

# Course Leader Guide

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**CC203**

## ***SoulCare Foundations III: Provisions and Practices***

By: Dr. Larry Crabb

Updated 2015

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**Our Daily Bread**  
**Christian University**

# Lesson 1 Study Guide

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## ***SoulCare Foundations III: Provisions and Practices***

Holy Tension: Leading People  
Toward the Cycle of Spiritual Movement

Updated 2015

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# Objectives

In this lesson, you will review the key topics from SoulCare Courses 201 and 202, including the two central elements of SoulCare: 1) knowing your ruling *passion*: what's happening in you, and 2) using *wisdom* to learn what's happening in the other person.

When you complete this lesson, “Holy Tension: Leading People Toward the Cycle of Spiritual Movement,” you should be able to:

- Cite the primary goal of this course: to learn God’s provisions for SoulCare.
- List the five phases of spiritual growth, including the role each plays in effective SoulCare.
- Review three mistakes of ineffective SoulCare.
- Explain the stages of effective SoulCare.
- Define the concept of *holy tension* as used in this course.

# Transcript

## **Course Title: SoulCare Foundations III: Provisions and Practices**

### **Lesson One: Holy Tension: Leading People Toward the Cycle of Spiritual Movement**

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

Welcome to the third course in our curriculum in SoulCare. We're dealing with provisions and practice. So far, in our first two courses, we've been studying a variety of things. Things like turning chairs. What does it mean to turn your chairs toward each other so people are explored, discovered, and touched?

The compelling vision of working with someone, chatting with someone, that their appetite for God becomes stronger than any other appetite.

We talked about the ruling passions that are in my soul, that are in your soul, as we engage in some SoulCare. What are the motives? What are we really trying to accomplish—as we're chatting with people—of which we're not even aware? Ruling Passions—a third topic we've chatted about.

We've talked about brokenness. We've talked about the really, the rather, painful recognition, far more self-centered than we dream. And that our self-centeredness does not exhibit itself only in obvious acts of selfishness but in motives within me as I interact with you that really don't have your well being or God's glory in mind at all.

And we've talked about spiritual power. What does it mean for me, as a provider of SoulCare, to speak in a way where more happens than just words going back and forth? Where a reality, a spiritual reality, takes place and is felt and is encountered and does something to the souls of people.

We've talked about all of these topics and I would think, in the middle of all that we've studied together in our first two courses, I would think you're feeling a variety of things. Maybe you've been able to boil down all the material that we've discussed so far to the two central elements. The first element is: What's happening in you as you provide SoulCare? What's happening as you speak with some other person? What are the passions that are ruling within your soul as you chat. That's topic number one. What's happening in you?

Topic number two: What's happening in the other as you listen to them? As you seem to enter the battles, as you're longing for the Spirit of God to energize you in the way that, because of your interaction with them, their appetite for God is stirred until their appetite for God literally becomes stronger than their appetite for a clean biopsy report. Their appetite for God literally becomes stronger than their husband stopping his affair. Their appetite for God becomes stronger than any other blessing which they can imagine.

What is happening in the other? Because, you understand, you can maneuver, you can move in ways that actually stir their appetites for God. So, those are really the two key questions we've been addressing; in all of our varied discussions of all the varied topics, we've been talking about two questions really. What's in you? What are your ruling passions? What's in them? What is your wisdom that guides you as you enter their souls?

If you put those two ideas together, then I suppose you do have an understanding of why we call this the passion/wisdom model of SoulCare.

Then, what I'd like us to do now as we begin our third course... I'd like us to take a deep breath and mentally rest for just a few moments before we work hard again to understand, before we put our minds to the exciting task really—maybe difficult, but—exciting task of understanding the supernatural provisions that the Spirit of God has made available, that if we do not draw on, we're not going to be engaging in SoulCare. But the supernatural provisions that are already available to us, that are already in me and in you, that if we draw on we will be engaging in meaningful, rich and effective SoulCare.

Before we get into all of that, which is our topic for this course, I would like you to take a breather for a moment and to pay attention to what's happening inside you right now as we enter our third course.

