaching. Or whether perhaps you are inadequate because you haven't been asked to preach for a while. You know I'm in sales. You know that. And I think it was about a year ago, I took a course in communication, and it was really helpful. I think it made me a much more effective presenter of my sales material in marketing settings, and I think it might be of help to you. Actually, there were several preachers in the course. I would love to get you the literature on the course. I think it might really be of help."

Now, you are Frank, what are you feeling? Sue told you Megan's doing fine, it's just a phase. Robert tells you that a course might help you preach better. What are they trying to do? Is there not some element in which these good people with, in very significant ways, good hearts that care about Frank are trying to fix Frank? Notice again, Robert did not ask a single question.

Folks, if there is one thing that I would like to get across at this point, we are a culture that is so bad at asking questions. Very rarely does anybody follow up something we say with a question—not an interrogation, not a ruthless probing, but a profound interest in just who we are, wanting to join us. People want to fix. Sue did it. Robert did it. And notice a principle, Robert actually gave advice here—talking about Robert speaking to Frank—and he said, “I think you ought to take this course in communication.” Now here is a principle I want you to see from Robert's response, advice—that is what Robert offered—advice offered by someone who has not first shown curiosity about somebody else's world rarely has the power to reach someone's soul deeply.

A third person in the group, a woman named Marie, she said, “I feel compelled to pray for Frank and Ann.” Ann was sitting in the room as well, Frank's wife. She was visibly hurting over Megan and her husband's insecurities. Frank was sharing his difficult things. Sue reassured them about Megan. Robert made available to them a course that might be helpful. And Marie comes along and says, “You know, I think the course might be helpful, and I think Megan's a fine girl too, but I just feel compelled right now to pray. Could we all just gather around Frank and Ann and lay our hands on their shoulders and commit them to the Lord? Can we gather around and pray for them right now?” Am I actually going to say that is a bad thing to do, bad to pray?

I have been in a number of groups where people have gathered around me, and put their hands on my shoulder and prayed for me. I want to tell you, I found it very, very meaningful. But it had been meaningful to the degree that the people had gone to the trouble to know me, to explore me, to discover me. Then their prayers touched me. Notice in my little illustration here, again Marie asked no questions. She assumes that she knows what is happening inside of Frank and Ann, because maybe she has faced similar trials and nothing was said to know, to explore, to discover.

Principle: Support, whether through good things like prayer and affirmation, can become a cheap and easy substitute for turning your chair toward someone. As I look at this illustration, neither Sue nor Robert nor Marie turned their chairs toward Frank in the way that I envision. I would love to see that different. I would love to see groups where people turn their chairs.

What is it going to take? It takes courage to relate more deeply. It takes a willingness to let somebody explore my interior world. It takes a recognition that SoulCare happens beneath the waterline, when the SoulCarer is speaking from his or her depths to the depths of the other person. Where I see Sue and Robert and Marie as speaking from above their waterlines to the exterior worlds of Frank and Ann, SoulCare, in a meaningful deep level, did not happen. I believe that community is perhaps the most underutilized resource in the Christian world today. It could be so different.

How come we do not look beneath the waterline? How come we do not look in our own souls and talk to each other out of our internal realities? Why do we stay at the level of giving advice and offering courses that might be helpful to Frank, and reassuring that Megan's doing fine and

offering a prayer that does not allow us or require us to get involved deeply with Frank? Why do we do that? What is going on inside of us? Are we willing to face that?

You know as I have taken this journey, and I am still just a beginner, but as I have taken the journey into SoulCare, I think the most frightening thing is to face myself, to really face what is in me. Because when I really face what is in me, when I really face what is in me is I relate to my wife and my children. When I really face what is within me, I relate to my counselees and my friends, I realize that what matters most to me I cannot control. Just like you, I want to be in control. I do not want to face my mysterious depths where I do not understand what is going on. But, you are hearing my encouragement. You are hearing that I am saying that if we are going to become effective providers of SoulCare, we are going to have to look deep beneath into our own interior worlds to see why we do not explore and do not ask questions and give quick advice and quick encouragement and offer a quick prayer. What is going on inside of us? Is it important to get to know ourselves at this level? Well, there are a fair number of people who say, “no.” But I want to suggest to you that it is very important to know our interior worlds for one, I think, rather definitive reason: because God says it is.

And let me close this lesson by giving you just a couple of things that God says, that in my mind make it clear that we have got to look into our lives. It is important to look into our lives. Well, #1, because very simply, God says we ought to look into our lives. In Proverbs 20:5, God, through the writer, says this, “The purposes of a man’s heart are like deep waters.” What is really happening inside of our soul is hidden beneath the water. There is the iceberg metaphor. But the Proverb goes on to say that, “. . . a man of understanding draws them out.”

Secondly, God looks inside of us. God not only tells us that we should look inside of ourselves, but God Himself is one who looks deeply inside of us. The Bible says in 1 Samuel 16:7 that the Lord does not look at the things man looks at. “Man looks at the outward appearance,” the exterior world, the displayed self. “But the Lord looks at the heart,” the interior world, the hidden self.

Thirdly, God sees what we cannot see. And He wants to show it to us. “The heart is deceitful above all things,” Jeremiah tells us (chapter 17 and verse 9). Who can know the interior world? And God says, “Well I do. I would like to reveal it to you. I have written a book that penetrates to the deepest parts of the soul.”

I want to suggest fourthly, and very briefly, that both real change, in ourselves and in people for whom we provide SoulCare, depend on what goes on in our own interior worlds. Jesus told the Pharisees, a group of people who were specialists in looking good on the outside and hiding all that was going on inside, He said to them, “If you are going to really change, you have got to change from the inside out.” Clean up what is inside before the outside will become clean.

If you and I are going to provide effective SoulCare, we are going to have to clearly see what is happening in our soul before we can clearly see what is happening in another. And that is the last reason I want to give you for why an inside look is important. The book of Matthew tells us, in chapter 7, we are not going to see clearly into the problem in somebody else’s life, until we first see clearly into the difficulties in our own interior worlds. An inside look is crucial. That is the point of this lesson. The next lesson will actually begin to see what is in us that an inside look reveals.

Discussion Questions

Rewrite the dialogue from the lecture (see the transcript for details) so that Robert and Marie become “safe” for Frank to explore himself more.

An ongoing controversy in Christian circles centers on whether a look at the realities below the waterline is really necessary for true spiritual growth. Defend the view that an inside look IS necessary for true spiritual growth. Your defense should be at least two pages long. Feel free to use Scriptures to support your view.

Now, write a two page rebuttal, arguing against the position you just defended (you will now be defending the view that an inside look is NOT necessary for true spiritual growth).

Note: If you are working through this class with a group that has the opportunity to meet, you can divide the group in two and designate one group to defend the first view and one group to defend the second. Use this opportunity for an oral “debate” and then, afterward, discuss what it was like to defend a position you may or may not have believed in and what new insights you gained from the debate.

Lesson 4 Study Guide

CC201

SoulCare Foundations I: The Basic Model

The Concept of Ruling Passions: What
Energy Carries You into the Life of Another

Updated 2015



**Our Daily Bread
Christian University**

Objectives

According to Dr. Crabb, true confidence in providing SoulCare requires a deep sense of inadequacy. When we recognize the true goal of SoulCare, we have no choice but to feel profoundly inadequate in ourselves.

Many people would assume that learning the theory and skills of SoulCare is all that is needed to become an effective SoulCarer. Dr. Crabb begins with a very different assumption—that discerning the passions that rule within you as a SoulCarer is absolutely essential.

When you complete this lesson, “The Concept of Ruling Passions: What Energy Carries You into the Life of Another,” you should be able to:

- Explain the importance of focusing on what is happening in the inner world of the person providing SoulCare.
- Discuss ways in which the SoulCare provider’s recognition of inadequacy is a prerequisite to effective SoulCare.
- Reiterate the compelling vision for SoulCare.

Transcript

Course Title: SoulCare Foundations I: The Basic Model

Lesson Four: The Concept of Ruling Passions: What Energy Carries You into the Life of Another

Your teacher for this course is noted psychologist, author, and speaker, Dr. Larry Crabb.

I recall my very first conversation with a gentleman I mentioned earlier, a gentleman who called me one day and said, “My wife is leaving me, and I would love to chat with you about that.” He did not put it in these words but what he said was, “My soul needs some care. I’d like somebody to walk with me in a very difficult journey. Can you arrange to meet with me?”

I will never forget the first time that we met; we chatted about the sadness, the horror that he felt, the devastation, the disappointment, the pain, the struggle, the feeling of rejection, the concern with his kids, all the obvious, the very real and very devastating things that he was dealing with. And I found myself very tempted to provide nothing but comfort. But I was not sure what comfort to provide. I found myself wanting to go find his wife and talk her out of the divorce and bring her back. But I knew I did not have the power to do that. I found myself wanting to give him Bible verses that maybe he could hang onto, but Bible verses, sometimes out of context, can seem so cheap. And a Bible verse should never seem cheap. But the way we use it sometimes results in that kind of a perception.

In the course of our first conversation, with the idea of a compelling vision in my mind, what I said to him was this. I said as we finished our conversation, “You were not put on earth to be married to that woman. You were put on earth to know God and to reveal Him as a husband as long as you are married to that woman; and to reveal Him to others if you no longer have the opportunity to love this woman as your wife. Your goal in living is not the enjoyment of your marriage with your wife. Your goal of living is something very, very different. And if that is what you want, if that is what you are after, then I would love to have the opportunity to provide care for your soul—to provide spiritual direction, to walk with you on the journey, to developing an appetite for God, and to develop an experience of God that is so strong that there will be a joy and a peace and a sense of purpose and meaning in your life, whether you are divorced and experience all the pain that will be there associated with that, or if she reconciles and comes back and you have a wonderful marriage, which I will be delighted about. But that is going to be a second thing. The first thing has to do with the compelling vision of an appetite for God with experience of God.”

Well, I shared that with him, and I want to suggest to you that I believe it is a good thing to share the vision that you have as you begin SoulCare with somebody. And I think it is a good thing for really two reasons. One, that when people come to chat with us and make known a concern—whether it is a friend over lunch or psychologist or spiritual director or pastor—when people make known a particular concern, more often than not, that is not what they are after. When somebody makes known a concern, they really want it to be different. They want the concern to be solved. They want the problem to be ended, and maybe they are talking to you because you are going

to help them feel better or know better how to deal with their kids who are rebelling—there is something that you can do to make things better. And if your goal as a provider of SoulCare is moving toward the compelling vision of this person’s soul becoming more like Jesus, and their goal is something else, you are going to butt heads. There is going to be resistance. You are going to have a hard time with that. So you have got to get on the same page.

But the second, and the even more important reason why I think it is wise to share, at least to some degree, the vision that you have as you provide SoulCare, is there is something in the soul of every believer that wants that. You are not building the appetite for God; you are touching the appetite that the Spirit has already planted within us. Remember that God introduced the Gospel for the central purpose of creating a people who want Him more than they want anything else. So when a person becomes a Christian at that point, not only are their sins forgiven, but also there is an appetite planted in the center of their soul that wants to know God more than they want anything else that is already there. Keep that in mind as you provide SoulCare.

This particular gentleman said to me a year later, as we journeyed together in SoulCare—spiritual direction, counseling, pastoring, befriending, whatever you want to call it—as we journeyed together, about what it means to know God and to honor God as he goes through the divorce, to honor God as he deals with the terrible temptations that came into his life, as he honors God with all the discouragement and frustration—as we began to think all that through for a long period of time, he said to me, “Larry, I never told you this, but the reason I found myself wanting to come back and talk to you was because of what you said to me at the end of our first session. You said that I was not put on earth for the purpose of enjoying a marriage with the particular woman that I had married. That is a legitimate desire, but if that is taken away my purpose for living is still intact. And you touched something in me that felt alive. I left our first session saying, ‘There is a deep part of me that wants to know God. And I want to journey with this man in the way that maybe that appetite will become stronger and deeper and more and more alive.’”

To walk with somebody on that journey requires that we be a certain kind of person. If we are going to provide SoulCare that stimulates a desire for God and provokes a consuming experience of God, we are going to have to become a particular kind of person that we cannot become, apart from supernatural resources.

Someone has said that “the cornerstone of the Christian religion is the doctrine of the Trinity.” Did you ever think of that? Most of us believe in the Trinity—God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit—and we say it in our creeds perhaps on Sunday morning, but have you ever thought about how practical that doctrine is? What does it mean that you and I believe that God exists as an eternal community of three persons who really get along very well? Whoever said that two is company and three is a crowd, did not have it right about the Trinity. Because these three persons, one God, but somehow (and of course, we are out of our league talking about this) three distinct persons who all are one God, they relate to each other in a very unique way. They relate to each other in a way that is absolutely other-centered. They are there for the other. The depth of who they are in the core of their interior world, if I can speak that way, there is nothing but radical other-centered purity and love. That is all that is there.

Remember Jesus prayed in John 17, “Father, as I go to the cross, as I am about to die and be made sin, what actually motivates me right now, what I want to pray about, what I want to talk to you

about, Father, before I go and endure this terrible, terrible suffering, my prayer is this: I want my people, because of my death on the cross when they become Christians and trust in me to pay the price of their sins, I want my people to learn to relate to each other, the way that You and I relate to each other, Father. I want them to become one the way, You and I, Father are one. I want them to be in Me, the way that I am in You.”

What is He talking about? Some very intimate kind of a connection, where one person walks with another now at the human level, where one person walks with another and joins another and pours out what is deepest in them into the other so that they both walk together in a way where their appetite for God is aroused. SoulCare requires a kind of person that only the Spirit of God can produce—a kind of person that really relates to another the way that the Trinity, the members of the Trinity, relate among themselves.

My first point in the last presentation flows out of the doctrine of the Trinity and the prayer of Jesus. My first point was this: SoulCare is not about doing something to someone. I want you to get out of your minds that SoulCare, that psychotherapy, that counseling, whatever word you are more comfortable with—I like the word “SoulCare”—is not a matter of an expert repairing what is broken; it is a matter of a certain kind of person giving what is in them to another in a way which has an effect on their soul, that reaches the compelling vision, that helps my friend realize that his deepest appetite is not to be happily married—that is a huge appetite, and the absence of that blessing causes incredible pain and struggle—but his deepest appetite is different. Can I be the kind of person who is safe and powerful, who can walk with him on that kind of a journey?

Well, I want us to look inside of our depths and see maybe that we are not those kinds of people. And maybe come in brokenness before God, asking him to make us those kinds of people that are safe and powerful and can do the work of SoulCare.

In this presentation, I want us to take an inside look. I want us to look below the waterline of the iceberg into the soul of the person providing the SoulCare, into your soul, into my soul, and see what it takes to be the kind of person who can provide the relationship where SoulCare takes place.

Go back in your mind, if you will, to that person that you earlier wrote down, that person’s name who shared a struggle with you, the person that made known to you something. They saw you as safe enough to make known a burden, a concern, a problem, and as they made known that to you, they were sharing something out of their life that probably was not all the way into the depths of who they are, but maybe it was pretty vulnerable. Maybe it was a sexual problem or a relational problem or a discouragement problem—something that was very real—and you are there listening to them. The question that we are now asking is, “What happened inside of you?” Go beneath the surface of the nice words that you said—the empathic response and the offer to pray for them—go beneath all the things that you might have done in listening well. (I know that there is one course that teaches listening skills that I was familiar with, where they make it into very much of a skill where you learn to kind of tilt your head to a certain angle, and lean forward and communicate that you are really listening.) My question is, are you really listening or not? If you are really listening, then all this does not make a difference. And if you are not listening, all this does not help. The question is, what is really happening inside of you, beneath the surface of whatever you

do? So somebody shares with you now a burden, a struggle. What happened inside of you as your friend shared this struggle? What did you feel? What emotions stirred within you? What attitudes came charging to the surface of your mind? Well, you follow through with your own example as you remember the person that you have recently been chatting with who shared a burden with you, as I make known a situation in my life, where a friend shared a struggle with me.

It was not too long ago that a woman, who was turning forty, said to me as we were chatting in a SoulCare kind of relationship—she had asked me to walk with her on her spiritual journey a bit—in the course of our chatting she said, “You know, I have handled unwanted singleness pretty well for a number of years, but turning forty became a symbol of something. I don’t know what it triggered, but it just did a number on me. And I have been undone and I feel more lonely than I have ever felt before. I worry about how attractive I am. Why does no man want me? I just don’t get it. I am just hurting, and I don’t know what to do in this situation.” That is what she said to me.

Now, let us go back to our very simple sketch. I know you are used to seeing the sketch, but let us see if we can make a little more out of the sketch now. Here is me and here is the woman sharing with me her struggle. Now, let us put this into “iceberg language.” And let us suggest that she makes known the fact that she is lonely, that she is hurting, and that she is experiencing something that I think she would call self-hatred. Now, as I am listening to her, do I want to know all that is happening down deep within her? Do I want to explore what is happening in her? Do I want to discover the reality of Christ, who is beneath all of the mess of her interior world? Do I know what it means to touch the reality of Christ in her? What is happening inside of me as she makes known her struggle?

I have got to start looking into my interior world. I have got to start looking into (and this is not too strong a term) the mess of my interior world. What is happening inside of me that maybe is bad? I do not think you are going to get very far with this lecture, with this presentation, if you do not begin with the acknowledgment, which I am sure most of you agree with, that when you look inside of yourself you really do find a mess. You find a mess of insecurities, a mess of pressure, a mess of trying to prove something. You really do find a mess.

I remember the very first book that I wrote was called *Basic Principles of Biblical Counseling*. And when I wrote the book (it was my very first book, and I was excited about writing it), I wanted to have a jazzy title; I wanted to have an interesting title for my very first book. My book came out shortly after a secular book hit the marketplace and was a runaway bestseller, written by Tom Harris called *I’m Okay, You’re Okay*. It occurred to me that a good title for my book might be a more biblical alternative to Tom Harris’ book. I wanted to call my book *I’m a Mess, You’re a Mess*. It felt a little more honest, a little more biblical. The publishers responded by saying, “Well the title is very interesting, but the book may not be as interesting as the title. So let us give it a more fitting title and call it *Basic Principles of Biblical Counseling*. I still want to write a book called *I’m a Mess, You’re a Mess*, someday. Why? Because, in the SoulCare relationship, yeah you are a mess, but I am too. And we have to start with that fact, that I am a mess in the SoulCare relationship.

When I am chatting with you in a SoulCare relationship, what is my first impulse? Well, my first impulse it to do something, to say something, to respond above the waterline as opposed to acknowledging what is happening inside of me as this person talks. Do I even have that category

for thinking? What is going on inside of me as this person is talking? Or do I come up with things that sound like they are appropriate, things that I have been trained to do? Do I come up with a good empathic response and say to my woman friend who is telling me how hurt she is over her singleness and how lonely she feels and self-hating she feels, do I say something like, “That must really be getting to you? I can hear you. That must be hard.” That might be a good thing to say, but why am I saying it? What is the energy within me that is driving my saying that? That is where the action is. Or do I say something in terms of a piece of advice? Maybe do I say to her, “You know, I know you fairly well, and I know that you just don’t go to church anymore. And I wonder if you need to get involved in your church—that’s where you meet a lot of people. There are some guys in church, and I know singles groups are sometimes wonderful and sometimes aren’t so good. But have you tried it?” And maybe I exhort her with a piece of advice— that might be a good thing to say.