We've looked at turning chairs and ruling passions and all these different topics, and now we're going to go further and talk about supernatural provisions and the practice of SoulCare. And I'd like us to pause to be really honest with ourselves as to...what are you feeling? What are you experiencing as you enter this third course? If you're like me, then I would suspect that as you think about providing SoulCare, as I think about my recent conversations with people in just the last couple days, in the last couple weeks, where I've sat and chatted in the SoulCare kind of a way, when I begin to pay attention to what's happening inside of me as I seek to provide SoulCare, I become aware that sometimes, just like you I presume, I tighten up. Something in me gets stiff. I don't know quite what to do. I sometimes feel a pressure. Is this conversation going well? I'm teaching this stuff; do I have a clue how to do it? I feel a pressure sometimes to pull it off, to make it happen, to say something intelligent, to be very discerning, to have my ruling passions just right and my wisdom on target, and I feel this pressure to do it well, and as I feel this pressure—as I tighten up, and as I long to say something sensitive and powerful, and to really have the person leave the hour saying, "Wow, that was quite a conversation"—as I feel those pressures and temptations, what happens is I'm no longer a wise man. I'm no longer free. The things that tighten up are the things that, if they were released, could actually make a difference.

I remember recently counseling with someone in my office, where I have a diploma hanging on my wall that announces that I have earned a doctor of philosophy in clinical psychology, and right next to that I have a certificate that says I'm qualified in my state to practice psychotherapy. With all these impressive credentials on the wall behind them, I remember sitting, talking with this person, and they were saying some very difficult, confusing things, and to myself, not out loud of course, but to myself, I remember saying to myself, not to the person, "This person needs professional help. I don't have a clue what I'm doing."

You're going to feel that. You're going to feel a lot of times, "What am I doing entering the battle for this person's soul? Why has God punished this person by having them chat with me? I don't know what I'm doing. I haven't got a clue."

You're going to feel like that when you talk meaningfully about another person's life. And what I want you to hear me say—now this is a repeat of what I've said earlier on—when you feel like that, realize that's a good thing. Realize it's a good thing to feel like that. If you don't feel like that, you'll never learn the meaning of the word "dependent" on the Holy Spirit in a meaningful, existential, at-this-moment kind of a way. You'll rather be trusting your own sense of competence. You'll rather be trusting in "I've got this thing figured out. I have the roadmap down pat. I know what I'm doing and everything is just fine."

There are going to be times when you're simply not going to know the next question to ask. There are going to be many times when you're not going to be clear on the next direction to pursue. There'll be a number of times when you'll say something and, to yourself, you'll wish you could pull it back, and you'll realize that wasn't a good conversation. Folks, we've really got to lighten up just a little bit and understand that training that develops expertise is not what we're about here. Training that eliminates a sense of inadequacy and replaces it with a sense of competence is training which, in my understanding, eliminates the possibility of providing rich and effective soul caring.

If we're going to provide SoulCare, if we're going to understand the provisions God has made for providing SoulCare, and if we're going to practice SoulCare well, then we're going to have to realize that the man or woman who provides the richest kind of SoulCare is not necessarily the one with the degrees on the wall. The man, the woman, who provides the richest kind of SoulCare is the person who is becoming more and more aware of who they already are in Christ, more and more aware of what the Spirit has done, is doing, and is continuing to do in their own souls, and who is aware of what is most deeply alive, and feels freely released to give what is most alive to the other. That's central. Training that provides competence is not the point. Training that helps understand who we are in Christ and frees us to release that in our engagements and in our conversations with people—that's what the course is all about.

We've talked in the past about the importance of not running from our felt inadequacy. We've talked about the fact that we must not run from our feelings of incompetence into training that makes us more confident in ourselves and less dependent on the Holy Spirit. We've talked about embracing our true inadequacy and recognizing that we don't have an inferiority complex; we really are inadequate. There is an inferiority about us. We're desperately dependent on the Spirit for anything of value to happen. And realize this—when something happens that looks valuable that has not been promoted, that has not been energized by the Holy Spirit, it really isn't valuable.

So we've talked about facing our inadequacy and moving into a level of brokenness that frees us to give what God has put within us. A brokenness that makes us say, "You know, even as I'm sitting here chatting with you, there's something in me that so much wants to impress you. There's something in me that so much wants you to think well of me. There's something in me that so much wants you to say, 'I never would have thought of that. I'm so glad I'm chatting with you.'" If my real motivation has nothing to do ultimately with your bringing glory to God and finding your

satisfaction in Him, but my real motivation is I want to get some glory out of this, and I'm going to see to it that my soul is blessed because you're going to react to me in a certain way. When I begin to understand that, there is a brokenness that takes place. That's in me. That's in you. Brokenness is part of the deal.

We've talked about the excitement of release. We've talked about what it means, out of brokenness, for us to be able to release what the Spirit of God has already put most deeply within me, that when it comes out of me, when the literal life of Jesus Christ that is in me comes out and—by some mystical means that we'll never understand comes out of me—and travels from my soul into yours and activates, touches, stirs something in you, then SoulCare takes place.

How does all this happen? How do I become a person who can provide effective SoulCare? And how does the person I'm speaking with move in the direction that God has established for them? Well, I want to suggest to you, as we start moving into our third topic now of provisions and practice, that there is a cycle that I want to introduce to you now. A cycle that has five phases. I don't want this to be a formula. I don't know of any formulas in the spiritual journey that work reliably; they just don't. Because the Spirit of God is not reducible to our pragmatic understanding. But there are ways of talking about—if I can give some clarity to—the process. And I want to talk about the cycle of spiritual growth that will perhaps crystallize all that we've said so far and will bring us up to speed so we're ready to move on into our next topic.

I want to talk about five phases, and let me put them to you very, very simply. The first phase can be talked about as brokenness. If there's going to be movement toward the vision that God has for us, if there's going to be movement towards the vision of having an appetite for God that is stronger and more powerful than any other appetite, then the first topic has to be **brokenness**.

Brokenness is the crucial first step in spiritual release. A brokenness which says, "I really am self-centered, and even more important than realizing I'm self-centered, I am so deeply self-centered, there's nothing I can do about it. If God doesn't provide something, I will be hopelessly stuck in self-centeredness every moment of my existence for the rest of eternity. Only God can change that." Brokenness is step number one.

Phase number two—a better word than step—phase number two is **repentance**. A word that we're all familiar with which maybe can be defined very, very simply. It's a momentum which comes out of brokenness, which releases a desire within me to say, "I long to be other-centered. Self-centeredness is not where life is. Other-centeredness is something which I long to be. It fits my soul better. I know it's what God wants and it's what I long for. It's what I believe is the avenue to life." Brokenness and repentance, which then leads to the third phase, which I choose to call **abandonment**.

If, in fact, I really am repentant, and long to be other-centered, my only hope for ever developing Christ-like character is absolute abandonment to God. It's got to be abandonment to His provisions, to His work in my heart, otherwise it isn't going to happen because there is no way a therapist, there's no way a pastor, there's no way a friend, is ever going to change my self-centeredness to other-centeredness. That's going to be a work of God and I must be abandoned completely to Him. That's phase number three. And as you abandon yourself to God, what



develops over time, not always immediately, is a deep and growing sense of **confidence**. This God that I'm abandoning myself to is a God that has the power and has provided all that is necessary for me to move in the directions that my soul most longs to move. There's brokenness, repentance, abandonment, confidence, and out of that confidence, which helps me to believe that the Spirit really is present at this moment, in the middle of this conversation, the Spirit is doing something, and when I believe that that's true of me as I chat, of you as I chat with you, then what happens is this last phase which I choose to call **release**.

Out of brokenness and repentance, abandonment and confidence, comes a release where I begin to offer what is most alive in me to the other person. When you walk this little path, I suggest SoulCare happens. And as you walk this path, you begin to discover a spiritual power. You begin to experience Christ's energy as the passion that rules within us as we seek to provide SoulCare. And all that is about what's happening inside of you as the provider of SoulCare. And there is the first question: "Am I aware of my own interior world as I speak with somebody else? What passion rules in me?"