But the real question is, what is happening in me as I say it? It is not whether my empathy is skilled or my advice is on target. The issue is what are the passions? Remember the passion/wisdom model? What are the passions within me that are energizing me as I give my empathic response or give my advice or perhaps offer a word of affirmation and say something like, “You are being way too hard on yourself. Don’t you know that you bear the image of God, that you are a woman of rare beauty, and if a man could see who you really are as God’s creation and recreation he would be delighted with you?” As I give that kind of affirmation, which might be the right thing to do, the question is, what are the passions within me that are energizing that? Are you hearing the point? It is a huge point. It is not what you do that matters nearly as much as why you do it. What stirs you? What is the mess within you? What are the passions within you?

Sometimes we decide we are going to go beyond the surface responses of empathy and maybe giving a word of advice. And maybe saying something encouraging and affirming, we have taken a good course in counseling, read a good psychology book and we decide to be a little more psychological, and we probe a bit and say something like, “I wonder what turning forty means to you.” We feel very Freudian and very intelligent, and we want to smoke our pipe as we are wondering about these deep things. Or maybe we interpret, “You know, it sounds like you stiffen up as we chatted. And maybe you stiffen up when men approach you and I wonder if the way you relate to men who seem to show an interest in you is really sabotaging something.” And we feel really brilliant in our interpretations and wonder why people are not helped. The issue is not the accuracy of our interpretation. The issue is not the wisdom of our probing. The first issue is, what is energizing us as we probe or interpret? Are you hearing my point? What is the mess inside of me? What is the reality of my interior world, the reality of your interior world? The issue is not what we say so much as why we say it.

Now, let us just take a look at some very simple categories as to the kind of things that are involved in our interior world as we chat with people. Go beneath the waterline in your own heart, and I will go beneath the waterline in my heart, and ask whether you felt— when a person shared their struggle—ask whether you felt confident. Was there some part of you that felt confident? You felt fairly comfortable and thought, “You know I think I have learned some empathic skills, and I am fairly intuitive, and I’ve talked to a lot of people, and people seem to find me a rather safe kind of a person to chat with, and I think I feel fairly confident in my naturally caring, intuitive style. I think I know how people feel, and I can relate to people in some good ways. I guess I know

what to do, and I guess there is something within me that feels pretty good about the fact that this person is sharing with me.” Is there anything within you that feels confident, like you are a gifted, intuitive person?

Much to my shame, after about twenty years of being a psychologist, I can recall saying to a class of students, “You know I am to the point in my career now (I actually said this) where I believe that if anybody comes to me, if they stick with me long enough, I’ll be able to help them.” I think it is one of the most foolish things, one of the most arrogant things I have ever said. I do not discount the fact that God gives certain gifts and gives certain calling—I do not discount that. But is there some kind of a confidence within me that makes me feel really quite sufficient that my talents—my abilities, my intuition, my training, my giftedness, my skill, my experience—they really equip me to do the job? Folks, if that is where a person is, you can count on the fact that they are quenching the Spirit. You can count on the fact that their SoulCare is not a spiritual activity; it is fundamentally a fleshly activity. “Do you feel confident?” is Question 1.

Question 2: Do you feel irritated? I know a lot of people who, when I have shared certain struggles with them, I just sense the irritation, and I felt that with other people. The kind of irritation I am talking about is the mood that says, “You know, you are bringing this on yourself. You know that you are doing it all wrong. Seems to me that you are kind of whining as a victim. And, yeah, I know your husband doesn’t treat you right, but crying out loud, you could care for somebody else once in awhile, you know. And, yeah, I know your kid’s a mess, but how much time do you spend with your kid?” And it is kind of a judgmental, angry mood that we feel like that there are biblical principles available, and we should be applying them and that is the key to change. You see, when you get irritated with somebody on these kinds of grounds, what you are really doing is buying a false theology of change. What you are saying is, “All people need to change is to be more responsible about being obedient to biblical principles—that is all there is to it. Just shape up, and you will be a lot better.” Is that your mood?

I remember telling a friend over dinner a while ago that I was feeling pretty discouraged. I was kind of down on myself. It was a pretty vulnerable thing of me to say to this particular friend. And I remember the friend just kind of rolled his eyes and said, “You have no reason to feel like that. Get over it.” I have not talked to him since about my life. Maybe that is my own self-protection, and I need to be vulnerable and go share more with him, but frankly, I would rather talk with somebody else.

Do you feel confident? Do you feel irritated? Or do you feel, the way I feel a lot of the time and I should feel all the time, do you feel profoundly inadequate? You will feel inadequate to the degree that the compelling vision that you are pursuing is something you cannot make happen. Is your vision high enough? I want to see this person’s soul conform to the image of Christ. I want to care for this person’s soul so that their appetite for Jesus is stronger than any other appetite. I want to provoke a consuming experience in them of Jesus Christ that gives them a joy that nothing else can afford. That is what I want! Who is adequate for that? Well, it sure is not me.

Let me suggest an important principle When you have even a glimmer of a compelling vision for what could be as you engage in SoulCare, you will realize that you are inadequate to make it happen. What I want to say to you is inadequacy is not an obstacle; it is an opportunity.

Inadequacy is not something which gets in the way; it is rather something that provides an opportunity for the Spirit to flow through you. Feeling profoundly inadequate—hear me carefully—is the only legitimate way to feel when you are involved in SoulCare. SoulCare can happen when one person feels safe enough to share openly with another person who feels profoundly inadequate. Strange language? Maybe it is to some degree, but I am hoping that because of this lesson that maybe you will find the courage to be honest about what's inside of your own soul as people share with you. And I would guess that most of you would agree with me that when people make known their problems, you really feel like you do not know what to do. You feel inadequate; you are not sure how to help; you do not know what to say. And sometimes you cover it over with nice sounding words or Bible verses or offers to pray, but maybe there is a different way to handle your inadequacy.

Now let me finish up this presentation by thinking with you about what you can do if you acknowledge the mess you are that makes you inadequate to really help anybody else. You enrolled in this course because you want to become effective at SoulCare and that is a wonderful ambition, and I pray this course will be used of God to help you in that. But it will help you in it to the degree that you embrace your sense of inadequacy as opposed to fighting it. Now, once you have acknowledged your sense of inadequacy, you can go in one of two directions. One direction is you can try to overcome your inadequacy: “I am going to take this course in SoulCare, and I am going to read twenty more books, and I am going to work really hard at this, and I’m going to become really good at SoulCare so I will not be inadequate.” Do not misunderstand; training in SoulCare is not designed to help you overcome your feelings of inadequacy. Training in SoulCare is rather designed to help you embrace the reality of your inadequacy as an opportunity for the Spirit of God to work.

This course in SoulCare makes no effort to overcome your inadequacy by teaching theory and skills. Rather it encourages you to embrace your inadequacy in order to achieve supernatural goals with supernatural resources. I am inadequate. You are inadequate. I do not have an inferiority complex. I am inferior. I do not have an adequacy complex. I am really inadequate. I am inadequate for what? Well, to achieve supernatural goals, I need supernatural resources. When you acknowledge that, then you go into a very different direction than wanting to overcome your inadequacy to become competent. You move in the direction of saying, my inadequacy becomes an opportunity for dependence on the Spirit of God in a way that can actually help me listen to the Spirit as I engage in SoulCare versus, with natural strength, coming up with all the right things to say. Look deep into your soul. I suggest you will find one of two ruling passions: either you are trying very hard to prove that you are adequate, or you are trusting God to work through your inadequacy. Competent people do a good job—dentists, plumbers, schoolteachers, and technicians—but it is inadequate people, people who know that they are inadequate, that become effectively usable by God, by the Spirit of God in the work of SoulCare.

What is the passion that rules within your soul as you engage in conversation with people, as I talk with my friend who is so discouraged? What is the passion that rules in my heart? The concept of ruling passion is crucial to becoming an effective provider of SoulCare. And we will look at that more carefully in our next lesson.

Discussion Questions

According to Dr. Crabb, true confidence in providing SoulCare requires a deep sense of inadequacy. When we recognize the true goal of SoulCare, we have no choice but to feel profoundly inadequate in ourselves. Reflect on how feeling inadequate in ourselves can become the path to our becoming substantial, unique people, capable of providing powerful SoulCare.

Many people would assume that learning the theory and skills of SoulCare is all that is needed to become an effective SoulCarer. Dr. Crabb begins with a very different assumption, that discerning the passions that rule within you as a SoulCarer is absolutely essential. What do you perceive to be the dangers of ignoring this assumption? Illustrate your reasoning with examples from your own life or create a scenario that illustrates it.

How does Dr. Crabb relate the doctrine of the Trinity to SoulCare? Do you agree with his view? Explain.

Lesson 5 Study Guide

CC201

SoulCare Foundations I: The Basic Model

Brokenness: The Key to Releasing
the Power of SoulCare

Updated 2015



**Our Daily Bread
Christian University**

Objectives

In this lesson, Dr. Crabb describes the process that begins with facing one's self-centeredness, and leads to the discovery of "holy passions," which, when released, result in SoulCare.

When you complete this lesson, "Brokenness: The Key to Releasing the Power of SoulCare," you should be able to:

- Give an example of a self-centered approach to SoulCare.
- Describe the passion/wisdom method of counseling others.
- Define *passion* as used in the SoulCare discussions.
- Explain the concept of *inadequacy* as it relates to SoulCare.

Transcript

Course Title: SoulCare Foundations I: The Basic Model

Lesson Five: Brokenness: The Key to Releasing the Power of SoulCare

Your teacher for this course is noted psychologist, author, and speaker, Dr. Larry Crabb.

A good friend who trained under me in counseling years ago recently asked me, “Larry, are you emphasizing the notion of inadequacy more than you used to? Are you emphasizing that in order to be effective in SoulCare, you must embrace your personal inadequacy? Is that a bigger point than it used to be when you would teach counseling?” I answered “yes,” and I thought about that for a minute. And I believe the reason why I am doing that can be expressed very simply: when the goal is supernatural, the means must be supernatural. If you are really after something that only the Spirit of God can produce, well then, of course you are inadequate. And then your inadequacy becomes a source of delight as opposed to despondency. You begin to celebrate your inadequacy, because you realize with Paul, “who is adequate for such things?” I am not. It takes the pressure off, and allows me to become a conduit of the Spirit of God as opposed to the person who has to make things happen. Let me illustrate that point.

A close friend some time ago called me one night and he said, “Larry do you have a chance to chat?” And I did, and we took in about an hour of chatting, and he gave me an opportunity for SoulCare that I very much valued. What he said to me is this; he said, “Something has come up that I don’t know how to handle, and it is ripping me apart, and I don’t know what to do.” I asked him what it was, of course, and he said, “Well, I just found out that my daughter had an abortion. I didn’t even know that she wasn’t a virgin. I didn’t know that she was pregnant, and now I discover that my daughter had an abortion. And I don’t know how to handle it. I just wanted to talk to you and get your thoughts on it.”

How did I feel? Well, I can recall where I was sitting when the phone call came, and I can recall talking to this good friend of mine and feeling inside, “I wish he had called somebody else.” I do not know what to do. I have two sons. I do not have a daughter. I have never gone through his experience. I’ve never had to face the reality of a daughter who’s had an abortion. The daughter did not know that her dad knew. What does he do? Does he tell her? Does he not tell her? How does he talk about it? How does he bring it up, if he brings it up at all? I am supposed to know all these things? I am inadequate for that. I really do not know. Oh, I have opinions. I have thoughts we can share, we can discuss—and that is legitimate to do—but I remember thinking to myself, “You know what I want more than anything else from my friend? I want my friend to want God. I want my friend to want to honor God in the middle of the situation with his daughter.” And I think as we were chatting on the phone, my friend’s preoccupation understandably—mine would have been too—was “how do I effectively deal with my daughter? Then when I figure that out, I will ask God to help.” Well, that is not all about God. That is all about him and his family and making life work, as opposed to glorifying God. And in the middle of all that, feeling as inadequate as I did, I recall what happened. I thought to myself on the phone, I do not know what to say. I am inadequate for these things. But then I thought, I would love it if the Spirit of God would work in

my friend's heart so that what he cared about more than anything else was knowing and enjoying God and revealing the character of God to his daughter. And I believed that if the appetite were stirred up that he would be given wisdom from the Spirit—not from me, because I am inadequate—but wisdom from Spirit and move toward his daughter. I cannot give him all the details of how to do it—I do not know.

So what I did on the phone was chat for some length of time. I said to him, “You know what I would suggest we do is spend the next few minutes on the phone both being quiet and both centering ourselves in the presence of God (many people call this centering prayer). Let us center ourselves in the presence of God and I will do all that I know to do to listen to the Spirit, as I bring you and your family and your precious daughter into the presence of the Trinity. And I want you to do the same thing. Take yourself and your daughter into the presence of God and listen to what the Spirit might be saying. Don't listen just to hear what you ought to do to straighten out your daughter—that isn't the question—but become aware of your relationship with the Father through Christ as the Spirit leads.”

Then we spent some time in prayer, and I believe that the results were not life changing in a final sense. They never are. (The only thing that changes our life finally is when we go home to heaven. So if somebody wants me to cure them, I guess I have to kill them so that they go to heaven. That is not very ethical so I cannot do that. There is always going to be more room for growth.) As we prayed together, what happened was not climactic and changed everything—the man still struggles and his family still struggles—but what happened was that he became aware of what was inside of him.

“You know, this situation is really hard. I wish it never would have happened. I'm worried. I'm scared. But there's something more in me than worry and fear and a pressure to handle my daughter right. I really love my Lord, and I really trust Him. And I actually worshiped Him in the middle of this.” And as that centering prayer stirred up his appetite, then together, we had a profitable conversation about how he might move toward his daughter and toward the rest of his family in dealing with this real crisis.

I would like to think that for just a few minutes in my conversation with my friend, that my inadequacy was not an obstacle to SoulCare; it became the opportunity for real SoulCare to take place. The story is told that during the Crimean War that Florence Nightingale, the well-known heroic nurse, was passing down a hospital corridor among all the wounded soldiers. Her heart was bleeding as she saw the men physically bleeding. The story is told that she was drawn to one particular soldier who was lying there so sad and so full of despair with major wounds. As she looked down into his face, apparently something alive within her came out of her, an energy, a passion, a reality, that was deep within her came out and poured into this young soldier, and as she looked down at him he looked up at her and he said these words, “You're Christ to me.”

What would it mean for you and I to become the kind of people that could talk to our friends when they discover their daughters have had an abortion, who could talk to our friends who are not getting along with their spouses who just realized their spouse is going to divorce them, who could talk to our friends when they are struggling with depression or panic attacks or obsessive compulsive disorders, all these things that we quickly refer to psychologists. What would happen if

we became the kind of people that, as we interacted with them, that something came out of us and into them where they said, “You know, right now you are Christ to me”?

What is SoulCare all about? How do we become the kind of people that can do that? Paul, in Ephesians 4:11-16, a few excerpts from that passage said this. He said that God gave a variety of people, apostles and teachers, to the church of Jesus Christ, to the community of believers in order for the purpose of preparing God’s people for service so that the body of Christ may be built up. In other words, their souls can be cared for and cured and changed and transformed until we all become mature. There is the compelling vision. He gave people to the church to care for souls so that we can be built up until we all become mature, like Jesus, whose central preoccupation was to honor the Father, whose appetite for God was stronger than His appetite to avoid pain. That is why He went to the cross—not because it felt good, it felt bad. It was the worst suffering any man ever endured. But He was willing to do that because His appetite for the Father was stronger than His appetite for personal comfort. God says that He gave to the church people who, when they move into other peoples lives, can be prepared to move toward maturity, to become mature. Then he uses this remarkable phrase, “obtaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

Well again, there is the compelling vision: becoming like Christ. Paul goes on and he says, “as we in love, speak truth, SoulCare will happen.” As we in love, speak truth, we will grow up into Christ because of Him—it all depends on Him. I did not help my friend that night. I was simply a facilitator of God’s helping. As we depend on Him, as we in love, speak truth, then from Him—He is the source—the whole body grows and builds itself up in love. And hear the phrase “as each part does its work.” You are a part of the body of Christ. If you are a follower of Jesus, then you are a part of the community of God. And if you are taking this course, that tells me that you long to be involved in SoulCare. You long to be one of the people that God has sent into the body of Christ to in love, speak truth.

God has raised up people to care for souls. He always does. But I think we can say with sad accuracy that true shepherds of the soul are in short supply these days. How many people do you know who are struggling alone? Probably, you are. To some degree, I am. I have a few people that are very meaningful to me—they mean the world to me—who care for my soul. But there are not many. You want to become a carer of souls; you want to be one of the people that God has provided to move into other people’s lives so that becoming like Christ is something that actually happens in the interior world of who they are. In love—there is the passion—speak truth— there is the wisdom. Recall, we are developing a passion/wisdom model of SoulCare. That is what we are after.

What are the passions inside of you? Are you speaking in love, or are you speaking to prove you are adequate? Are you speaking to impress somebody with how spiritual you are? Are you speaking to prove that you know what you are talking about? Or are you in love, speaking truth? Do you have wisdom about what is going on in people’s lives who are struggling? Or have you been caught up in a worldview that opposes the Scripture, and you have come to understand that what is going on beneath the surface of people’s lives really is different than what the Bible teaches? Do you have an understanding of fancy things like psychopathology, where you look at a person who injures himself or herself, or who is anorexic, and you come up with a secular understanding, as opposed to a biblical understanding of the soul? Do you have wisdom for knowing how to enter the soul? That is what we are all about—passion and wisdom.

Now at this point in our presentation, we are still talking about the first element. We are talking about passions. And I hope you are understanding what I mean by the word “passions.” Now I know the word “passion” can mean a variety of things. All I am talking about are what are the things that stir meaningfully within you as you are interacting with somebody else, that stirs so deeply, that in fact they rule within you as you talk, as you think, as you exchange conversation with a friend. What are the ruling passions? That is what I want to think about with you a little more carefully.

I want to suggest to you that you want, just like me, to have a passion within you that is holy. You want to have a passion within you that is rooted in Christ, rooted in the Spirit of Christ, a passion that says that “I have no greater joy than to see my children walk in truth. I have no greater joy than to see you honor God in dealing with your daughter who has just gone through this moral struggle. I have no greater joy than seeing you become a godly man or a godly woman. I have no greater joy, son or daughter, than seeing you become a godly person, whether you are rich or poor, whether you are successful in your job, or you get fired. My deepest goal for you is that you become godly.” Is that the passion that is within you as you care for other people’s souls? You want it, and I want it. You want Paul to be able to say I am in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you—that is what I want. How do we get to the point that that becomes our ruling passion?

A couple of observations: passion, the holy passions of God, the spiritual energy of Christ that Paul said was powerfully working in him when he cared for souls, the passion that you and I want that is required for being effective in SoulCare— that passion is released, not through choice but through brokenness. You cannot sit down with somebody who is hurting and say, “I will choose to be filled with love.” You cannot do that. If the real essence of who you are in Christ is to come out of you, and you are to become Florence Nightingale to that wounded soldier to where he looks up and says, that “you’re Christ to me,” if that is going to happen and is going to come about, not because you made a deliberate choice and you have done the right things—you had devotions this morning, you memorized ten verses, you went to church last Sunday—that is not it. The issue is, is there a brokenness over all the other passions that are interfering with the release of love’s passion?

I want to develop that thought with you, because if you and I are to become effective in SoulCare then we have to grasp the reality that the root to becoming effective in SoulCare is not pleasant. It is brokenness, and brokenness is not a pleasant experience. To make sense of what I am talking about, it seems to me that we need to understand two things.

First, we need to articulate the difference between selfishness and self-centeredness. (Keep that in your head for a minute, and we will discuss it in a moment.) The first thing we need to understand is, if we are to become broken people, out of whom the perfume of Jesus flows as the box of perfume is broken and the true fragrance of Christ comes out, if that is going to happen, we are going to have to be broken people; to understand that, we are going to have to realize the difference between how our culture thinks of selfishness versus what the Bible talks about in terms of self-centeredness.

The second thing that we are going to have to understand to realize that brokenness is required to become effective providers of SoulCare, is that the passion of love exists in each of us, if we are

followers of Jesus, beneath the passion of self-centeredness. Two points that you have heard me say—let me develop them with you and see if I can make some sense out of it.

Again what we are talking about here, we are talking about releasing the passion of Christ within us and that requires brokenness. To understand that, first a distinction between selfishness versus self-centeredness needs to be made. Again, visualize the image of an iceberg. You have seen that several times now, where the iceberg has the exterior world visible above the waterline that anybody can see who happens to be in the area versus the massive structure of ice beneath the waterline that nobody can see that is there, but nobody can see it. The invisible world, the interior world—keep that image in your mind, as I present an illustration to you.

I want you to visualize in your mind a husband coming home after work, and he has had a tough day at work. He feels exhausted, and things have not gone all that well, and he is kind of frustrated and discouraged. And he walks in the door, and there is his wife in the kitchen making dinner—sounds like a '50s television show—and he goes right to the television. Does not even stop by and say, “Hi Honey, how are you doing,” not even, “What’s for dinner?” He is just tired, and all he can think about is what a lousy day he had at work. And so he goes to the television and turns it on. From the couch, he barks, “What’s for dinner? I’m hungry!”

How do you feel about that man as you observe that man? Well, I think we would all agree that is pretty selfish. That is selfishness. That is “above the waterline behavior” that any honest observer would say that he did not think at all about his wife. He was so preoccupied with himself—yeah, he is hurting and he is discouraged, but all he is thinking about is himself—and that is selfishness. Maybe it is kind of justified in some sense, some of us would say because he is discouraged, the day at work was bad—all those things are there. But whatever the reasons, he is behaving selfishly. There was nothing visible that moved toward his wife.

What do you do with that gentleman? Do you say to him, “You shouldn’t be like that. When you come home at night, I am going to be your SoulCarer, I’m your counselor, and when you walk in the door I don’t care how tired you are; you can at least walk by your wife and say to her, ‘Honey I am just tired and discouraged. I had a lousy day at work. I don’t want to ignore you, and I know you have had a long day, too, and I love you a bunch, I am just too tired to help with dinner, but I promise that I will clear the table after dinner’”? So you exhort the man to do that.

Tell me how effective exhortation can be in changing people? How effective has it been when God from Mount Sinai thundered and said, “Shape up. Here are the Ten Commandments”? Remember, Israel responded by saying, “We’ll do it all.” Did they do it all? No. The next night they came home, and they went right to the television and barked at their wife, “What’s for dinner?” There was no change in selfish behavior based on exhortation.

You know, from an unlikely source we get some insight into that. Sigmund Freud, no great friend of Christianity, began his whole system of psychoanalysis on one particular observation he made early in his career. And the observation he made early in his career was this: that when people were behaving above the waterline in ways that were ineffective, maladaptive, that were not working for them, that he would say, “You know, you really should not do this; I have a better plan. Do this.” But they would not change. He found himself saying, you know advice, accountability,

pressure, exhortation, they do not seem to change people. “I wonder,” Freud said as a very young man, “if there are not things below the waterline that have a lot of important power in the things that we do above the waterline.” Now Freud was wrong about a lot of things, but he was not wrong about the importance of what is going on in our interior worlds. What he thought was there and how to deal with it, he made a lot of mistakes. But he said, “know what is happening inside.” Selfish behavior, selfishness, behavior that is visible and takes into account nobody else, is the first illustration from that gentleman.

Picture a second husband, picture a husband coming home after work, and he has had an equally difficult day. Life has not gone well for him that day. He is discouraged. He is unhappy. He feels like a failure. He is down on himself. He is insecure. But suppose as he drives in his driveway, and as he walks in the door into his home, to himself he says—maybe without even hearing it; maybe it is part of his interior world that he denies—but suppose what is stirring within him in his interior world is a sentence like this: “I’m sure not much of a success at work. I didn’t sell a thing today, and we are not going to meet our bills this month, and I don’t know what I am doing. But you know what? At least I can be a good husband. I am going to come in and at least show my wife that I can be a pretty good husband and be kind to her. I can be a good Christian husband, even.” Suppose he is saying that to himself. And so he comes in and walks up to his wife and greets her very warmly and gives her a big kiss. And she says, “How was your day?” And he says, “You know, it really wasn’t very good, but I’m concerned about yours, too. How was your day?” And she shares her day. And they communicate about it. And he says, “Honey, you have had a long day, look, let me help you set the table—and you’ve made dinner already. I really appreciate that.” They have a good dinner. They talk about their days. They commiserate together. They encourage each other. He helps clear the table. We watch that and we say, fantastic, that man is not selfish.

Now, here is my question. Go below the waterline and what do you see? What I suggest you see, in the way I told the story, is self-centeredness. Why was the man nice to his wife? Above the waterline, selfish? No. Below the waterline, self-centered? Yes. What does that mean? Was his primary ruling passion as he went to his wife to bless her soul? Was his primary ruling passion as he went to his wife and helped with the dishes to honor God and to please God? Or was his central ruling passion, “I got to feel good about myself somehow. I guess this will work.” Whose soul is he taking care of? He is taking care of his own. That is self-centeredness. That is a problem.

The ruling passion of self-centeredness is in all of us. It can express itself in all sorts of ways, sometimes in ugly ways. Out of self-centeredness we do ugly things. People have affairs. People make fun of others. People are sarcastic. People are critical. Out of our self-centeredness, we become ugly people. But out of our self-centeredness, we can also become socially appealing people. And God looks at that and says you know, “All of your righteous deeds are no more attractive to me than filthy rags because in the core of your being, there is a radical self-centeredness.” That is bad news.

There is good news. The good news is the Gospel. I am going to tell you what the good news is: The good news is not only am I forgiven for all of my self-centeredness—not just my selfish behavior—not only am I forgiven for all of my self-centeredness because Jesus took all the punishment that my self-centeredness deserves, not only am I forgiven for that, but there is a whole new life beneath my self-centeredness that was planted there by the Spirit the day that I became a Christian.

Let me sketch it for you very simply. Back to the iceberg. You are the person who is providing SoulCare. You are the person who wants to engage in somebody else's life—to talk to your friend whose daughter just had an abortion, to talk to your friend whose wife just left him, to talk to your friend who is depressed and discouraged with life. You want to provide effective SoulCare.

Understand, if all you do is learn interpersonal techniques of empathy and good advice giving and learn how to pray with people, if that is all you do, let me suggest that what you could be offering that person is what I am going to call “counterfeit love.” It is going to be like that husband who came home and helped with the dishes. The wife liked it. You might get a good practice of SoulCare, if that is what you are doing. But you are not going to be achieving spiritual purposes. You are not going to be advancing the Kingdom. You are not going to be revealing God, living in His power, not living a supernatural life.

I recall a pastor friend of mine. I was preaching at his church. We were praying together before we preached, and in his prayer he said, “Lord, I’m so longing to lead a supernatural life.” Well, you long for that too. You will not lead a supernatural life if all you offer is counterfeit love. Understand, that your counterfeit love, even when it looks good, may be coming out of a deep, passionate self-centeredness. It may not be selfish. There is a distinction. It may not be selfish. It may not be bad behavior, where people would look at it and say, “Isn’t that awful,” but, in fact, what is happening inside of you spoils whatever good deeds you do. There is a passion of self-centeredness. There is a mess that we are going to look at much more carefully in the next presentation to make sure we understand it.

Now, here is the good news. The good news, and this is the second point I made earlier, is first to discover selfishness versus self-centeredness and the meaning of that, but now to realize that because of the Gospel God has put in the core of our being, beneath our self-centered passions, He has put (can I call them) Holy passions—passions that reflect the heart of God, passions that keep the Trinity relating so well for all these years—that is inside of me. Those passions are there.

In the depths of our soul (this is very good news), not only are we forgiven for all the ugliness that is there, but in the very deepest center of our being—so deep below the waterline that no person can go there unaided—lies the treasure of Holy passions that the Spirit of God put there at our conversion; and the Spirit of God can invigorate and release it.

Do you see? That is what happened with my friend. “Larry, my daughter had an abortion. I am troubled.” And something inside of him wanted to make his family life better. Do you blame him for that? Well, be a little bit careful here. Because if he is saying, I do not care about God’s glory; but I care about how my family works, then God blames him. He has got to be able to say, “God’s glory matters more than my family working. My family working matters a huge amount, but something matters more.” That capacity is deep within his soul. That capacity is deep within my soul. And I am able, as I listen to him tell his story, to not just give counterfeit love and not just respond by trying to be helpful so I can prove that I am a good counselor and he can say, “Wow, what a good friend you are, Larry”—that is self-centered motivation like the husband I talked about—but maybe there is something inside of me that is alive because of the Spirit of Christ that can be released.

In the next presentation, which will be the last one that will deal with the issue of passions before we start talking about the issue of wisdom—the other half of this model—I want to look one more time at the mess and put some substance to this idea that there is a mess inside of us. I want to put some substance to it and explore our self-centeredness. I want to explore it enough to give us reason for brokenness. Only when we see how awful this is, and we are broken by it, we will begin to discover the passions that are beneath. We will look at that more carefully in the next presentation.

Discussion Questions

Describe an event where your visible behavior (above the waterline) appeared commendable, but your inside look revealed a profoundly self-centered motivation. To better understand the reality of brokenness, consider what stirs within you as you face your subtle self-centeredness. Write out your reflections and contemplate where this discovery might lead you, both as a SoulCarer and in your walk with God.

Do you agree with Dr. Crabb, that holy passions reside in the center of a believer's being? Explain your answer and use Scripture to back your reasoning.

When you face your self-centeredness, you are not drawn to it (refer to your answer to Part 1, above). How does that fact validate the reality that there is something better and deeper in you?

Lesson 6 Study Guide

CC201

SoulCare Foundations I: The Basic Model

The Good and the Bad in the Human Soul:
Self-Need vs. Soul-Thirst

Updated 2015



**Our Daily Bread
Christian University**

Objectives

In this lesson, Dr. Crabb stresses that our longing for relationship is legitimate—but that longing can become an illegitimate need/demand. What happens when this illegitimate neediness becomes our bad, ruling passion when we give SoulCare?

When you complete this lesson, “The Good and the Bad in the Human Soul: Self-Need vs. Soul-Thirst,” you should be able to:

- Identify the common, internal dynamics of human beings that result from 1) the fact that we were created in the image of God, and 2) we are fallen.
- Recognize the self-centeredness in your own soul.
- Discuss how bearing the image of God relates to community.
- Explain how turning away from God causes our longing for love to become a demand.
- Understand why we justify our behaviors, even if they are hurtful or anti-biblical.

Transcript

Course Title: SoulCare Foundations I: The Basic Model

Lesson Six: Brokenness: The Good and the Bad in the Human Soul: Self-Need vs. Soul-Thirst

Your teacher for this course is noted psychologist, author, and speaker, Dr. Larry Crabb.

In this lesson, I want us to look at the content of our interior world. I want us to understand something of the self-centered mess that gets in the way of providing effective SoulCare.

You are sitting across from somebody who says to you, “I really feel like I am on a thin edge.” What do you do? Do you probe? What does SoulCare look like at that moment? Perhaps you might ask an open-ended question. You might say, “Well, what’s going on? You say you are on a thin edge. Tell me what is happening in your life. If you want to discuss it more, I would love to listen.”

Suppose the person said, in response to that, “You know, I really don’t know what is going on. All I know is that I break down and cry at least a couple times a day. I just feel so tired and defeated.” Now, does that not just scream at you in terms of, “I want to ask a question. I want to know what to do. Could not somebody who is going to teach me how to do SoulCare tell me what to do at this point? What do I do?” It is an opportunity for SoulCare.

But you have heard me suggest so far that you must not begin with the question, what do I do? The question you must begin with is, what is going on inside of me? All of us, I have suggested, are deeply self-centered and the passion of self-centeredness rules within us and in most of our interactions with people. In a child, it is obvious. A child will say, “I don’t want my vegetables, give me my dessert, I want it now!” We say, well that is just being self-centered. You have to live by higher rules than your own desires. In a child that may be obvious, and in us it is a little less than obvious sometimes. To a hurting friend, we might say, “Things sound really tough, but I want you to know that I believe in you.” Maybe as we are saying that, in a voice that is so soft we cannot hear in our own souls—in our own interior worlds—we are saying something like, “There, I think I did the right thing. Did I measure up to the standards? I think I proved myself to be adequate.”

What is the ruling passion? That is an illustration of self-centeredness. As I have indicated before, how often has a husband seen his wife crying, and comes over to her and holds her and asks, “Honey, what’s wrong? I want to be here for you.” But to himself, he says, “I hope that was a good thing to do. It really seems to me that I’ve done a good job with her tonight. So the next time I am hurting I am going to expect something from her.” There is a self-centeredness that underlies a lot of what we do.

So often in our attempts to provide SoulCare the passions that control us are not the passions of the Spirit of Christ. They are the passions of self-centeredness. I want to spend our time putting content to that. I want to suggest to you that the most natural energy in each of our souls is self-centeredness. When someone shares a concern with us, the very first thing we need to do is to pay

attention to our own natural inclination to think of ourselves. I'm really naturally more concerned about me than I am about you, even when your life is falling apart. That is a hard thing to say. It is a hard thing to see. But it is true.

Here are a couple of illustrations to make the point, and then let me put some conceptual content to the idea. My wife and I have been married now for thirty-four years. We met when we were ten years old. We could not start dating then because Rachel was going steady with Karl. When she had the wisdom to break up with Karl when we were both twelve, I stepped into her life and we began dating. During the years of our courtship, we fell in love. What does that mean?

Well, I was a guy who had my set of struggles. I used to be a bad stutterer. I would not be able to say words that began with "L"—my name is Larry—or words that began with "P." I was raised among a church group called the Plymouth Brethren. I was raised in Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania. When Dad wanted to buy a Plymouth, I said "Get a Ford"—at least I can pronounce it! I had problems. And I was not sure if a guy that stuttered was very valuable, was very accepted, was very liked. I was laughed at. I was jeered. But Rachel never laughed at me. There was something in the way she responded to me that made me feel like beneath the stuttering problem that maybe I had value. So, we fell in love.

I wonder what that means. At age twenty-one, we got married. We stood before the preacher, and we said all the right words. We followed the directions of the pastor who married us. I said things like, "I promise to love, honor and cherish . . . until death do us part." But suppose you could have seen beneath the waterline into the passions that were ruling in my heart at the point of my marrying my wife thirty-four years ago. I think what you would have seen would have been something like this, I think what you would have heard would have been something like this, "You know, I really had not felt very good about myself in a lot of ways (for a lot of other reasons that are more severe than stuttering, but that was one part of it). I really don't feel very good about myself. I am not sure who I really am. But, you are a pretty girl. You are intelligent. You're fun. You're bright. You're attractive. You're everything I want in a girl. You seem to like me. I like the way you make me feel. Therefore, my commitment to you is to marry you, to give you the chance to keep on making me feel about me the way I want to feel. Do we have the terms clear?" That is what I was saying in the core of my soul.

My wife, on the other hand, was saying something very similar. My wife, and of course I say this only with explicit permission, has been the victim of sexual abuse. When she stood before the preacher to marry me, I believe what she was saying was something like this: "I have been enjoyed in such an illegitimate way that made me feel cheap, that made me feel dangerous. But Larry, after my courtship with you I've come to believe that you value me at the level of my soul. You see something beautiful in me that you are maybe going to cherish. Maybe you are going to treat me with a level of dignity, care, and concern. And I like the way you make me feel. That means that I must love you, so I am going to marry you, and let me explain the terms. I am marrying you so that you can treat me the way I want to be treated, so I can begin to feel the way I long to feel, which is so different than the way I felt in the middle of my sexual abuse, and many other circumstances. Those are the terms."

Can you see the obvious self-centeredness that underlies even the beginnings of a good marriage with two people that love each other? Can you see that the relationship is really not dissimilar from the relationship between a tick and a dog? What is a tick there for, to bless the dog? Or is a tick experiencing its own emptiness and looking for a nourishing host to sink its, whatever it has, into the host's flesh and suck out of the host what would bring fullness to the tick?

See, I believe in most relationships—marriage included, a parent-child relationship, SoulCare relationships—the fundamental dynamic that is often going on is no different than a tick-on-a-dog relationship. Of course, the problem with most marriages is that there are two ticks and no dog—that presents a few problems. In all of our relationships, the self-centeredness is what really gets in the way. That happens in parenting. We have two sons, two sons we are enormously proud of, who God has blessed in wonderful ways, so we are excited about it. But I will tell you, not much thanks to me—maybe no thanks to me, maybe it is all of God—when our kids were little, I know that I wanted so much to have our kids be godly and wonderful and responsible and all the things that a parent wants their children to be. So I decided, I am going to see to it that my kids mature into godly young men. I am going to teach them the Bible every day of their lives. You know what I did? For family devotions, I literally purchased an overhead projector. I made my two poor kids sit in front of me with an overhead projector. I did Old Testament survey, New Testament survey. By the time my kids were six years old, they could define the word “propitiation.”

What is the energy going on inside of me as I am laboring so hard to get my kids godly—is it love for God? Is it wanting to bring praise to the glory of His name? Is that what I am after? Or, am I saying, “I know how I will feel if my kids rebel. I know how I will feel if my kids do well. I want my kids to respond in wonderful ways. I am going to work really hard at it”? Is it possible that, even what appears to be our best intentioned behavior, whether it is as husbands and wives, or parents with their children, or with friends or with people for whom you are providing SoulCare, is it possible that there is really something going on in the core of us that interferes with the process of relationship, that interferes with SoulCare, that is fundamentally the disease, the poison of self-centeredness?