The second question is equally important: "This matter of wisdom—what is happening in the other person that I need to understand well enough to move in certain directions as we chat? Do I bring up this? Do I ask about their father? Do I bring up a Bible verse? Do I say, 'It's time to pray'?" Wisdom guides me in the direction that I go. I need to answer the second question—not only, "What is happening inside of me? Am I going through the process of brokenness and repentance, abandonment and confidence and release?"—but, "Do I know what it means to lead the other person in this direction and do I know what's happening inside of them that might be getting in the way of this direction?"

If you're like me, you're regularly tempted, as you engage in SoulCare, to make three mistakes. The three mistakes that you're most tempted to make—and there's a dozen others, a hundred others—but the three that you're most tempted to make—I would suggest, if you're like me—is number one: to retreat. I want to back away from what confuses me. I want to back away from what puzzles me or disgusts me. And when I hear you say something that I can't handle or I feel a certain disdain for, something in me wants to back away from who you are and I want to redefine your struggle in terms that I can handle. That's retreat. And when you retreat, you're really moving into your own comfort zone and you're away from moving toward SoulCare. Retreat—one common mistake.

Second common mistake, and maybe the most common of all in providing SoulCare, is the mistake of advising, of giving solutions, of fixing people, of coming up with something the person can do that will make things better for them. We think of the biblical principle, we come up with a spiritual discipline, and we say, "If you'll follow this principle in Ephesians 5, if you will follow this spiritual discipline, if you will do this, if you will do that, then here's what's going to happen, and I'm telling you what to do, and this is the result of what's going to happen as a result of your doing these particular things."

Remember, you're not doing SoulCare when all you're doing is rearranging behavior. You're not doing SoulCare when all you're saying is, "This principle would suggest you do this. Follow this particular discipline and that will happen." You're not doing SoulCare. You're not depending on



the Spirit when all you're doing is moving people in directions that they can accomplish with or without God's Spirit.

A third mistake that is terribly common is to merely empathize. Empathy is a good thing. Feeling what people feel, letting people know that you feel with them, that's obviously a good thing. To say to a wife, "That must have hurt to realize that your husband is involved in pornography and doesn't seem to be finding you very desirable; that's got to be a very difficult thing to feel." And is that a good thing to do? Well, sure it is. But it's merely, at best, opening the door to far more important topics. It's not the substance of SoulCare.

As you've studied our second course in particular, you're now thinking about doing more than retreating, than redefining problems into things you can handle. You're thinking about doing more than advising and coming up with solutions to fix where people are. You're thinking about doing more than merely being with people at the level of emotion, empathizing with them. You're developing wisdom. You're thinking about things like journeying reality. What is the person experiencing right now? Do you know what it means to be present for them in a safe way so they're willing to discuss all that's involved in the reality of their journey, where they are right now? You're thinking about journeying reality. That's a part of wisdom. You're thinking about vision; we've talked about that. What is the Spirit up to right now in this person's life? Here's where they are. Where might the Spirit be moving that person? Are you excited about...the Spirit is present and doing something right now? He takes His time, if you've noticed. And you might need to wait weeks, months, years. Parents need to wait decades sometimes to see God work in their child's life the way they long. But you have the vision for what could be and the excitement sustains because you believe the Spirit is active. The second topic: vision.

Third topic of reframing. You want to move from journeying reality, from the specifics of, "I just found out my husband's involved in pornography," to reframe the specific topic into the larger topic of the story of their soul, the story of their relationships. You want to begin thinking about how they are relating to, not only their husband, but to their children, their friends, how they are relating to their past in terms of what their mother and dad happen to be like in their history, how they are relating to you right now as the two of you interact, how they are relating to God. You reframe into the story of the soul.

You talk next about flesh dynamics. Wisdom is developing as you think about the topic of flesh dynamics. I know this relational image-bearer is fallen. I know this person has journeyed through early childhood and on up to the present with a fist clenched in the face of God, and you know that this person you're chatting with, at some level is saying, "I don't like the way my life is going. I will make my life work because, frankly, God, You've been a bit of a disappointment. You've not come through the way I think you should, and I'm going to take over, and nothing matters more than my soul developing a certain kind of health or a certain kind of internal experience, and I'm going to arrange for that."