Well, I want to think about that with you. I want to put some conceptual framework around the self-centeredness. The reason I want to do it is because I want us to understand self-centeredness clearly enough for us to be able to recognize it in ourselves to the point where we are disgusted by it, and to the point where we see it is so pervasive and strong that we are helpless in its presence, that all we can do is stand broken in the presence of a Holy God and trust His redeeming grace to not punish us with the punishment that we deserve. Maybe in our brokenness before God over how self-centered we are, maybe that is the process through which the love of Christ begins to bubble up in our hearts and come out in our SoulCare, and we begin provide the kind of relationship that SoulCare requires.

Well, let us look at self-centeredness this way. In order to understand the profound disease of self-centeredness within every human soul, we need to understand two theological concepts, two very basic truths that the Bible teaches. The first is: we need to understand something of what it means when the Bible says that we bear the image of God. I am created in the image of God and so are you. Now whatever else that very rich and deep theological concept means, it means at least this: that you and I in some way resemble God. Now let us just keep that in our minds. We bear the

image of God and in some way we resemble God. Something has happened. The second theological truth that we have to grasp is that we are fallen beings. 1. We bear God's image; but 2. Something has happened. It happened way back in the Garden of Eden. It has been affecting us ever since. Every single person who has been born, except Jesus, has been affected by a disease that is now in the center of our image-bearing souls. We have to understand that. If we are going to come to grips with what self-centeredness is really all about, then we are going to need to understand that the profound issues of self-centeredness emerge from understanding these two theological truths.

1. We bear God's image. Again, whatever else that means, it means that we resemble God. How? Do we look like God? Does God have a body that is like ours with five fingers on this hand and five fingers on that hand and a nose and a couple of ears? How do we resemble God? Well, let me suggest to you what most theologians would agree is at least a part of the center of our resemblance to God, and that is this: that you and I were built with the capacity to relate, just as the God in whose image we were created is a relational God. Recall, I said earlier that perhaps the cornerstone doctrine of the entire Christian religion is the doctrine of the Trinity. God is a relational God. He exists eternally as a community, and you and I have been built, have been designed, with the capacity to enter into relationships that are like the relationship that God has forever enjoyed within His own community of the three persons of the Godhead. To say as simply as I possibly can, I would put it this way: to bear His image means that you and I have the capacity to enjoy good relating. We have the capacity to enjoy good relating. To elaborate that with just one simple addition, we have the twin capacity to receive love as the Son received love from the Father. The Father was loved by the Son. We have the twin capacity to receive love, and we have the capacity to give love.

Now, because you and I have the capacity for love, the capacity to receive love, what follows very naturally and necessarily is this: that whenever we are in a situation where we are not receiving love—whenever we are in a situation where we do not feel love coming toward us, where we do not feel the acceptance and the enjoyment and the celebration of who we are by somebody else, whenever the love is not coming toward us—we become aware, not of our capacity to enjoy love; rather, we become aware of our desperate longing to receive love. What is a capacity becomes a longing when the capacity is not filled.

How many of you would say that every moment of your life you are just deeply aware of being loved by your spouse, your parents, your kids, your friends, your pastor? How many of you would say that of every moment there is a love just flowing into you that feels just so wonderful? Or how many of you would say, far more spiritually, that you are aware of God's love for you at every moment? When the diagnosis comes back and the doctor says "cancer," something in you bursts out with, "I know how deeply God loves me?" Is that where you are? That was not where I was when I got that diagnosis.

How many of you are aware of how deeply God loves you when something happens in your family that breaks your heart? Or one of your children goes in a very, very bad direction? And you have worked so hard to be the right kind of a parent. You immediately say, "My longing for love is so deeply satisfied." Are you thoroughly enjoying the fact that God is deeply loving you? Our health as persons, the health of our souls, depends on whether we first receive love (because we are dependent beings, we must be loved by someone outside of ourselves), and then our

health depends just as much on whether we give away the love that we receive, because that is what the Trinity does. They receive love from each other. They give love to each other. It's an interdependent relationship of fully-loving people, radically other-centered persons who give themselves to the other and who receive the love that they so much enjoy from the other.

If we are in a personal relationship with God—if you are a Christian, and you are; I am a Christian, and I am—then it does mean that we are ongoingly receiving the unconditional love that we were designed to enjoy. So what that means is at my core, even as I stand before you right now, whatever else is happening in my life, and you do not know what is happening in my life—you do not know how my wife and I are getting along right now; you do not know how my kids are doing; you don't know my friendships are going; you don't know much about me—but, you do know this: that because I am in a relationship with God, that fundamentally at my core, I am not a needy person. Because I have been given the love that my soul longs for in relationship with God. I am not a fundamentally needy person.

How many Christians do you know who come across as needy? Why? Why is there this lack of awareness of the fact that God's love has touched our souls at the deepest level where satisfaction becomes our real reality? Why are we out of touch with that and so often experience ourselves as needy?

We bear the image of God. We long to be loved. We are in a relationship with God; therefore, we are loved. Therefore, we can say that we are not needy persons; we are satisfied persons. Again, that is not our experienced reality. It is not what is happening inside of us much of the time. Why?

Well, that takes us to the second truth, that we are fallen people. We bear the image of God, Truth 1.; but 2. We are fallen people. Now, what does it mean that we are fallen? I think that one of the great problems in the church today is that we understand sin in a very trivial, superficial fashion. With many audiences, I have said to people, "Write down the last time you've sinned—don't take long to think about it, just write down the last time you have sinned." People will look kind of confused and think, "last time I sinned ... when was the last time I sinned?" They will write down something like, well I went faster than the speed limit allows yesterday, so I guess that was breaking the government's rule, and I guess that is sin.

What is our awareness of sin? Is our awareness of sin only what happens above the waterline, the things that we visibly do that transgress known standards? Or do we have a deeper understanding of sin? What does it mean that we are sinners, that we are fallen people? Think about it this way: even though we are bearers of God's image, even though we resemble God and we were designed with the capacity to relate to both receive love and to give love—even though that is true, and even though we are people who have the privilege of bearing God's image in a way where we can move toward God in worship for the love that He has given us and then take the love He has given us and move it towards other people and give it to them, even though that is the design, even though that is the way we are built and with the capacities we have—something has happened. We are fallen people.

What that fundamentally means is this: Every one of us has turned away from God as the source of the love that we need. Every one of us has turned away from God, and we have really told Him

that essentially we are just “not interested in receiving the kind of the love You provide.” Recall that very disturbing passage in Jeremiah, where God looks out at His people, and He calls the heavens, the stars, the sun, the moon and He says, “Come here, take a look at this. Here are my people who are thirsty. They long for the water that I can give. They long for the relationship that I can provide. Look what every one of them is doing; they are walking right by the springs of living water. They are turning away from Me and they are going over to other sources. They are digging for themselves broken cisterns that really can’t provide water for their souls at all. They are foolish people; sin is absolute insanity.”

We are fallen people who take who we are as image-bearers and turn away from God and say to somebody else, “You take care of me.” Do you see that is the deal with my wife? When I met Rachel at age ten, I thought she was pretty, but she was taken. At age twelve, she became available and I stepped into her life. We had a courtship, and I think that there was something inside of me that said, “I long to receive something that gives me a deep sense of my value, a deep sense of my worth, a deep sense that I am loved, a deep sense that I am wanted, a deep sense that I am enjoyed. I long for that. You know, God’s my Savior ... and I will go to Heaven ... and I worship him on Sundays, but what I really want is something that God can’t provide. Rachel, you are doing a pretty good job. Tell ya what, let’s get married.” That is a fallen image-bearer who moves toward a woman out of the energy of self-centeredness.

Now, let me tell you a very, very tragic thing that happens. When you and I turn from God, and all of us naturally do exactly that, our longing for love becomes a demand. No longer do we simply turn to God with a notion of “I long for love, and you have given it to me. I am a satisfied person who’s whole. I am not an empty person. I am not a ghost; I am a solid person. I am an alive person who can give of my substance to another. I can love my wife when she lets me down. I can love my husband when he’s not there for me because I am not desperately demanding his love. I am full. I have the love of God.” When you turn from God, that longing to receive love turns into a demand. Now the mood is, “Look, this longing is a need and you jolly well better satisfy it. Or at least somebody better!” We become absolutely ruled by the passion. This is not extreme language. There is no hyperbole here. This is what really happens if you take an honest inside look into your own heart. We become absolutely, not partly, ruled by the passion to get somebody to give us at least a little of what we need. Now, whose well being are we thinking of? Well, ourselves. That is called self-centeredness. I want somebody to give to me what I deeply need, and these longings that could be satisfied in a relationship with God now become desperate demands.

You all can relate to this: you have been in relationships where there has been some level of rejection or some level of criticism, where someone has not enjoyed you, where you have been put down or demeaned. What do you feel at that point? Why does that pain feel so intense? Because, you were designed to experience something very, very different. The real pain of not receiving love becomes something (now listen carefully) that is so deep and so bad and so hurtful that every one of us takes the position that whatever provides relief from that pain feels justified.

Why does the man who has an affair rarely feel profound guilt, but feels somehow justified, even though he knows that it is not the law of God? Why does the person who gets a divorce say, “I know this is wrong; it goes against God, but I just have to do it. But I know that God will forgive and He will understand?” Because there is a pain within that justifies whatever measures we take

for relief. Folks, this is happening inside me; it is happening inside of you. It is happening inside of the people for whom we provide SoulCare. This is the dynamic, this is the reality, this is the passion, this is the self-centeredness that is going to get in the way of SoulCare.

Fallen image-bearers, we can say then, feel an inner neediness that drives them, like the thirst of a person in the desert. We are ruled, therefore we can say, very simply, by self-need. Now, let us look at it this way: let us go back to our familiar iceberg once again. Look down beneath the surface into my interior world, and maybe the first thing that we are going to see is what I am going to call “self-need.” As I come to you to provide SoulCare, am I fundamentally saying, “Yeah, I want to provide you SoulCare, but I have needs, and I want my needs met in this relationship of SoulCare”? If that is the fundamental thing you are saying, it is going to interfere with the power that you might have to provide meaningful SoulCare.

Self-need, the first reality: I have got to find somebody who is going to take care of me. Of course the fact is that I do not trust anybody to take care of me. I have learned, as everybody has learned, that absolute trust in anybody is suicide. Have any of you, even with the best parents in the world, experienced a parent who has been completely and fully and wonderfully sensitive to your every need? Nobody ever has. There is no husband, there is no wife, there is no parent, there is no child, there is no friend, there is no pastor who has ever done that, and so we learn that we have this self-need, but nobody is going to do it for us. Therefore, what I must do, is, I must take responsibility to get my needs met.

The second dynamic that we experience in the deepest part of our soul, therefore, I would call “self- management.” I am committed to taking care of myself. Self-need: I hurt. I need to be loved and honored and valued. Self-management: I will find some way to get what I need, whether it is by depending upon my natural talents to impress people or a social style that is analytical or fun. Whatever it is, I am going to find some strategy in relating that is going to get you to get me something of what I need.

Self-need: the spirit of entitlement—it is what I need. “Give it to me, you should!” Self-management: the style of manipulation. You see the Bible takes these two ideas of self-need and self-management and just calls it the flesh. It is the driving energy in everybody’s soul apart from God.

So you want to provide SoulCare, and I want to provide SoulCare. I want to sit down with a friend who tells me his daughter has had an abortion. I want to sit down with a friend who tells me his wife has left him and tell him, “I would love to provide SoulCare.” But this is the energy inside of me: I can’t do it. But if I am a Christian, what has happened at the point of my Christianity is, in the core of my soul something else has been planted. Now it is not just the energy of self-need and self-management, but now I become aware that in the core of my soul there is a thirst that only God can meet. And now as a redeemed, fallen, image-bearer, my appetite for God is implanted within me and I turn to Him, and I say “God, it is not my wife, it is not my husband, it is not my kids, it is not my friends—somehow it is You! You are the one I depend on. You are the one that I am going to trust. You are the one that I am going to enjoy. You are the one that I am going to celebrate. You are everything. You are all that I need.” There is a soul-thirst in the core of my being, and the soul-thirst, the more I relate to God, leads to a deep soul-trust, that says “God, you really are supplying me with everything that I need.”

Folks, if you and I are going to become effective in SoulCare, then we are going to have to learn what it means to live out of the deepest part of our being. The thirst that is satisfied by God, the appetite for God that only He can satisfy, and a trust in Him that says, “Even when you do not like me, even when you are hard on me, even when I fail you, I can still move toward you.”

With the passions of the Spirit, we are now prepared to think about, “What does it mean to enter another person’s life?” We have talked about passion. Now we are going to talk about wisdom.

Discussion Questions

We can all agree that our longing for relationship is legitimate. When does that longing become an illegitimate need/demand? How can this illegitimate neediness become our bad, ruling passion when we give SoulCare? Illustrate from a recent conversation in your own life or create a scenario that illustrates the point.

The flesh is most subtly expressed in our style of relating. For example:

- We don't share where we hurt because we are afraid no one will come through.
- We choose words that have a better chance of being well-received than blessing another.
- Our antennae are out to see how people feel about us and we often react to that perception. We may come across as needy or cynical or we may pretend we do not care and come across as self-sufficient.

At this stage, are you starting to recognize how the way you relate to others expresses fleshly energy and passion? Discuss and illustrate what you are discovering.

Lesson 7 Study Guide

CC201

SoulCare Foundations I: The Basic Model

Entering the Battle for Another's Soul:
The First Step

Updated 2015



**Our Daily Bread
Christian University**

Objectives

In this lesson, Dr. Crabb explains the important role that vision plays in the life of the SoulCare provider, and how a proper vision leads to perseverance in the SoulCare process.

When you complete this lesson, “Entering the Battle for Another’s Soul: The First Step,” you should be able to:

- Discuss the role of curiosity in connecting to the soul of another.
- Explain the important role that vision plays in the provision of SoulCare.
- Discuss ways in which vision can lead to perseverance in the SoulCare process.
- Express in written form your vision for another person.

Transcript

Course Title: SoulCare Foundations I: The Basic Model

Lesson Seven: Entering the Battle for Another's Soul: The First Step

Your teacher for this course is noted psychologist, author, and speaker, Dr. Larry Crabb.

It is time to enter the battle for someone's soul, to engage with someone in a way that arouses their appetite for Christ to the point where all other appetites become secondary—no longer demands but merely desires. We have talked, so far, about what it means to develop the passions that are required in order to meaningfully enter somebody else's interior world. And now we want to shift gears a bit and talk about the wisdom that is required so that when we enter somebody else's soul we have some idea of what to expect, and how to move around, and how to talk about the things that we discover. What does it mean to develop the wisdom to move into somebody else's interior world so we can enter the battle for their soul?

Now make no mistake about it—it is a battle. There are dark forces in each of our souls. We talked in our last lesson about the fact that in me and in you, and in everybody with whom we speak, there is this dynamic force called self-need. I matter, nobody matters more. God does not matter as much as I do. My well being is the point. Self-need and self-management: “I will be in control. I will handle this embarrassing situation. I will maneuver my kids, whether it is buying overhead projectors for family devotions. I will do whatever is required to see to it that I manage my world so my needs are met.” That is in me as a SoulCarer, and that is in the person that's receiving SoulCare from me. That is in each of us.

We want to understand what it means to move into somebody's interior world and to pour out the life of Christ wisely, through verbal expression, to pour out the life of Christ that is within us in a way that actually invigorates the life of Christ that is in somebody else. A good friend of mine has often put it this way. He said, “You know you are in a good conversation, you know you are in a SoulCaring conversation, if when the conversation is over something in you is more inflamed, more alive toward God than it was before the conversation.” You know, and I know, we have been in lots of conversations where after the conversation, I want to worship less than before the conversation. Now I must take responsibility for what I am to do with that, but the effect of a person who is providing SoulCare is to invigorate the appetite for God.

Now let me sketch that very simply, so you get a visual picture of what I am talking about. Now we are going to introduce two people, both by the metaphor of the iceberg, and we are going to suggest that each person has an exterior world. And the person that is coming to you for SoulCare is somebody who has made known a concern, somebody who has said, “my marriage is struggling,” or “I'm kind of discouraged,” or “I feel tired all the time ... on a thin edge ... crying a lot.” Whatever the problem is, they have made known their concern. Now if all we provide is something like advice or empathy or perhaps accountability or exhortation, I am going to suggest that it is one person's exterior world talking to another person's exterior world. That is not SoulCare. The person makes known their mess. They give you some understanding of what is happening inside

of them, their background, the difficulties with their parents, the insecurities that they feel, and all the struggles that are inside, but you have a mess as well. In your interior world, you have the mess of self-need and self-management; and they have the mess of self-need and self-management. Suppose that out of your self-need and your self-management you come on as an expert therapist who is attempting to somehow repair the mess in the other. I would suggest that is not SoulCare. So what is SoulCare? SoulCare is a recognition that in the core of my being, the heart of Christ has actually been implanted within me. The Bible puts it this way: that when I was converted, I was given a new heart—not the old mess of self-need and self-management, but a new heart that has an appetite for God, a new heart that can experience God in the way that is stronger, and brings me stronger pleasure, than any other experience. Is it possible that I could speak out of that new heart into the new heart that is in the other person who is a believer? If the person is not a believer, the new heart is not there. But if the person is a believer, the life of Christ is literally in them, as the life of Christ is literally in me. Now when I start speaking out of the life of Christ in me, and touch the life of Christ in somebody else, that is when SoulCare takes place.

How do we enter the battle for somebody's soul? How do we come to the point of being able to speak out of our life into somebody else's life in a way which stirs it up? Recall that wonderful passage in Hebrews 10:24, where the writer to the Hebrews says that "when we get together," and in verse 25 he says, "and make sure you don't stop getting together. Make sure you get together. But when you do, here's what I want you to do. I want you to consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds. I want you to consider (and the word for consider is very strong in the original language—it means pay continual close attention) how you walk into church on Sunday morning, when you have coffee with someone between church and Sunday school, when you walk into a living room for a small group, when you meet your friend for a meal, think very hard ongoingly of what you can do to move into their life." That is what the verse is saying. Consider how to stimulate. And the word for "stimulate" is a very powerful word. It comes from the word *paroxysm*. It means, "how can I move into your life in a way which takes the flame that the Spirit of God has put within you, and how can I stir that flame into a bonfire?" So because of our conversation, you are more in love with God than you were before the conversation. Because of our conversation, you are more dependent on God when your son walks in the door at 4:00 in the morning drunk, and you are so burdened about it. You are more in love with God in the middle of your wife leaving you. And because you are more in love with God, something in you is solid, and you are able to honor Him and to deal with the problems in your life with great wisdom. What does it mean to be able to do that? Consider, hard, how to stir up people who know Jesus to love and good deeds. How do we stir up the love of Christ within us? That is what SoulCare is all about.

I want to talk with you in this lesson particularly about what I regard as the very most important first step in entering the battle. And I want to suggest that the first step in entering the battle can be summarized by two words: curiosity and vision. Again I want you to get very practical, as much as you can. Think about that person that you have talked to recently, somebody who shared a burden with you—a friend, a spouse, a child—somebody who has made known to you a concern. You have been exploring now yourself a little bit, your own passions, and your own self-centeredness—and you are glad we are off that topic finally—and you realize that there really is something alive in you and you would love to pour it into your friend who is struggling. Before you do anything else, I suggest that you ponder the fact that in the core of your being, you are very curious, and you are very hopeful of a vision that could be reached. That is in you by the grace of

God's Spirit if you are a believer. Let us talk about these two words: curiosity and vision that bring hope.

First, curiosity. Remember what C.S. Lewis said. One of his lines that is so well known by most fans of Lewis is this: "You've never met an ordinary mortal." You've never met somebody who is just, eh, another person. "Yeah, she is the one who checks out my groceries at the grocery store, and she was a little bit slow and was talking too much—and I got mad— but I got my groceries and got home in time. I just met, yeah, some woman that checked out groceries. Yeah, the woman that cut my hair the other day, she is a nice lady." No, you know, you have never met an ordinary mortal. Every person that you meet, every person with whom you rub shoulders, and Lewis talked about this, every person that you have ever seen, every person that you speak with, every person that comes into the range of your vision is somebody who is a person of inestimable dignity and depravity—they are people who bear God's image, and they are people who are fallen.

What that means, very simply, is this: everybody you are in contact with is somebody who has fallen short of God's design. Everybody you are in contact with is somebody who is not living to their full potential. Everybody you are in contact with is somebody who is not living by design and therefore is not experiencing the fullness of joy, which is available to them. Everybody you are in contact with is somebody who is not bringing God as much glory as He deserves to get out of their lives. That is who you have been chatting with in your small group every week for the last couple of years.

It seems to me it is like, a little bit like, driving along the highway with hundreds of cars, including your own, and you notice with every car on the road, something's wrong. An engine is sputtering, the brakes are not working, the front tires are out of alignment, the car is veering—it will not stay straight. Every car is moving in a way that is not entirely right. Something is wrong. Something is flawed. Every person, created by God to resemble Jesus Christ, and thus to have a desire for the Father, is moving in a way that reflects that their internal workings are not right. There is no car on the road that is moving properly. There is no car on the road that is moving in the right direction entirely. Now when you see somebody, you need to understand that at any given moment, the movement that you see in their life—if the Spirit is ruling in their lives—they are moving toward an eternal destiny that is wonderful, toward a beauty that is magnificent. Or at this moment, the way they treat their husbands, and the way they are handling their own sexual desires, they are moving in a direction that is destined to bring them to incredible misery. You have never met an ordinary mortal.

But I would suggest when you begin to become aware that everybody is kind of a mess, when you become aware of that, your response can be a variety of responses. One response might be that you might get very frustrated. "You know, nothing's working as it should. There is no small group that works properly; there is no church that works properly; there is no marriage that works properly. I'm sick of the whole thing!" You become a cynic; and you become despairing; and you become tough to live with. And when you get frustrated over the fact that nobody is living as they should, including yourself—which people with frustration do not see quite as clearly—what you end up doing is you keep your chairs facing straight forward. There is no turning because you do not want to get involved with people that frustrate you. You are not a good mechanic; you are tired of cars that do not work, so you just stay away from them. Frustration. Or, what a lot of people do

is, and I think that this is the disease of the Western church to some degree, we pretend. We do not get frustrated. We pretend that things are better than they are.

One of the most challenging verses in Scripture to me is Jeremiah 6, where God looks down on the religious leaders of that day, those who were charged with the responsibility for SoulCare, and what He says to them is: “You have healed the wound of my people superficially.” You have dealt with the wound, you have dealt with the mess, you have dealt with the struggle, the self-centeredness, you have dealt with the malfunction of the engine, without recognizing the seriousness of the disease. You have dealt with the wound as though it were not serious. And what you have said is “peace,” when there really is no peace. You have been in your small group with friends, and they seem to be doing fine; and you never think more deeply about what is really going on in their souls that needs the care that maybe you can, by the grace of God, give them. You pretend. You deny. It is a disease that afflicts all of us, because frankly it is a lot easier to live in denial than it is to live in honesty. Start living in honesty, and you will realize that at the last party you went to, where everybody was well dressed and friendly and sociable, that all was not as it seemed. Now I am not suggesting that at that party you should walk around saying, “You need SoulCare; I am here to give it to you.” I am hardly suggesting that. But I am suggesting that you stay aware of the fact that the person who is the wonderful hostess, and is handling herself really well, that there is something inside of her soul that desperately needs care. And maybe, over the course of the next several years, you might have opportunity to give it. Do you think like that?

Or, do you just get frustrated, or do you live in denial? Or, maybe a third option—are you curious? I wonder what is happening in this wonderful hostess. I wonder what is happening in this business guy that is making tons of money. I wonder what is really happening in this guy that just went bankrupt. I wonder what is happening in this guy that cannot find a job. I wonder what is happening in this woman who is anorexic, and this fellow who is involved in sexual immorality. Can we, rather than getting frustrated—you should not be there—or denial—“well, it is not as bad as it looks”—can we learn what it means to be curious? Internally important things are going on inside each of us. I want to share personally for just a moment. There are so many things in my life that are going on and when somebody is curious about them, respectfully—not intrusively, but curious about them—I find an invigoration. I find a sense of “you mean you are interested? You mean you really care?”

I have mentioned a time or two that a few years back, I was operated on for cancer, and it was a life-threatening situation. Cancer is always a serious disease, of course, and I came within six hours of death several times. What a very profound experience for me. And I live in a community of men and women, brothers and sisters, that have been wonderful to me. I have a wife that was as faithful as any wife could ever be in a situation of those tragic proportions. And I am so grateful for so much, but there is one thing that I still think about some. I would have loved to have had an evening where a couple of friends gathered around and said, “Larry, we are really curious about what your walk with the Lord was like in the middle of your cancer. Would you talk to us about that? We have got a couple of hours; we would love to hear.”

What does it mean to be curious about another human being? If we see the big picture, if we see the eternal perspective, the divine design, then we will, at the very least, be curious. We are going to be intrigued by the woman whose competence is real, but whose tenderness is absent.

We are not going to be judgmental initially; we are going to say, “she bears the image.” How is her fallenness contributing? Here is a woman who is very competent, who has no idea how to be tender. What is going on with her? I don’t get it. We are going to be curious about the man who makes lots of money, and just seems to be content with surface relationships. He is content with surface relationships—how can that be? He was designed for deep relationships with people, and he is content to have only country club relationships. I do not get it. Be curious. It is rare.

The question that we need to be asking as we begin to move into people’s lives—not with a mood of judgmentalism, not with a mood of analysis—is with a mood of, “I really would love to know what is going on. I don’t understand. I am not looking to figure it all out, but I would love to know, explore, discover, and then maybe touch this person for the glory of God.” Curiosity, for at least two reasons. One, the human drama is fascinating. The human drama, the drama of human existence, is a fascinating thing. We are going to be attentive to the human drama. We should be attentive to the human drama the way a child is attentive to a spider weaving its web. Look at that. Is not that fascinating? Look at how people operate. Yeah, it might be difficult, and it might be painful, and it might be ugly, and it might be horrendous, but how could the Holocaust happen? Yes, be appalled by it, but be curious. Be intrigued. How can this woman give her body to make money? How does that happen? How can a young girl, a two-year-old baby girl grow up in a home where she ends up making money through prostitution? How does this happen? Be very curious. Yes, appalled, burdened, concerned, but curious. The human drama is fascinating.

Secondly, the human drama is mysterious. There is a lot here that we are never going to explain. And the passion to explain is one of the evil passions within our soul, because we want to explain so that we can control. If we are going to get involved in SoulCare, we are going to get out of our depth very quickly. If we are going to get involved in SoulCare, if we are going to be curious about people’s lives, then we need to understand that we were created to enjoy a God, but we seek pleasure elsewhere. It is insanity. It makes no sense. It is a mystery that God has worked in our lives, and loved us, and saved us, and redeemed us—why did He do all that? We really do not get it. How does it all work? We do not understand. But how good to look at it with incredible intrigue. Curiosity. The spirit of curiosity begins the process of SoulCare.

The second word that I want you to think about is the word “vision”—a vision that provides hope. I have been counseling, and doing my best to provide SoulCare for people, for well over thirty years. And there are times that I get weary. There are times that if one more person tells me about a problem, I am going to explode. There are times when I just want to watch a ballgame. I do not want to hear about somebody’s mess. I am not curious. I just want to insulate myself—phone off the hook, go to bed, watch a ballgame. The Bible says, “Do not be weary in well-doing.” The Bible says that we can “mount up with wings as eagles”—that the power of Christ, that the energy of Christ can actually keep us going, not that we are not going to get tired and need a break and need a Sabbath rest and need to get away from people occasionally and watch a ballgame—there is nothing wrong with that—but how do we maintain a forward momentum? Maybe it requires vision. Do I believe that the person with whom I am speaking could actually be different?

Sometimes I hear stories—and I have heard thousands of stories—sometimes I hear stories of not only the second shoe dropped, but the third shoe, and a fourth shoe, and fifth shoe, and I have said to myself, “I don’t know how this person is ever going to come out of this.” And I wish that

they had never brought it to my attention because all I do is feel discouraged. I do not have much of a vision sometimes. And what that means is I do not have confidence in the power of the Spirit to move through anything to accomplish good purposes. What is your vision? That life will work well? Kids will turn out right? Marriages will get better? No, no, no. Make your vision something so much higher than this life working. Make your vision so high that what you are saying is that everything that happens in this life—all the good stuff, all the bad stuff, and anything in between—it all can work together in the hands of the master designer to bring about good. Well, what is good? Good to those who love Jesus, is the good of becoming like Jesus. Now we are back to the compelling vision of SoulCare that I spoke about earlier. Do I have a vision as I get curious about your life of what could be, and does hope follow naturally along?

The old French spiritual director, a man named Jean-Pierre de Caussade said, “Everything leads me to God.” I think Saint John of the Cross, if he were here, I think he would say the same thing. I think he would say that “Even the darkest night of my soul, when my fellow monks rejected me and had me imprisoned for a number of months; and I went through a period where I felt the hatred of everybody, and I felt like God was a million miles away; and the darkness was overwhelming to my soul; that somehow through all of those experiences, an appetite for God surfaced that made me realize that I want Him more than I want anyone or anything else. Everything helps me to God, even dark nights of the soul.” That sentence—that “everything leads me to God”—reflects a confidence in God’s power to redeem every present reality as a pathway to knowing God better and becoming more like Jesus. You see, as you move toward someone with profound curiosity about what is going on, if you enter somebody’s life without distancing yourself to handle only that which you can manage (remember self-management— that strong drive within us), if I get to know you and say, “No, I am not going to limit my knowledge of you to only those parts of you that I can deal with,” or I can handle, or I can assimilate in my worldview. I am going to get to know everything about you. At times, I’m going to feel like throwing my hands up. I don’t get it. This is so difficult. This is so mysterious. This is so hard. I do not know what can happen.”

If you move with profound curiosity into somebody’s life, you need to have a vision to accompany the curiosity. You need to have a vision that something can happen in this person’s life by the power of God, and it can happen through no power that is less than the power of God. This person, in the middle of their situation, whatever it is, could actually resemble Jesus Christ more than they do right now. Is that your vision? That is the vision that drives SoulCare.

I was once speaking to a group of men, and I challenged them to do something specific. I said to them two things. I said, “First I want you to reflect on something that is happening in the lives of your children.” Most of the men in the audience were parents, and we talked about their kids, and I said, “Will you all just think of one of your children, maybe one of your kids that might be a burden to you at the moment for whatever reason. I want you to do this now, as you think about this troubled child that you are concerned about, I would like you to write a letter: ‘Dear Denise’ or ‘Dear Freddie, here is my vision for what you can become, and what I pray that God will empower me to help you become. I have seen something in you that is alive, and I long for it to develop into the full-blown life of Jesus Christ within you.’” I challenged them to write a letter to their children—a vision letter, I called it. I heard later that one of the men in the audience wrote a letter, and the gist of the letter was, it was not exactly this, but the gist of it was this: “Dear Carrie, (a daughter that was causing him great trouble, a daughter with whom he was having incredible

friction, real tensions), I see in you a beautiful woman with a tender, loving heart who longs to give herself to deeply good purposes. I am so privileged to be your dad. You have a unique power to draw people to deep relationships in which they feel important and valuable. And we can feel your beautiful power.”

I learned that after the conference, he went home and he walked up to his daughter and he said, “Honey, I have something for you, and I would like you to read it.” And she read the letter. (I wish this happened all of the time, but it does not—but it does happen sometimes.) This girl read the letter, and she burst into tears—a sixteen-year-old girl—she fell into her daddy’s arms, the first time she had let her daddy hug her in months and months and months.

To have a vision for somebody can be a very powerful thing. I have a good friend, a godly woman, who makes wedding veils for groups of ladies and tells them to talk about their beauty as the bride of Christ and about the way they soil that beauty but how it remains anyhow, and after talking about these things, this wonderful saint of a woman, takes these wedding veils and places them individually on each of the women’s heads in the room. She says, “You are the bride of Christ. I have a vision for your beauty that is within you that could develop as the years continue.” The effect on their souls was profound.

Curiosity and vision. Do you know if you are not curious, what you are going to be? You are going to be analytical. The opposite of curiosity is to analyze, to figure out how you can be in control. How many times have you shared something with somebody, and they have said, “Well, the way I see it, I think this is the way it is ... and this is how I would explain it ... and this is what I think that you should do.” How do you feel? Is your soul cared for? Or do you just get annoyed? Curiosity, not analysis. Vision, not pressure. So often, we feel a pressure. “Well, this person wants me to change in a variety of ways as opposed to, “here’s what could happen to this person’s beautiful soul if the Spirit of God got hold of him.” What is your attitude as you move into the battle for somebody’s soul? Curiosity and a vision, which brings hope, which releases the good passions within you to start coming out and to move into their soul in a way which invigorates their appetite for Christ.

Discussion Questions

Describe a time when someone expressed real curiosity about you. What did you feel? If no examples come to mind, what does that thought stir within you? What keeps you from being more curious about others?

The idea of envisioning what someone can become is a difficult concept to grasp. Wrestle with the idea by writing out a vision letter for someone you know well. Give the letter to the person and discuss it with them. Describe for us what this experience was like for you. What got stirred up in your soul?

Lesson 8 Study Guide

CC201

***SoulCare Foundations I:
The Basic Model***

Wisdom: A Roadmap for Entering the
Soul Without Getting Lost

Updated 2015



**Our Daily Bread
Christian University**

Objectives

In this lesson, Dr. Crabb shifts from our study of passions within the provider of SoulCare to a focus on wisdom for entering another person's life. One reality that should be apparent to you is this: Troublesome passions will be present within us until glory. Given that reality, can we even hope to become powerful providers of SoulCare for others?

When you complete this lesson, "Wisdom: A Roadmap for Entering the Soul Without Getting Lost," you should be able to:

- Describe why being dependent on the Spirit of God is essential to the SoulCare process.
- Explain and illustrate why SoulCare is something for which inadequacy is a prime prerequisite.
- List the three basic "don'ts" and the three basic "dos" as you begin to move into other people's lives to offer SoulCare.

Transcript

Course Title: SoulCare Foundations I: The Basic Model

Lesson Eight: Wisdom: A Roadmap for Entering the Soul Without Getting Lost

Your teacher for this course is noted psychologist, author, and speaker, Dr. Larry Crabb.

Well, there is one thing that is obvious. There is something going on beneath the surface of my life, and beneath the surface of your life, that is causing trouble. What may not be quite so obvious is that there is something even deeper in my life, and in yours, if we are followers of Jesus that can cause progress to take place. If we are going to enter the mystery of someone's soul, if we are going to do battle for people's souls, and get involved meaningfully in conversation, and get into the tough areas, the confusing areas, then it seems to me that we are going to need to have a roadmap. We are going to need to have some kind of a guide that will help us to discover what is bad inside, what is bad that needs to be seen and then abandoned, and maybe a roadmap, even more importantly, to see what is good in the center of the being of every follower of Christ.

It seems to me that it is easy to make the mistake of not entering deeply enough into the human soul to fight the battles that are there. It is terribly easy to make the mistake of moralism, to fall into the error of a moralistic culture, which says to somebody when they have a problem, "get over it." "Here is the biblical principle ... look, you are not loving your wife as you should. Haven't you read Ephesians 5? And if you will read that, you need to do what is right, and I am going to hold you accountable." How many times have people tried to change solely on the basis of mutual accountability? How many times have you been in a small group, where the whole dynamic of how you are going to grow spiritually is accountability. "Here is the principle, I promise that I will do it, and next week, you will check up on me." Moralism—do it right! That is a mistake that we need to avoid by being able to go deeply into somebody's soul.

The second mistake that I think it is very easy to make in our culture is to become therapeutic in our thinking. Now let me use that word in kind of a negative way. It can have a good meaning, but let me use it in a negative way. It is very easy to become therapeutic and to assume that we are going to be able to plumb to the depths of people's unconscious, to get into that which is hidden, and to somehow do a repair job, to fix what is wrong. Two ways of thinking about change: do what is right (moralism); and fix what is wrong (therapy).

There is a third way, a way that I think is pivotal, foundational, to all of my thinking about SoulCare, and the third way can be summarized with the idea of "release what is good." Has the Spirit of Christ, at conversion, really put something inside of my heart that when you see me acting obnoxiously and arrogantly and neurotically and crazily, you are able to assume that there is something beneath all of the junk? There is something that is wonderful beneath all of the junk, that if you knew how to enter my soul, if you knew what to look for, if you knew how to sift through all of the junk and all of the bad and to get down to what is core within me, maybe there is a possibility of releasing something that is good. SoulCare gets involved with someone's life—I hope that is a big sentence for you now—SoulCare gets into the reality of somebody's life. It enters

with a curiosity that really wants to know, a curiosity that is intrigued: “I wonder what is going on? I don’t know.” It is not a judgmental spirit of, “Something’s wrong, and I want to straighten it out.” But, “I am just so curious about how you are thinking, about why you reacted that way. Why did you get so paranoid about that? I am not judging you—I am just dying to know. I would love to explore and to understand, with curiosity, what is going on.”

And secondly, SoulCare enters the battle for somebody’s soul with a vision. We talked about that last time—with a vision that no matter what you find, you know the power of God is sufficient to move a person from where they are to a vision of what they could be. SoulCare enters the soul with curiosity, and with vision, and engages the battle that, in fact, is raging in the deepest part of our soul.