You've thought about various categories for understanding. You've thought about, as people have listened to their story, as you've listened to people's story, you've thought about the kinds of categories that will begin to help you make sense out of the story that they tell. This person does bear the image of God. They have the capacities for relationship. They are thirsty, but because they are depraved, they are not aware of their thirst for God.

You've thought about the fact that these people think, that because there's depravity, they're fallen people, their thinking has become foolish and they have a wrong understanding of how life works. And you're thinking about this as they tell their story. You're thinking about the fact that they're volitional people who choose and all that they're doing is a choice and when the wife loses her temper with her husband because of this pornography problem, somehow there's a choice involved in pursuit of a goal. What's her goal? What's she after? You're thinking about all this.

You're thinking about...the person bears the image of God and, therefore, has the capacity to feel. They long and thirst. They think. They choose. They feel. And with their feelings, they sometimes, when the feelings hurt, they run away from their feelings and they are not willing to take their feelings as an indication that maybe they are on the wrong track. And the feelings that are negative, they simply want to suppress and get rid of.

You become aware of these kinds of things. You've begun to understand the topic of wisdom. Now, with all of that in your minds, as we're taking our breather here, with all of that in your minds, as we're thinking about journeying realities and vision for what God can do and with framing and thrust dynamics and categories for understanding people, as we're thinking about all of that and putting it into our two central pillars on which we're building our model of SoulCare—of what's happening in me as I provide SoulCare—what are my ruling passions? How do I, how am I thirsty, and how am I foolish, and all of that and what's going on inside of my interior world? What passions are ruling in me? As we're thinking about that, and thinking about the other person and what's happening in them, and wanting to develop wisdom—with all of that in our minds—I think we've come to a point where maybe with me you're saying, "So, this all looks kind of bad. Things are kind of a mess. I'm not sure where to go from here. Will this course tell me what to do?"

Before we can even begin to think about what to do, you've got to think about God's provisions. What I'm sincerely hoping is that all of the training so far has brought you to a position that you're saying, "Things really are a mess. I'm in desperate need of God. Yes, we're image-bearers, but we're fallen. We need God. What has God provided?"

I want to end this presentation by introducing one simple phrase that will be a thread throughout the rest of our lectures in course three. And the phrase is this: **holy tension**. What I want to do as we provide SoulCare together is I want to be talking about where a person is that violates where they long to be and leaves them with their tongue hanging out saying, "I want to be somewhere else, but I can't make it happen." That produces a tension between where I am and where I long to be, which then leads to a dependence on the provisions of God. And we'll begin talking about the provisions that God has made for SoulCare in our next presentation.

# Discussion Questions

As you review the cycle of spiritual growth, think of times you have experienced each phase of that cycle (below):

- a. Brokenness
- b. Repentance
- c. Abandonment
- d. Confidence
- e. Release

How might your experiences in the cycle of spiritual growth help you provide more effective SoulCare?

Why is it a mistake to do any of the following while attempting to provide SoulCare: **retreat**, **advise**, or **empathize**? Which of these three mistakes are you personally more likely to make as you attempt to engage in SoulCare...and what about you might predispose you to make that mistake?

Briefly review what role each of the following topics plays in SoulCare: **passion**, **wisdom**, **journeying reality**, **vision**, **reframing**, and **categories of understanding**.

# Lesson 2 Study Guide

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**CC203**

## ***SoulCare Foundations III: Provisions and Practices***

Four Kinds of Conversations:  
Provoking the Right Kind of Tension

Updated 2015

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# Objectives

In this lesson, you will learn about four different types of conversations and comprehend how SoulCare conversations differ from the other three conversations in which we typically engage.

When you complete this lesson, “Four Kinds of Conversations: Provoking the Right Kind of Tension,” you should be able to:

- Define the concept of spiritual formation.
- Explain the core purpose of every SoulCare conversation.
- Describe the holy tension that provides the dynamic for spiritual formation to take place.

# Transcript

## Course Title: SoulCare Foundations III: Provisions and Practices

### Lesson Two: Four Kinds of Conversations: Provoking the Right Kind of Tension

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

We introduced the idea of holy tensions. Everyone's familiar with the concept of unholy tensions. You all know what it is to be in relationships where there is irritability and, because somebody's sarcastic, there's a tension that develops in the room that you could cut it. It's as thick as ice. And we're familiar with a lot of conversations that are devoted to avoiding any kind of tension.