Now, if you are prepared to do that, if something in you is feeling stirred by this, if you are saying, “You know, I would like to get involved with people at this level. I am not sure how to do it. (I hope that you are going to get around to telling me someday.) I really want to know what it means to get into a conversation that could be called SoulCare.” Let me warn you that when you get into people’s lives deeply, it really can be confusing. I cannot tell you the number of times, in my more than thirty years now as a psychologist—having talked to hundreds, thousands of people, I am sure—I cannot tell you the number of times that I have gotten into people’s lives, and I have gotten so confused by what I have heard that I have said to myself (I had the wisdom to not say it out loud), “This person needs professional help.” Then I had to realize, “Wait a minute, I am the professional; I am supposed to understand all of this stuff.” There is a mystery that no amount of training will reduce. There is a bottom-line mystery about the human soul that you must be prepared to get involved with, and to be threatened by a little bit, until you realize your absolute dependence on the Spirit of God to make anything valuable happen, whatsoever.

I remember a man some years ago came to see me in my professional capacity. I was in private practice, and he came to see me, and he told me the following story—and this is very close to exactly what happened a number of years ago—and he said, “Dr. Crabb, I have been married now for about twenty-some years, and I just lost all sexual interest in my wife. I feel a revulsion to any kind of physical contact. Our marriage is doing fine, but I don’t know what it is, but there is just something about the idea of even holding my wife’s hand, let alone kissing her, let alone going into physical relations, that I just almost feel a physical nausea. I know it is hard on her, but it is hard on me. I don’t know what to do. I went to my pastor, and when I shared this dilemma with my pastor . . .” (Now let me insert an editorial comment: the pastor did not enter the man’s soul.) What the pastor said to the man was, “You know, in 1 Corinthians, Paul makes it clear that our body belongs to our spouse. He makes it clear that we are not to withhold sexual relations from our mate except by mutual agreement for spiritual purposes. And I presume that if God is telling you to be involved with your mate at a physical, sexual level that He will give the power to make that happen. So here is my recommendation to you (pastor to parishioner): I want you to take that passage of Paul in 1 Corinthians, and I want you to memorize it, and I want you to spend all week pondering, and reflecting on it, and praying about it. And then I want you to trust God for the power to carry out His commandments, because God never requires what He does not empower us to do.” The pastor went through all his clichés that were true but sound so pat. Then he told the guy to “trust God, and move toward your wife.”

Well, the fellow did his best. He did it for a couple of weeks. The pastor asked, “How’d it go?” And his response was, “I experienced no change whatsoever. I don’t know what to do.” And the pastor finally, after several weeks of exasperation, realizing that his moral model was not working, the accountability model of instruction was not making the change that he was hoping would be seen in this particular guy’s life, he called me up (I know the pastor, he is a friend of mine) and he said, “can I refer so-and-so to you,” and these were his words, “I think he has a psychological problem. I have tried the biblical approach, and I think that he needs psychotherapeutic attention.” Can you hear the two models, the moral model, the moralistic model, which says here is what you ought to do and in the power of God, go do it? And if that [model] does not work, then I guess that there is something inside of you that only a psychologist could understand and deal with; so go for therapy, and maybe he can fix what is wrong, so you will be able to obey God.

I am suggesting a very different way of thinking about this situation, a way of thinking that perhaps came home to me with what happened with that gentleman. At our first session—he did come to see me—in our very first session, he told me the story, and I let him know, of course, that the pastor had called me and let me know some of what was going on. And toward the middle of our first session, when he was sharing with me that he felt like there was a force within him—that’s how he put it— “there is a dark force within me that seems when I want to move toward my wife, pushes me away. And I need to tell you, Dr. Crabb, if you tell me to just go do it because it is the right thing to do—I know that I should love my wife in a different way. I know I should move toward her. But I can’t—and if you tell me just to go do it, I’m going to give up on being helped by you, and I’ll just walk out. Forgive me, but that’s how I feel.”

I remember sitting there looking at him. I was a young psychologist; I was not sure what I was doing—I am not sure if I do now sometimes—and I remember looking at him kind of thoughtfully, and trying to stroke my chin and pretend that I am thinking deep thoughts, and understanding all of this, and in the middle of all of that, he said to me, “Now stand up.” I remember being a little nonplussed that my client was telling me in my office to stand up. I remember thinking that I had not had a course in graduate school on how to deal with it when a client tells you to stand up. It also occurred to me that I had not had a course in graduate school for most of the things that I faced in my counseling office. So, not knowing what to do, I decided to cooperate, and so I stood up right in front of my chair. And as I stood up, this man got out of his chair, and he walked slowly over toward me—I was not quite sure what was about to come—and then suddenly, without warning, he took his hand, and put it on my chest and pushed me hard, so I fell back in the chair. And then he looked down at me, and I am wondering what is going on here, and he said, “Why did you sit down?” And I looked up, and I said, “Because you pushed me.” And he said, “Did you have a choice?” And I said, “Well, no. The power of your hand against my body required me to sit. I did not have the power to stand against the force that came against me.” And his sentence was, “That’s how I feel. When I begin moving toward my wife in a physical way, I feel something inside of me pushing me away, and it is stronger than I can handle.”

What on earth does SoulCare do with that? How do you deal with that? How do you think about that? Do you just exhort him more strongly, and hold him more accountable, and get him to read more Bible verses? Do you say that there is some sort of a deep, dark, unconscious secret perhaps— maybe he was sexually abused; maybe his mother was involved with him in terrible ways . . . and maybe memories of that revulsion are coming back—that could be. Is that what you

deal with? How do you deal with these kinds of things? These are the questions that I want us to think about. When you and I get involved in the battle for somebody's soul, we are going to get confused. And I am wanting us to start thinking about a roadmap for moving into the reality of how people experience life, of how people experience forces moving them away from godly living, of how people feel very little impetus toward godly living except pressure from the saints.

What does it mean to involve yourself in SoulCare? Maybe if this man were your friend, and shared all of that with you that I just made known was his problem, is it possible that you could envision yourself moving into his life with spiritual power? Is it possible that you could actually talk with this man as your friend and have power in his life? What would that mean? What would that look like? Maybe what this man needs is SoulCare that you can provide. SoulCare that I can provide—not as a professional psychologist, but SoulCare that I can provide as a Christian in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells; therefore, SoulCare that you can provide, whether you are an engineer or a plumber, you finished third grade, or have a Ph.D. in nuclear physics—SoulCare that you can provide because the Spirit of Christ is within you.

Now let us review a little bit. If we are going to move into people's lives, we are going to accept a few things perhaps about SoulCare. 1) We are going to agree that SoulCare you want to provide for this gentleman involves offering him not your expertise, but a certain kind of relationship, a certain kind of relationship where he feels good about the idea of you knowing him—not just his sexual problems with his wife, but a lot of other stuff as well—exploring him, getting into the depths of his soul, discovering what is in him that is ugly, profoundly ugly, far uglier than staying away from his wife sexually, but also discovering what is in him that is profoundly beautiful, that is wonderful, that is good, and being able to touch him with your life in a way that releases that which is good. That is the beginnings of understanding SoulCare, to think in those categories. You want to see his appetite for God stirred to the point where he wants God more than he wants to avoid his wife; and where the strong appetite for glorifying God and honoring Him fills him in such a way that there is actually a power within him that is released through the operation of his will, but a power, that enables him to move toward his wife through the force that is opposing him. What does it mean to stir an appetite for God that can have those kind of practical effects?

Now, another point we have made, in terms of our review, is that you feel as I do—you feel inadequate for the job. But maybe we can view inadequacy not as something to be overcome with good training, but maybe we can view inadequacy as an opportunity, an opportunity to learn humility, that if anything eternally good happens in somebody's life, God gets the glory and not me. I did not make it happen. And dependence—I have got to listen to the Spirit. SoulCare is not a technique that I am going to train you in, and you are going to go out and practice and do it right—I do not do it right; you do not do it right. SoulCare is rather, when it comes down to the bottom line, is a matter of listening to the Spirit, of having a way of thinking about things (certainly), but moving into people's lives according to the movement of God's Spirit, discerning what the Spirit is doing within them and kind of tagging along, following behind the Spirit as He does His mysterious works. SoulCare is something for which inadequacy is a prime prerequisite. Because if you recognize your inadequacy, then maybe you can begin to listen, as I want to be able to begin to listen more and more to the Spirit within me. You also know, as you involve yourself in the possibility of SoulCare, you also know that there are a bunch of troublesome motives inside of you.

As you talk to this gentleman with his difficulties, and you want to offer a certain kind of relationship, to know, explore, discover, and touch, and you recognize that your goal, your basic vision for this gentleman is to have an appetite for God that is stronger than all other appetites. And you know you are inadequate for the job, and then you go on to realize, “You know, even as I am talking to him, I know that beneath the surface of my life, there is a mess. I am feeling threatened by this guy. Maybe I have similar sexual problems or problems that are different from his, but in the same broad category; and I have found no power to overcome them; and I am aware of the fact that I am just looking to move into this guy’s life without much hope at all, and hoping to find some way to help this guy so that I can get my belief in Christianity validated; and there is a lot more going on inside of me than just a real burden to see the Christ formed in the deepest parts of the soul.” You have a lot of junk happening inside of you, as I have a lot of junk happening inside of me.

Now, do understand this: that junk is not going to go away. For the rest of your life, for the rest of my life, when I sit down to chat with a friend—whether as a professional therapist or a buddy or a husband to my wife or a parent to my children—I am going to have junk inside of me. Do not get discouraged by that. Rather, be defeated by that. Do not be discouraged by that with the idea that maybe, “I can overcome all of that. Let’s see, how can I do that?” Be defeated by it in a way of recognizing “that’s always going to be with me.” If God is not moving in deeper ways through me, I am licked. I am totally defeated. But praise God! He is working in deeper ways through me. There is something in me that is far better than all of the junk, and when I face the junk, and become broken over the fact that I am so full of messy motives, then that brokenness allows the perfume of the fragrance of Christ’s life with His Spirit to begin coming out of me.

You begin to realize that the passions within you are very self-centered. But as you feel more and more brokenness over those passions because you have faced them, then some of the passions of other-centeredness begin to bubble up out of you. And with all of that happening, you begin to feel curious. You begin to ask yourself, “What is really going on? What is the battle in this man’s soul?” Can you envision the effect on some other person if you were sitting with them and being profoundly curious about wanting to know, what is the battle going on in their soul?

It was a few years ago when my wife and I were in a downtown hotel preparing for a conference I was about to give the next morning, and at about 4:00 in the morning, I woke up from pain in my side. And when I am in pain, I think that others should be aware of that fact. So I made known that I was in pain by making noises appropriate to the occasion that were designed both to express my pain and to wake up my wife. She woke up—she had very little choice in the matter—and she immediately discerned something was wrong because I was rolling on the floor of the hotel room and telling her that I was in profound pain that I had never known before. She called the ambulance, and they came—and I had my first ambulance ride that morning, at about 4:30. It turned out to be a kidney stone, by the way. And I had never had one before, and hope I never have one again. But as I rode to the hospital in the ambulance, my wife was in the front seat, and the attendant was in the back seat with me. I was lying on the gurney. He was taking my blood pressure, and asking me questions, and talking to the doctor, and saying “white Caucasian male about 62”—and I said, “wait a minute, I am 55”—and he was asking me all of these questions, and at one point, when the pain subsided a little bit, I said to him, “You are making a lot of fuss over me. You’re asking me a thousand questions. Why all the fuss?” I will never forget his words. “We have to know what battle we are fighting.”

A thought occurred to me. Who has made a fuss over me spiritually? Who has said, “Larry, I would like to get to know you. Can I ask you a thousand questions? Can I talk to some other people that are pretty wise too? I would love to know the battle you are fighting. It would mean the world to me to be able to join you in fighting that battle. I want to enter the battle for your soul.” Curiosity: entering the battle for somebody else’s soul. I am reviewing all that we have talked about already in the class.

So now basically we have a picture that we can draw a little more completely. We can take the familiar icebergs, and we can say here you are—here is the person who is offering SoulCare and you want to enter the other person’s soul. You want to go beneath the surface of this person’s life, and you want to get involved in that person’s life, and you begin by understanding that what you have to offer is a relationship—a certain kind of relationship where you come to know the man, the woman, to explore, to discover, and to touch, in a deep soul-to-soul way—that is your attitude as you move into SoulCare. You begin to realize that you have a deep longing within your soul, and the longing is to see Christ formed in this person’s life. And by the way, just a second diversion, you can have that same attitude with an unbeliever. Now the unbeliever does not have the power of Christ within him, but he has a God-shaped vacuum and he bears the image of God. As you are talking to your unbelieving friend, rather than beating him in the head with the Gospel, begin with an understanding of how much you long for the fullness of Jesus to invade his life. There’s a longing for that inside of you toward your fellow believers, toward the unbelieving community—that longing is there. That motivates you. That begins to get you going in a certain way. But then you realize that there is a profound felt inadequacy. You are just not sure how to go about this. You know that what you really want to see happen, you cannot make happen. You cannot solve the problem, so you do not even try. You embrace your inadequacy as an opportunity to create a space to listen to the Spirit.

You begin to realize that your inadequacy is more profound than you thought, because there are all sorts of self-centered motivations going on inside of you. There are all sorts of ways in which, as you are talking to this individual, you are preoccupied with yourself—you are trying to look good, trying to impress, trying to make a point, trying to prove some point, you are working very hard—but it is really more about you than about God, and about them. And you begin to realize that, and you are broken by it. And you realize, “Oh, what a mess I am.” And then out of that brokenness, something begins to bubble up within you, something of the energy of Christ, and you begin to feel a profound curiosity about this person; and a vision begins to develop in your mind of what could happen. With all that going on, with all of that being your internal reality, you want to enter this individual’s life. So what do you say?

Well, I want to give you a basic strategy that I call a roadmap, a wisdom roadmap, to understand what you are looking for and what to think about and how to move into a person’s life. But before I give you that basic strategy, before I outline that for you, let me just give you a couple of preliminaries that I think you might find helpful as you actually engage in talking with people. I want to give you a couple of dos and don’ts. I want to give you a couple of basic dos and don’ts as you move into people’s lives; with all of these realities going on, there are a couple of things that I think are very important “not” to do, and a couple of things that are very important “to” do. And with those in our mind, we will be ready to look at the actual strategy.

Let me give you three basic “don’ts.” The first “don’t”: Don’t back away no matter what you hear. When the person shares with you stuff that is uglier than you ever dreamed, don’t back away with a mood of, “I’m not going to handle that. That’s too much for me.” Stay involved. Don’t back away. When you do back away the person who you are wanting to provide SoulCare for begins to feel dangerous, begins to feel like there is something inside of him or her that nobody can handle, and the walls get thicker, the walls go up. And the person retreats more and more. Don’t back away.

The second “don’t”: Don’t advise. Don’t start your SoulCare enterprise by giving advice. Your counselee, the person with whom you are providing SoulCare, is going to feel pressured, is going to feel judged. If, early in the game, you begin giving advice, and saying, “You know, here’s what I think you ought to do.” If you start with that, the person internally is going to recoil, and say, “You really cannot handle me where I am. I feel pressured and judged to be different. I really am going to tune you out.” Premature advice to the person for whom you are providing SoulCare is going to put up a wall between you and him or her. The second “don’t” therefore is don’t give advice early on. There is a place for advice, but not early on.

The third “don’t” (and this will sound strange): Don’t offer support. Don’t merely offer the support of saying, “May I pray with you?” Don’t, early on, merely offer the support of saying, “I want to affirm you. I think you are a great guy. You don’t like yourself, but I like you a bunch. I don’t quite get what your problem is.” Don’t offer the kind of support that more often than not has the effect of making the other person feel trivialized. If you give an aspirin for a person who has got a migraine headache, the person with the headache is going to say, “You don’t understand. My headache is far worse than what a single aspirin can handle. Don’t do that to me. Don’t give me the simple answers, the simple prayer, the simple affirmations. It really is not going to help me at all.”

Let me give you a couple of basic “dos” as you begin this incredibly important work of SoulCare. The first “do”: Do listen closely and expectantly. Listen hard, expecting to hear very important things. Your friend will feel valued. Secondly: Do ask questions. In the next lesson, we will talk about what questions to ask, but do ask questions, not with a naked light bulb over their head and a thousand interrogational questions—that is not the point—but questions that say, “I just would love to know. I am going somewhere. I am wanting to see God work in your life, and I have a lot of questions that I am just dying to ask you.” The person that you are chatting with will feel validated that there is something there worth knowing—“I do exist.” It is amazing the number of people who have no sense of their own existence. Asking questions can validate a person’s existence. The third “do”: Reflectively think. As the person shares, and you have asked a question, do not feel like you have to fill every moment with verbiage, with words. Allow yourself to sit back, and sure, go ahead and stroke your chin, and sit back, and maybe even say, “I just want to pray about this for a minute. I am in the middle of thought, and I want to ponder a few things.” The person will feel joined, connected, that you are taking them very seriously and that you are thinking about their journey. Three “don’ts” and three “dos”—in preparation for developing a roadmap for entering their soul. The actual roadmap, we will sketch at the outset of the next lesson.

Discussion Questions

At this point in the course, we shift from our study of passions within the provider of SoulCare to a focus on wisdom for entering another person's life. One reality that should be apparent to you is this: troublesome passions will be present within us. Given that reality, on what do you base your hope that you can become a powerful provider of SoulCare for others?

Of the three basic "don'ts" (refer to the course transcript), which one do you most often do? What passions in your soul might be behind this? Of the three basic "dos," which one don't you do, and why?

All of us have a knee-jerk reaction to pull away from others (which is the first "don't"). Why is that reaction there? What could cause it to weaken?

Lesson 9 Study Guide

CC201

SoulCare Foundations I: The Basic Model

Getting into the Battle: Moving Below the
Waterline from the Presenting Problem
to the Story of the Soul

Updated 2015



**Our Daily Bread
Christian University**

Objectives

When a person shares a problem, our natural tendency is to want to help solve it. In this lesson, Dr. Crabb discusses how “vision” promotes a curiosity about what’s going on inside the person, and allows you to ask questions without sounding judgmental.

When you complete this lesson, “Getting into the Battle: Moving Below the Waterline from the Presenting Problem to the Story of the Soul,” you should be able to:

- Sketch the basic model of SoulCare.
- Explain why *thinking vision* in response to hearing a presenting problem allows the SoulCare process to move into the story of the soul.
- Define the *point of confusion* and explain how this creates an opportunity for the SoulCare provider to enter the person’s soul.
- Explain the role and impact of reframing questions.

Transcript

Course Title: SoulCare Foundations I: The Basic Model

Lesson Nine: Getting into the Battle: Moving Below the Waterline from the Presenting Problem to the Story of the Soul

Your teacher for this course is noted psychologist, author, and speaker, Dr. Larry Crabb.

A passion/wisdom model of SoulCare. The focus now is on wisdom. What is a basic strategy for moving with wisdom into the depths of somebody else's soul? Let me give you a sketch, a sketch that at first might look a little bit complex, but if we go through it slowly enough, I think you will see that there is a simplicity to it that will, at the same time, guide you as you converse with somebody about the depths of their soul, but will not give you enough specificity to do without the Spirit of Christ. It is a guide that requires the Spirit for it to move well into somebody else's life.