What's this idea of holy tension all about? How does a SoulCare conversation introduce a productive kind of tension, a tension which legitimately can be called holy, which helps us achieve the purposes of SoulCare?

To understand the idea of holy tension and to move into how we engage in conversations that put us into position of complete dependence on the Holy Spirit, in order to understand these matters and to move into the provision and practice of SoulCare, let me talk to you about four different kinds of conversations, three of which involve, at best, only a minimum level of SoulCare because they don't generate holy tension. Let me talk about these kinds. The first three kinds of conversations that I want to mention to you most often actually diminish the soul and run at cross purposes to SoulCare conversations. They don't restore the soul; they decrease or diminish or weaken the soul. Only SoulCare conversations intentionally create the kind of holy tension that releases the Spirit to do His deepest work.

Four kinds of conversations—the first kind I call very simply **social conversations**. This is not a bad thing; it's a good thing. Let me describe what I mean by it. In a social conversation, the purpose is to keep things pleasant. The real agenda in a social conversation is simply to have a good time and enjoy the interaction. Is there anything wrong with a bunch of guys getting together and watching a football game and their whole point is to have fun, and they make comments about the game together, and when the conversation is over they say, "Great time; time to go home"? Is that a good thing? Sure it is. But understand that sometimes the central purposes of SoulCare are violated by that kind of conversation. Not always, but they can be. Let me explain.

Although not stated, although nobody talks about it, the covenant in a social conversation is to intentionally honor appropriate boundaries of social discourse, to intentionally honor appropriate boundaries of social discourse and to see to it that no one's offended, that no one gets uncomfortable and that all tension is avoided. "What a nice evening," we often say. Criteria—we had a good time. "That wasn't a good evening. Didn't like the evening." "Why didn't you?" "It wasn't a good time." Somebody made things unpleasant by being obnoxious, by being sarcastic, by being critical, by offering a putdown, and we say, "Next football party, he's not going to be invited," because he doesn't fit into purposes of our social conversation. He violated the covenant.

Many conversations—I hesitate to say, but I think it’s true—most conversations among Christians in church settings are little more than social conversations. We meet in the lobby, we meet in the Sunday School class, we meet in a Bible study and our bottom line agreement is we’re going to keep things pleasant, we’re not going to talk the way that disrupts anybody. Our measure of whether the evening, the time, the conversation, was good is whether a good time was had by all. Social conversation, not necessarily a bad thing, but if it’s the only kind of conversation we have, we’re not in fellowship with each other and we’re not really the church. We’re not functioning as the church.

Second kind of conversation—**task-centered conversations**. In a task-centered conversation, the purpose is to achieve an agreed-upon task to pool the resources of the people in the room to move towards something we all concur has value. I’ll bring what I have to bear, you bring what you have to bear, and together we’ll go toward that end which we’ve agreed is a good end. Sometimes stated, but generally understood, the covenant in a task-centered conversation is to intentionally not have a good time (that’s a social conversation), but to intentionally pool resources to accomplish an objective of common concern. And sometimes we create a productive tension. Sometimes we’re willing to say, “I don’t think that’s the best means of getting there,” and someone else says, “Well, I disagree with that.”

And now—the tension that comes out of disagreement is productive if it leads to SoulCare? No. It’s productive if it leads us to pooling our resources more effectively and we can agree that “You know, I think you have got a point. If I did this, it would be more effective in getting there and our final goal is getting there, so let’s get there by doing this, and you’re doing that.” There’s an eagerness to achieve something that cooperative effort can achieve. A task-centered conversation. “What a good meeting,” we often say after a church committee meeting. What do we mean? Everybody got involved. We dialogued. Everyone worked together. We kept the objective in sight. And our disagreements didn’t get us off track from our agenda. A bad evening happens in a task-centered conversation when someone is obstructive or lazy or disinterested or committed to a different objective.

I would suppose a clearest example of a task-centered kind of a conversation is a committee meeting, a church committee meeting. I wonder how many elders’ meetings are task-centered conversations and nothing more. Task-centered conversations can occur among elders, among church staffs. They can occur at a church service. They can occur in a small group where the goal is to worship or to connect. And we say, “Here is our purpose. Here is our task. We’re going to worship God. We’re going to connect with each other. Let’s see, how can we pool our resources to make sure that happens and the only tension that we are willing to put up with is the productive tension that will get us each to contribute whatever we have to contribute to move toward this particular objective.”

Task-centered conversations—the goal is to get something done. And when your goal is to get something done, there are times that you quench the Spirit. There are times when you don’t wait upon the Lord. We’re going to make it happen and then we say, “Spirit of God please show up. Here we go.” Task-centered conversation—devoid often of the holy tension that is required for effective SoulCare to take place.



The third kind of conversation I simply call **informational conversations**, where the purpose quite obviously is to give or to receive information. And usually this is clear: A classroom setting is an obvious setting, a discipleship relationship with a mentor and a mentee with a covenant is to intentionally learn something of value from another—not to avoid tension, not to produce productive tension but maybe to honor the tension of confusion, the tension of ignorance. “I don’t know about this. You do know about this. Will you relieve the void, the tension that I feel about not knowing what I wish I knew? Will you relieve that by teaching me?” Folks, we often confuse SoulCare with teaching.

What you’re going to hear me say a little bit later is the fundamental dynamic of the human soul that needs to be released and needs to change is not going to be changed when all we do is teach. Is there a place for teaching? Of course. Is it the core of SoulCare? No.

In an informational conversation, the core purpose is, in fact, to teach and to learn. We say a sermon is good. You leave church and you go out to lunch and have your preacher [out] for lunch and somebody says, “Great morning. Great sermon.” What do we mean? Well, he was clear. He kept our attention. As learners, he kept us focused. He said some things that we actually recall from the sermon and so we say, “What a good morning.” The teacher taught well, and we as learners learned something. It was a good evening or a good morning or a good sermon or a good class. How about if we say, “Well, that was a waste of time. I’ll never go back to that church again. If that pastor’s preaching, I’m going to skip the morning”? What do we mean when we say it’s a bad sermon, or a bad Sunday School class, or a bad classroom situation? Well, either the leader taught poorly and didn’t know his material and wasn’t effective in communication, or the learner wasn’t attentive or focused or was too distracted—but learning didn’t happen. Bible study, whether on Sunday morning, or in small groups, or Sunday School class, is a clear example of informational conversation taking place in a church.

Too often we think that’s where spiritual growth takes place, because too often we think that the dispensing of information is sufficient for spiritual growth to take place. Is it necessary? Yes. Is it sufficient? Well, discipleship has too often—in our Western culture particularly—been understood as the process of dispensing information to another. Even with our new focus on spirituality and spiritual formation and spiritual disciplines, too often we become technicians who dispense a new understanding of how to do something. I will teach you how to engage in this particular spiritual discipline of reading the Bible in a certain way, or this discipline of centering prayer, and when you learn this discipline from me as your teacher and you practice it, this will happen. There’s no connection between people. I’m still just the teacher, and you’re the learner, and I’m standing in front of you with a blackboard with a lecture, and all I’m doing is teaching. Is there a place for that? I hope so. I’m doing it right now. But is it sufficient for SoulCare? No. Preparation for SoulCare? Yes. The essence of SoulCare? No.

Informational conversations don’t change us at the core level. They provide the framework for change, if the information that is being conveyed is, in fact, biblical truth. The goal in informational conversations is to learn something in our brains that perhaps at some point we can translate into our hearts and express it in our behavior.

There’s a fourth kind of conversation which I simply call **spiritual formation conversations**, SoulCare conversations, if you like. The purpose in a spiritual formation conversation, the purpose

in a SoulCare conversation...as I describe this purpose, listen to how different the purpose of a SoulCare conversation is from a social conversation, which has its place; from a task-centered conversation, which has a valuable place; from an informational conversation, which is crucial to the growth of the Christian and important in many, many settings; but listen to how different the goal is from each of those in a SoulCare, spiritual formation conversation.