Here is how I think about it. You are chatting with somebody, and they make known to you a presenting problem. The opportunity for SoulCare begins, or at least takes a particular shape, when a friend, a counselee, somebody in your pastor's office, says to you, "Pastor, I'm struggling." He says to you over lunch, "My friend, I'm hurting. I have got this going on. I am confused. I do not know what is happening." They present a problem. Now, the sketch develops this way. From "presenting problem," the person who is providing SoulCare needs to immediately think "vision." We need to ask the question, not "what's wrong?" but "what's possible?" There needs to be a mood of excitement, a mood of anticipation—not a mood of correction and judgment, and fixing and repair, but a mood of, "Here is where a person is, but I have confidence, (the SoulCarer must be saying) from the bottom of my soul that a vision emerges within me that the Spirit of God could actually bring about in this individual's life." So from: "presenting problem" to "vision." Now, when you realize what a person could become, but realize that they are not there, then you do start having to ask the hard question of, "Well, exactly what is wrong? What is the root problem? What is happening beneath the waterline in the depths of this individual's soul that is a problem? What is the real problem in the person's life?"

Now I am going to suggest to you—let me get ahead of myself just a moment here—I am going to suggest to you that the best way to understand the problem beneath the presenting problems, the root problems, the deep problems, in the interior world, beneath the problems in the exterior world, is to think in terms of what I choose to call "flesh dynamics." You have all heard the phrase "psychological dynamics"—the phrase that actually was popularized by Freud in 1895 when he began to think with us about the fact that there are forces going on, dynamic forces, happening in the core of the human personality that need to be understood. Well, I want to suggest that a more biblical way of thinking about what is happening inside of us that is bad, that is wrong, that is troublesome, is not to think of psychological dynamics, but rather to think of flesh dynamics. Now with this thought in your mind—and we will look at this more carefully as time goes on—what I am suggesting we do is, as people make known their presenting problem, that we actually reframe the problem with questions.

We take the problem that person presents, and we put a different frame around it. We say, “Yes, you have gotten very angry about such and such. I would like to know more about your anger in the general story of your life. I would like to hear about you anger with your relationships.” And by asking certain kinds of questions that we will look at carefully, we encourage the person to start talking, not about their presenting problems only—we do not diminish those or ignore those—but we shift away from the focus on presenting problem to a focus on what I like to call, “the story of a soul.” We want to provide SoulCare. We want to provide care for the deepest part of the human personality, not just advice or empathy or support for presenting problems. We want to provide SoulCare. So we encourage the person with well-chosen questions to think about the story of their relationships, the story of their present important relationships, the story of their past important relationships, the story of their immediate relationship with you, even as you are speaking back and forth, the story of their deepest relationship with God.

Then as we begin talking about this, we listen. But we listen with categories for reflection. As you are telling me the story of your life, what is happening in my mind? How am I thinking about what you are telling me? Am I understanding it? Do I have a roadmap for knowing how to understand what is happening in you as you talk about the fact that your mother was never there?—as you talk about the fact that your mother was your worst critic, as you talk about the fact that your father was an alcoholic, and a friendly alcoholic who laughed a lot when he got drunk and how you actually encouraged him to drink more to make him happier? And as you tell some of those stories to me, do I have categories for reflecting meaningfully on those stories in a way that as we chat together over time, allows the real battle in your soul to become clear? Do I begin to understand the battle that is going on in your soul? Do I realize that this battle is really the battle that Paul talks about in several epistles: the battle between the flesh and the spirit, the new reality that God has put within you? Do we begin to understand in your unique case—not in just general terms—but in your unique case, how this battle is working out in your life, the battle between the way you are trying to make your life work without God, and the way that the Spirit is calling you to move toward God with an appetite for Him? There is a battle in each of our souls that is between the flesh and the spirit. And then do I have the ability, the power, the wisdom to realize that there is something in me that, when released toward you, is the effect on that, to move toward this huge battle of yours, in flesh and spirit, in a way that causes the flesh to become less appealing? It causes the whole way you live your life under the flesh to be something that you just do not want to do as much because there is something else that you want to do more. And does the spirit within you begin to feel a new sense of life that moves you toward the vision that the Spirit of God has for you? That, to me, is a basic strategy for moving into peoples’ life. It is a model, a model of wisdom.

Now, if we are going to follow that strategy, what I would like to do is I would like to take apart this model. I know that it can look imposing at first, but if you go real slow with me, I think you will see that it can be, not a confusing something or other that it will take twenty years of training to even begin to understand how to do it—it is not that at all—it is really very simple; but let us just take it a step at a time and go very slowly through the model. In this presentation, I want to cover just a couple of the top items. The SoulCare opportunity begins when someone makes known their presenting problem to you, the one who provides SoulCare, who knows that relationships are vital, who feels inadequate, who knows your own self-centeredness, who is broken over that, who has a vision for the person, who is curious—all of those things are present within you now—and

somebody shares this problem with you. What I want to talk about with you is how do you respond to the presenting problem? As the problem is shared, what needs to be happening in you as you begin to enter the battle for the soul?

Someone lets you know—let’s make it something that will sound a little bit silly— someone lets you know (you are a couple of buddies chatting over lunch), and one friend says to you, “You know, I really get mad at the dumbest things. Last night the toilet overflowed and I lost my temper, and I really screamed and hollered and made a mess of things. I just really handled it poorly. And I do not get why I get so upset over dumb little things that happen like that.” That is an opportunity for SoulCare. “Why do we get so mad about that? Man, that drove me nuts.” A person shares that with you over lunch. What is your natural response? “Yeah, me too. I get like that a lot.” That is not all bad, I do not suppose, but not much SoulCare is going to happen. “Well, did you have devotions that morning?” Maybe you wouldn’t be as simplistic as that. But how do you proceed?

When a person shares a problem, let me suggest to you that the initial response within the person providing effective SoulCare, the initial response to the presenting problem is “think vision.” Think vision. Do not talk vision. Do not begin by saying to the person, “I have a vision for you. My vision for you is that when the toilet overflows, you are going to sing the ‘Hallelujah Chorus.’” Do not get silly like that, but think vision. Think inside of yourself, “here is a human being who bears the image of God, who is fallen, who is redeemed. And they have a response of inappropriate anger that hurt their wife, that troubled their children, that was not a good thing to do at all.” They have this response of anger—maybe it is a much bigger thing, maybe it’s going to topless bars or maybe it’s having affairs or maybe it is swearing a lot—whatever the problem may be, whatever the problem is—initially begin, not by giving advice, not by talking to them about their problem, but think vision. Now let me tell you what I mean by that.

You are providing SoulCare for this friend of yours who presents this, what seems like perhaps a trivial problem: he lost his temper when something inconvenienced him, when the toilet overflowed. Suppose, if I could tape-record your mind as your friend shared that with you. Suppose I heard something like this—this is what I would mean by thinking vision—suppose the tape recorder in your mind indicated words like the following: “You know, my friend really does have a temper. I do not know what is going on. I haven’t got a clue why he gets so mad about that. I sure noticed it before, and here is one more illustration of it. I don’t know what is going on. But I do know that the Spirit right at this moment is present in our conversation. I do know right at this moment the Spirit is active in my friend’s life. He is moving because the Spirit always moves. And I believe that, and right now I am thinking about the fact that the Spirit of God, with all of His limitless power, is moving in my friend’s soul in the middle of this apparently trivial little minor difficulty. The very fact that my friend told me about this over lunch tells me that something’s going on. I do not know what it is, but the Spirit is working.” Can you start feeling a little tingle? Can you start getting a little bit excited? Can you think back to the Narnia series that C.S. Lewis wrote so wonderfully where he said, “Aslan’s on the move.” Something is happening. Can you start thinking “vision”?

And suppose in your mind, as I am tape-recording it, I hear something like this, you are saying to yourself, “You know, as I listen to my friend talk about this, an image comes to my mind. The first image of where he is right now, he seems like an empty, scared little kid that has to prove

he can handle stuff. And when things go wrong he just gets petulant and frustrated and angry, like a little kid with the neighborhood kids who is trying to impress them. (You get this strange image, that might be all wrong, but it occurs to you, so you allow it to come to your mind.) And you think, “Well, that is my vision of where he is, not where I want him to be, not vision in the rich sense.” But then your mind goes further, and you say, “You know, that’s where he is, but I can picture something different about my friend. I can picture him as a solid, God-trusting man that nothing really threatens. That whether it is something that reveals his level of incompetence—he does not know how to handle little plumbing problems—or whether it is bigger things—he loses his job, whether it’s far bigger—he discovers that he has cancer, but in the middle of whatever is happening, I can envision this guy as a solid man, who in the middle of all of the frustration and all of the failures, and all of the rest of it, that there is some thing that is anchored and deep and real within him. Man, wouldn’t that be something? To believe that it is there in undeveloped form, but maybe because of our time together, that could become just a little more real. Maybe Christ could form in him. Man, I would love that.” Suppose that is the way that you are thinking. I have not got a clue how to make all of that happen, but boy does that sound good! Your initial response is to think vision. That is what I mean by it.

Now do hear, that this suggestion that I am making to you in SoulCare of “think vision” when a problem is presented is very different than what most of us do. What most of us do is we don’t think “vision”; we think “analysis.” “What is wrong with this guy? Why would something like that get to him? Does he feel incompetent? That is the whole issue, isn’t it? Is it that he is mad at his wife and is taking it out on the toilet? I mean, what is going on with this guy? I have got to figure it out so that I can help him.” Do not begin by thinking analysis. And also—and this may be a little hard to understand—do not think “help”—“How can I help this guy? What do I have to do?” You are just going to feel pressured. And your friend will feel pressured, and he will wish he had never brought it up. Do not think “analysis.” Do not think “help.” Think “vision.” And when you think “vision,” let me tell you what happens inside of your soul.

When you think “vision,” it creates a spirit of prayer. It creates a space, a quiet space, within your own soul, that you are longing for the Spirit of God to fill. It creates a space in your own soul when you think about, “Here is where he is; here is where he could be. I long for that. Oh God, could I be useful to that? Let me open my ears, not to figuring him out, but to the Spirit, knowing the Spirit is moving in my friend’s life. Can I think about that?” You will think about that. That will be on your mind if you think “vision”—no pressure within you, no judgment within you of where he is, no retreat or meaningless support. All the don’ts are being avoided. Now, you listen. And you are asking questions because you are curious. You are thinking reflectively, not analytically. You are in the SoulCare because you thought “vision.” You have made a place for the Spirit to begin enlivening you, and now you are ready to begin moving into the man’s life with your mouth. You have already moved into his life with your heart. Now it is time to speak words.

As you think vision, and as you wait for the Spirit of God to lead you and to direct you—you do not wait passively; you wait very actively—you are sitting there, and you are thinking what this man could be, the image of him being solid as opposed to empty, and the Spirit of God leading me to help him to become more like that. Man, what an exciting thing. And then you start thinking about the presenting problem that he had actually presented to you. And your focus now—and here we come back to an earlier lesson—your focus now, is on (is the word “relentless” a good word here?—

it has a bit of an antagonistic feel to it, but let me use it anyhow) a relentless curiosity, a curiosity that says, “I am so eager to know you that I really want to ask questions. I really want to know.”

Your focus is on curiosity, not on analysis, advice, or affirmation (the triple A’s of bad SoulCare). In response to, “I got so mad last night when the toilet overflowed. I don’t know why I get so mad, but man, I get mad a lot.” You thought vision ... you are thinking vision ... you have a space for the Spirit, and now you are curious. And you say something that, when I suggest the words to you will sound so simple, and you will say, “Well, anybody could think of that.” And that is my point. Anybody who is curious and who is thinking vision could think of this. And what they would say would be something simple. I can think of ten possibilities. One might be something like, “What did you do when you got so mad?” You are just curious. You would like to recreate the scene. You know, the toilet overflowed, the guy got mad. What does that mean? Does that mean that he took the lid off of the thing, and hurled it across the room? Does that mean he said a bad word? Did it mean that he just walked away and put on the television, and watched it for two hours? You are just curious. You want to know what your friend did when he got mad last night over this little inconvenience.

Now, notice the difference between curiosity, and judgment or pressure or analysis. I could ask the question, “Well, what did you do?” with a spirit of judgment. I could ask the question, “What did you do when handling that? You got so angry. Well, did you really lose your temper and yell at your wife? I want to see if you really mishandled this thing.” Or, it could be an analytical kind of a thing: “Well, I wonder what you did, because I am ready to put on my thinking cap and figure this thing out for you.” The words matter so much less than the energy beneath them. It really is not what you say that makes the big difference. It is why you say it and what is in you. That is why we spent so much time on the issue of passions, on the issue of what is alive within you as you say, “What did you do?” If what is alive within you is, “What did you do so that I can straighten you out?” Or, “What did you do that shows me your problem so that I can figure it all out?”—you are not doing SoulCare. But rather, if “what did you do,” [is the question] because this is your friend, and you would love to know what is happening in his life, if that is the energy behind your question, then you are a curious person who your friend would experience as safe.

When you ask, “What did you do?” with the energy of respectful curiosity, your friend’s response will be one of wanting to let you know, as opposed to: “Well, I will tell you a little bit, but not too much, because I do not want to get beat in the head by your moralism or repaired by your therapy.” The friend will rather say, “Well, I am glad that you asked. I guess, I am kind of ashamed to tell you this, but I said some words that I shouldn’t say, I guess, and I just got mad about the whole thing and stormed off, and my poor wife just had to put up with me for the evening, and I didn’t feel very good.” The ruling passion within you will help your friend feel safe enough to let you know what he is ashamed of. And that creates the opportunity for you to begin to know, to explore, to discover, and touch. He has opened up his life to you just a little bit.

Now, when expressed curiosity is coupled with assumed vision, and both are energized by the energy (Spirit) of love, a good conversation of SoulCare is about to begin. That is how it works. The person is going to not merely complain and make known facts, but there is going to be—now, listen very carefully to an important point—when you do it the way we are suggesting, when there is a meaningful curiosity and you are thinking “vision”—and you are doing it all in the energy of

love, and you say to your friend, “Well, what did you do?” and he begins telling you, and you ask for clarification, and you talk for ten or fifteen minutes about all of this—what is going to happen at some point is that your friend will, in the middle of his personal revelations, which are an invitation to you to know him, explore him, discover him, and touch him, as your friend begins making known his personal revelations, you are going to notice something in your friend. Now, what you are going to notice is a point of confusion. Your friend is going to highlight a point of confusion. He might say something like, “I don’t know why I get so mad.” There is the confusion. Why is he telling you that? “I don’t know why I get so mad. Yeah, it really upsets Peggy because, man, she puts up with this all of the time, and I guess I do get mad a lot. And it really isn’t good. I know it isn’t right. I just don’t get it. I am so confused about it. I mean, how does a toilet overflowing have the power to make me into a seething, angry volcano that is exploding? I really got mad. I am not even sure who I got mad at, or what I got mad at, or what I got mad about. I don’t understand it. I am just confused.”

When your friend is at a point of confusion, when your curiosity leads your friend to any acknowledgment of confusion, the tension has been created for you to enter your friend’s soul. There is a good tension, a creative tension. A problem has been shared, and the person had made known, “I am a mystery to myself. Beneath the waterline, I don’t know what is going on, and I am confused.” It is at that point that you can then begin to shift from presenting problem to the story of the soul. It is at that point that you can begin to ask questions, questions that direct the person away from the specifics of “what happened with the toilet,” and “what he did with his anger,” and move away from the specifics of that, which you have spent fifteen or twenty minutes, thirty minutes, forty minutes talking about. But then the point of tension comes. “I don’t know why I get like that.” That is the opportunity. That is the door that has been opened by your friend for you to begin asking a different kind of question, questions that reframe the problem from a specific moment that was poorly handled to a specific moment that is part of a larger story of a soul who is struggling in his or her relationships. That is when you begin to reframe. From, “Why do I get so mad? How can I stop it?” to “I wonder what is going on in my important relationships?”

It is not just a matter of learning anger control techniques. It is not just a matter of analyzing the source of anger at that moment and learning to cognitively say new sentences to yourself that stop you from being so mad at the moment—it is not a matter of that sort of thing. It is a matter of moving from the presenting problem to the story of a soul. You begin asking reframing questions. What do I mean by that? Ask questions that move in four simple directions—one direction toward present-important relationships. You might ask a question like, “What does Peggy do when you get mad like that?” That is a reframing question. You have shifted from anger and inconvenience to a relational issue—i.e., “What does Peggy do?” That is a present-important relationship—that is what you talk about first.

Secondly, you might ask a question about past-important relationships. “You know you talk about this. Did you ever get mad when you were a kid like this? You know, did your dad ever drive you nuts or did you ever work with your dad in the shop and make a mistake, and your dad yelled at you for it? I would just love to know about your past a little bit. I am not trying to play psychologist. You are my friend, and I care about you. I would like to know about the story of your soul.” So you ask about some past-important relationships.

And then thirdly—and this a little tricky—you might ask a question that has to do with the present-immediate relationship between you and your friend. You might say something like, “You know, as you tell me that, can I tell you what stirs inside of me? Can I tell you what I feel right now? And can I tell you that I am really glad to have you as a friend? You drive me nuts in some ways, but here are the ways that I am just thrilled to have you as my friend. Because, yeah you get mad a lot, but there is something in you that just feels alive. I am just so glad that we are friends.” You might make it personal like that, and ask a question about a present-immediate relationship between you and your friend.

Fourthly, and obviously most pivotally, you might ask a reframing question to get into the story of the soul about the person’s most important relationship, deepest relationship, eternal relationship with God. And you might say something simple. Do not try to find the right question, the exact wording. You might say something like, “How do you think about God when you are so mad?” Or, “After you get over your anger, and you are sitting there realizing, you know, what a fool you made of yourself, how do you visualize God? I mean, if He were to walk into the room, what expression would you see on His face?” Or, whatever question occurs to you about God, just to get people talking about that.

From “hearing the presenting problem” to “thinking vision” to “curiosity about the presenting problem” that leads to a “reframing of the present problem,” the presenting problem into the story of the soul, now do you see what has happened? Now you are listening to the story of the soul, and you are listening to the story of the soul with hope because you have been thinking “vision.” What do you do as you listen? How do you think about what you are hearing? How do you move with what you are hearing? That is the topic in our last lesson.

Discussion Questions

When a person shares a problem, our natural tendency is to want to help solve it. Discuss how thinking in terms of “vision” (1) promotes a curiosity about what’s going on inside the person, and (2) allows you to ask questions without sounding judgmental.

“Reframing” shifts the focus from the “presenting problem” to the deeper issue of relationships (the Story of the Soul). (1) Why is this shift important? (2) How does “vision-produced curiosity” help someone feel safe enough to tell you the story of their soul?

Lesson 10 Study Guide

CC201

SoulCare Foundations I: The Basic Model

Agents of Growth: What SoulCare Can
Do in Our Lives

Updated 2015



Our Daily Bread
Christian University

Objectives

In this lesson, Dr. Crabb explains how the spirit-led heart of the person being helped can be stimulated by the release of the spirit-led heart of the SoulCare provider.

When you complete this lesson, “Agents of Growth: What SoulCare Can Do in Our Lives,” you should be able to:

- Compare and contrast the terms *stubborn soul* and *damaged self* in describing people in need.
- Explain and illustrate how the categories of *fallenness*, *image-bearer*, and *new covenant realities* guide the SoulCare provider.
- Describe and illustrate how the spirit-led heart of the person being helped can be stimulated by the release of the spirit-led heart of the SoulCare provider.

Transcript

Course Title: SoulCare Foundations I: The Basic Model

Lesson Ten: Agents of Growth: What SoulCare Can Do in Our Lives

Your teacher for this course is noted psychologist, author, and speaker, Dr. Larry Crabb.

Let me tell you the great danger in learning SoulCare from a chart. The temptation will be that you are going to reduce SoulCare to a chart. The basic strategy I am sketching is not meant to be a precise formula by any means for how to move into somebody's life. I am offering this really as a loose guide for you as you enter someone's soul with a desire to see their appetite for Christ become their ruling passion. And all this chart, material, and all of the thinking that we are doing now is meant to be nothing more than that—an opportunity for the Spirit to move through your intelligent movements into somebody else's life. Remember the very first point that I made as the course began that SoulCare is not a technique to master—it is a relationship to offer.

So what I want to encourage you to do, as we have come to the last lesson in this particular course, is I want you to maybe put your pen down just a little bit for a moment. I want you to sit back in your chair with a mood not of, "I've got to get it all," but with a mood of, "Let me ponder what is being said ... let me become aware of what is stirring within me rather than getting the teaching so I can go out and do it. Let me just become a different kind of a person, as I ponder these thoughts about how to move into somebody else's life."

So far, we have covered the top half, essentially, of our chart. We have talked about the presenting problem, and we have suggested that the very first thing that you must do with the presenting problem is to think "vision." When you think "vision," it creates a space in your soul for the Spirit of God to speak. As you think "vision," and become attentive to the Spirit speaking within you, then secondly, [become curious]. I talked last time about becoming very curious, about wanting to know all that is involved in this presenting problem and just asking many respectful questions, with the energy not of judgment or analysis, but with the energy of just plain curiosity, plain respect. And then as the presenting problem gets talked about, then we suggested that you want to reframe the problem into the story of a soul, to encourage people to begin talking about their relationships, because that is what the story of life is all about. If we are relational beings made in the image of God, then the story of a soul is really the story of relationships, so reframing questions get us to talk about the story of the soul. And now as the person talks about their relationships, their present relationships—husband, wife, children, friends, their past relationships, particularly parents of course, their present-immediate relationship with you at the moment that you are chatting, and their deepest relationship with God—as they begin talking about that, now the work of SoulCare really begins. Now you listen. And you listen with the intent of knowing, exploring, discovering, and touching. In order to do that well, the bottom half of the chart needs to come into play. So let us start talking about that.

Let us start talking about the way a SoulCarer thinks about the difficulties as somebody shares the problem. Way down, the root problem, flesh dynamics, this category is not something that

I am encouraging you to understand in a way that you can pin a label on somebody and figure somebody out, but it is a way of sitting back, and with the guidance of the Spirit, open to the Spirit's leading as you think about what this person could become. It is way of thinking about what is going on in the deepest part of this person's soul, in the part that is a mess and the part that is just full of the flesh and the part that reflects their image-bearing fallenness, not their image-bearing redemption. What is going on, as you start thinking about the root cause, what really is behind their presenting problem? What I want to suggest to you is at this point SoulCare, many other points as well, but at this point particularly, that SoulCare parts company dramatically with secular psychotherapy. We are going to be talking about the root problem, not in terms of thinking of a damaged self, which is the way that therapy often thinks about what is going on—somebody is hurting, they were damaged by a bad event, and the therapist has to come up with an understanding of that, and repair it in some way—we are not going to be thinking about what it means to be a damaged self—that is psychotherapy, which I believe at this level is illegitimate. We are going to be thinking rather about SoulCare, which focuses on a stubborn soul, as opposed to a damaged self, a stubborn soul with incredible potential, but still the problem has to do with stubbornness more than with damage. I want to explain that. I want to make that as clear as I can.

In secular therapy, the assumption is made, in all of secular psychology, there is an assumption that is made that I believe is at exact variance with the biblical worldview. The assumption is this: that this little baby that is born that now at age two or three or four begins to experience the harshness of the world—of a parent who rejects, of a parent who loses temper, of an alcoholic parent who beats, of a perverted parent who is involved in sexual abuse—as this little child begins to experience all of the good things, as well as all of these bad things that I have mentioned, the assumption is made that that child can best be understood as an innocent self. And as an innocent self with no moral direction that is bad whatsoever, all they are wanting to do—all this cute little girl, this cute boy wants to do—is come alive with who they are as a cute little boy or cute little girl. But their environment hems them in, and keeps them from becoming all that they can be, so we think more in terms of the innocent self that has been damaged by a difficult environment. And just as a physician would treat a person who has been damaged by an assailant, who plunged the knife into the arm, the surgeon now says, “You are an innocent victim. My job is to suture up your arm where the knife of the assailant went in,” the secular therapist thinks similarly and says, “We have an innocent self that has been damaged, and my job is to restore the fullness of self so you are released to be all that you can be.” That is the view of secular therapy.

Now, contrast that with the very different understanding that I believe is at the root of SoulCare. SoulCare assumes that there is no such thing as an innocent self, and that is a theological statement—that every child born into this world, except for Jesus, has been born with a fatal disease, a moral disease. Every child born into this world is an image-bearing—and that gives that child his or her dignity and value—but an image-bearing, depraved soul. Now we have the concepts of dignity and depravity. We have this little child who is now the adult sitting in front of you and your relationship of SoulCare, and you are thinking about this person, not as an innocent self who has been damaged, and you have got to fix something by going beneath the surface and seeing where the damage is; but you are thinking now in terms of this person as a stubborn soul who is looking at the realities of life and finding some way to keep themselves intact, to keep themselves preserved—feeling good about themselves, somewhat happy, whole, able to function, to take care of themselves in the face of a difficult world—and they are taking responsibility for

that and what they are saying is, “God is not relevant to this process whatsoever.” And that is the depravity. God is not someone to trust.

Tell me some little five-year-old girl, who in the middle of the sexual abuse, naturally says, “God is with me.” It does not happen. Why does it not happen? Fundamentally, it does not happen, because that little girl has no relationship with God. She has been cut off from God by her own depravity, and something in her is saying, “Whatever is happening in life, I have got to handle it on my own, because there is nobody out there for me.” God has been cut off from her life, from his life, from all of their lives.

Let me give you a simple definition of what the Bible calls the flesh. All I am talking about is the flesh as the root problem beneath all of our presenting problems. And the Bible talks about no longer living in the energy of the flesh, and mortify the flesh, do violence to the flesh, kill the flesh. What is the Bible talking about? The flesh can be defined most simply as the determination to make my life work without ever trusting God. Flesh can be most simply defined as a determination to make my life work—as a seven-year-old boy with an alcoholic father, as a ten-year-old girl with a neighbor who seduces her—“I am going to find some way to make my life work. That hurt a lot. I don’t like what happened to me. It was wrong. I am the victim. It should not have happened. There has been damage done to me, of course, but my core determination is, I am going to find some way to make my life work, and it is not going to include God.”

So when a father neglects his son or when a little girl is abused, the essential point that I am making is that there is no such thing as an innocent self; that has been damaged. What there is, is an image-bearer. There is a cute little girl that is being treated very wickedly and despicably in a way she never should have been treated; and her pain is real, and her pain is legitimate, and our mood should be one of profound empathy and rescuing her from that awful situation, if it is at all possible. All that, of course. But go beyond that to recognizing that in each of us who has been harmed by relational events in our worlds that have not been as they should be, in each of us, there is something, there is an energy within us that reflects our fallenness that says, “I am going to make a determined attempt, I am going to be determined in my effort to find a way to make my life work, and it is not going to include trusting God. The world is not working for me. I am going to find resources within me to get my needs met that I can control.”

Recall the concepts from an earlier lesson of self-need (I am the point, my needs are the point), and self-management (I am going to make my life work). That is the issue. Those are the issues that are beneath all of these presenting problems that we have in our world. Therefore, we can put it simply this way: that life experiences, whether it is a wonderful mom and dad, or a bad mom and dad, or somewhere in between, life experiences x fleshly energy (the determination to make life work without God) = flesh dynamics—i.e., the strategies that I have come up with to make my life work, so that if God does not come through, I am just fine. I do not really need Him, because I am intact without Him.

I want to illustrate that personally for just a moment. If we are going to understand flesh dynamics, if we are going to realize that we are up against a problem that we cannot solve, if we are going to realize that the problem that we are up against is so big, and so bad, and so deep, and so awful, that nothing has the power to deal with this except the Gospel of Jesus Christ, if we are

going to realize that SoulCare depends on what Jesus does in our lives—it is not something that we pull off—if we are going to realize how big and bad these flesh dynamics are, then maybe it will be helpful to put some illustration to the concepts that I am talking about.

And, again just very briefly, I am a fifty-six-year-old man who has two parents who are both living. Dad is eighty-eight, and Mother is eighty-four. Mother is living in an Alzheimer's unit, and Dad is living, in an apartment close by to where Mother is, by himself. He is very lonely. And this is an enormous struggle, of course, for them, obviously. And it is a struggle for me. And you want to provide SoulCare for me. You want to move into my life as a man who is struggling, and this is a very present struggle that I am in the middle of experiencing, even as I share with you. Suppose you were to ask some questions out of curiosity, out of respectful, loving curiosity. And you say, "Well, Larry, tell me more about your mom and dad, and tell me what kind of struggles are going on with you." I would share things along this line. I would say to you that I am very grateful for Mother and Dad. They are godly, Christian people. And I could enumerate the blessings that they have brought into my life that are very strong and very considerable, and I think that I am blessed more than many people that I chat with, and I mean that very sincerely. And yet, and everybody can say "and yet ..." because nobody has perfect parents. Nobody has a perfect friend except God. And if in our flesh, we turn to some source other than God, we are always going to experience profound soul-smothering disappointments. What I would say to you is my mother is a woman who is more matter-of-fact than affectionate. And just recently, as I walked away from her after visiting with her and left the room, she had a moment of lucidity and emotion. She grabbed me and kissed me on the lips and said, "Thanks for everything"—that happened just recently. It is the first time that she has ever kissed me that I can recall. I wonder what that did to me? Am I a damaged self, or am I a stubborn soul? And then, [there is] Dad. Dad has had to overcome a variety of disadvantages throughout his entire life that, for whatever reason, has made me look on him as a bit of a needy person that I have to take care of. What has that done to me?

That is a thumbnail sketch, obviously, incredibly brief, about my relational story of my soul. What is that like for me? How will you care for my soul? How will you move into my life? What are the flesh dynamics that are going on? Am I a stubborn soul who longs for more affection and strength in somebody else's life toward me, which I think is legitimate to want? But then do I see that as a need in myself that you had better take care of, and then in my self-managing ways I go about looking for ways to get people to respond to me in ways that I have not been responded to by Mom and Dad? Is that the way that you would begin to understand me? I think if you were to think like that, you would be on to something. Because that is more of who I am, more of a stubborn soul than a damaged self who needs your sympathy.

As you listen to someone talk about their life—as you listen to someone share about the first time they were kissed by their mother, after fifty-some years of being alive; and a father who, with all of his good points, still has a certain neediness that calls something out of me to take care of him that I do not think is holy—as you listen to somebody's life, how do you start thinking? You have this category in your mind of flesh dynamics, and you realize that there is something ugly and wicked and bad inside of each of us, and we have to use terms like that. Many years ago I asked the question, "Whatever happened to sin, whatever became of evil, why do we not have that diagnostic category, if you will, in our mind as we think about problems?" Is there not something fundamentally, morally wrong with us? And then as you think like that and encourage me to tell

my story, and encourage your friends to tell their story, then what kind of categories do you have for reflecting upon their story?

I want to suggest this very simply. There is so much to this that we will look at much later, but for now, I want you to think about the notion that there are some basic categories that I have already stated that I want to review for you very simply and those are these: As people tell their story, think about the fact that you are listening to an image-bearer tell his or her story. You are listening to a person who longs for a relationship that only God can provide; and therefore, every other relationship in their lives—the best husband, the best wife, the best kid, the best mom, the best dad—every other relationship, at some point, is disappointing. And as you tell me your story, I want to reflect on that. You are disappointed. You are hurting. You are an image-bearer who is not receiving what you were designed to receive from other people, and maybe you are not as aware of receiving it from God as you could be. You are an image-bearer who longs for certain things—that is a category for reflection, an image-bearer.

A second category is a category of fallenness. As I listen to you tell your story, I need to realize that you are a demanding person. There is something in you which is demanding that other people come through for you, and you feel justified in that. There is something insufferable about you, just like there is about me. We both stand in desperate need of God's forgiving grace. And as I listen to you tell your story, I realize that there is something very self-centered about you, very demanding about you, that really is neither good, nor changeable.

A third category is a category that we are going to look at in exciting detail later on, a category of the new covenant. We are image-bearers who long, we are fallen people who demand, but we are redeemed people, redeemed by the Gospel. And what that means is, not only that we are forgiven for all the ugliness, but we are actually changed. We are changed from the inside out. God has put a new heart inside of me, and now as I am providing you with SoulCare, and you tell me the story of your soul, as I listen to you talk, I am looking for the good stuff, beneath the bad. I am looking for the thirst in your soul, the appetite that you have that really is directed toward God, because that is there. It is not just a demand that you have a mother who is more affectionate. It is not just a demand that you have a father who, in certain ways, was stronger for you. But now you realize that of course you want that, but you have an appetite for God that is far deeper than those appetites. And when your appetite for God is recognized and realized and lived out, then those other appetites cease to become demands, and only become painful desires that really do not destroy you at all. The new covenant changes us in ways that lets me think about you when you tell the story of your soul with a great deal of hope, and I need to reflect on that. I need to listen to you carefully according to categories for reflection. And then as I do that, maybe I will be able to, as the two of us chat, maybe we will collaborate together, and be able to come up to a clearer understanding of what is the battle going on in your soul. Maybe we can move from reflecting on the story of the soul, to entering the battle that is going on inside of you. What is the real battle that is happening inside of you between the flesh and the spirit?

Could I begin to understand what your unique battle is and leave aside the aloof-sounding theological terms, flesh and spirit, and bring it down to where you are living right now, when you get mad when the toilet overflows? What is the battle between the flesh and the spirit at the point of that trivial inconvenience? What is the battle between my flesh and my spirit, as I think

about a mother who no longer recognizes me, and who has kissed me once in my life? What is the battle going on? Do not feel sorry for me. Do not give me sympathy. Explore me. Discover me. Understand the battle that is going on in my soul, and realize that as you begin to explore that battle—as I begin to explore that battle with you—as you begin to explore that battle with somebody else, we have a power.

There is a power within us that, when it is released from my heart, can actually engage this battle productively, and can join forces with the right side, with the side that has got to eventually win, but which needs to win now a little bit more as well. There is a power within me, that as you share your story, and I reflect, and the battle gets defined, and I begin to see how you are demanding that your wife respond to you in this way, and you are feeling very insecure because of your background, and I realize that all of those are your fleshly dynamics, but you have an appetite for God that is within you that really would love to bless this woman in the name of God, even when she lets you down—that is actually in you. Maybe my power that could be released from my heart into yours, includes at least two elements. One: How badly I hate your flesh, just like I hate my own. It is something that deserves to die. You do not kill unless you hate, and there is a hatred that is legitimate, a hatred of sin, a hatred of the fact that when I move toward my wife, sometimes I feel so justified in moving away from her, and not being kind to her because she let me down. That is worthy of hatred. And maybe, if that hatred within me toward my flesh as well as yours is felt by you—not as an angry judgment, but as a way of saying that is a part of you that is ruining your potential to live for God and your joy—maybe then that hatred coming out of me for the fleshly part of you will help you abandon that a bit, provided that something else comes out of me.

Do I just love your spirit? Do I just love, am I excited about, am I passionate about, what Jesus Christ has done in you, and can I see it? Have I discovered, as I have come to know and explore, now am I discovering what is alive within you? How would you talk to me, if you were releasing your heart toward me? I think that you might say something like this: “You know, you really are pretty demanding at times. You demand that you be enough for other people. You demand that you be sufficient to remove other people’s neediness, and I think it is because you finally want to get a break, and want to take a rest.” And I think that I would say, “Yeah, that is kind of what I do, I guess, that is not so good is it?” And your response would be, “No, I think it is ugly, and I don’t like it. And it hurts my friendship with you, actually.” And I think that something in me would agree. But then suppose that you were to go on to say, “But I know that there is a life within you that deeply cares about your mother, about your father, about your wife, a life that deeply wants to be a blessing to other people. Larry, I can see it in you, and I just got all excited about that. I celebrate that. I jump up and down that I see that. That is marvelous. I am so thrilled to have you for my buddy. I am really glad to have you for my friend.”

What would have happened if you were to do that, if you talked to me that way, if you released your spirit-led heart, if you released your curious heart that has a vision for who I could become, if you released the part of you that is energized by the love of Christ, and not the desire to help me and to make me better and to fix me up; but if you released all of the good stuff that is in you toward me in that way, something about my flesh would feel much less attractive to me. And something about the life of Christ that is in me would start to come alive a little more. It is already there because of the Spirit. You cannot put it there. But if you start invigorating that, then you are living out what the writer said in Hebrews 10:24: You have thought hard about how you can

stimulate me to love and to good deeds, where the spirit becomes more alive in me because of the way you have interacted with me. If you did that for me, you would be a man or a woman who provided me with SoulCare. And I would be grateful. And I would be different because of the power of God through you in my life.

What we have after these ten lessons, are only the basic foundations of SoulCare. We have just gotten started in what we need to understand. We need to clearly grasp the problem that each of us has more deeply. We need to grasp who we are as image-bearers more fully. There will be other courses. We need to grasp the Gospel that Jesus Christ has introduced into our lives, and the changes that it has made, and how we can capitalize on all of the resources, the provisions, of the Gospel. That will be a further course yet. And then I long that we begin to see that SoulCare could begin a revolution. There is a new way to live, and SoulCare can release it. We will be talking about all of that as time goes on.

Discussion Questions

What was stirred in you as you heard Dr. Crabb share part of his story regarding his parents? Suggest a response to him that reflects legitimate empathy to a disappointed image-bearer. Also, suggest a few responses that reflect your understanding that Dr. Crabb's root problem is a stubborn soul.

Explain your understanding of the difference between the "damaged self" of secular therapy and the "stubborn soul" of SoulCare.

Dr. Crabb says that life experiences x fleshly energy = flesh dynamics. Explain this concept in your own words.