The goal, the purpose, in a spiritual formation conversation is...I wonder how you would finish the sentence. From all that you've heard so far, how would you finish that sentence? See if what I say aligns with where your heart is. I put it this way.

The purpose in the spiritual formation conversation is to celebrate the presence of God's Spirit. The purpose of a spiritual conversation is to celebrate the presence of God's Spirit by making ourselves available to whatever He's doing in the moment, whatever He longs to do in my soul—to celebrate the immediate availability of God, right now as the two of us are having a cup of coffee at our favorite coffee shop. To celebrate the availability of the presence of God, right now, as we gather for our Bible study. To celebrate the availability of God as, over lunch a friend says, "My marriage isn't going so well." Rather than "you need counseling" or "how do I fix that?" or "what's the Bible verse that deals with that one?"—no, to celebrate the availability of God's Spirit; He's here; He's present; He's eminent and He's working. He's never taking a break. He's active.

The effects of celebrating the presence of God's Spirit and making ourselves available to His availability, making ourselves available to whatever He wants to do—the effect is to feel a holy tension. The effect is to feel what Paul felt in Romans chapter 7 when he said, "I'm aware of something inside of me, the presence of God's Spirit, that is actually impelling me, moving me, creating impulses within me that makes me long to go in a certain direction, but I feel a tension. The things that I really want to do (I want to be pure; I don't want to watch pornography; I want to be so patient with my husband; I want to enter my children's lives, so, well, I don't want to be so irritable with them; I want to be close to my friends; I want to reveal Jesus to them)—the thing that I long to do, I don't do. And the things that I don't want to do (I have such a bad temper; I'm so impatient; I think such lustful thoughts; this sexual addiction is driving me crazy)—the things I don't want to do, I end up doing."

When you celebrate the presence of God's Spirit and you realize that holiness dwells in the sanctuary of your soul, a tension is developed between where you are and what you long for. It's that tension, I suggest, which provides the dynamic for spiritual formation to take place.

In a SoulCare conversation, in the spiritual formation conversation—I'll use the terms interchangeably—the covenant, I would suggest, must be clearly stated and prayerfully agreed upon. It's my conviction that SoulCare, at its richest level, will not happen until there's a stated covenant between the people who are involved in the conversation. In a "good time" you don't state, when the guys come over to watch the football game, "Our purpose tonight is to have a good time. Everybody agree?" It's just assumed. When you get together for a committee meeting, you may state—but often not—"Our purpose tonight is such and such. We're going... we're the building committee and we're going to agree on a budget for tonight and that's our agenda." Maybe you have an agenda, some agreement. In an informational conversation, it's kind of assumed the purpose is that you're going to teach, and I'm going to take notes and learn. But too often when Christians get together for SoulCare and spiritual formation, we assume it just sort of happens.

It's my conviction, based partly on my experience, that SoulCare at the strictest level is not going to happen unless the people who walk into your living room for your Bible study agree, "We're coming tonight not centrally to exegete a text. (There's a place for that, a very important place.) We're coming tonight not centrally to have a pleasant time and to avoid tension. We're coming tonight not to reach a particular goal and decide how best to evangelize our neighborhood. (That's a valid objective, a wonderful goal for a task-centered evangelism group.) But we're coming tonight for an explicit purpose. We're in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in each other and we believe that we have the resources, because God has given us the division in our soul that, when released, could actually stir up your appetite for God. We don't know how to do it; we're lost; we're experimenting, but we're trusting. And even more than trusting, even before trusting, we're committing. We have an intentional agenda and it's spiritual formation."

Ask yourself the question, "When have you been in a relationship, whether one-on-one conversation or a small group, where you have intentionally agreed together to enter into each other's lives, for one to enter into another's life, perhaps for the purpose of spiritual formation?" Maybe one of the reasons it happens so rarely is because we don't know what the term *spiritual formation* means. Does it mean that you stop doing bad things? That you have devotions every day? That you miss church very rarely? What is spiritual formation? Let me give you a simple definition. Maybe not too simple, a little cumbersome, but I want you to ponder with me.

When I think about a SoulCare conversation where two people, and maybe more, get together for the purpose, the agreed-upon purpose of spiritual formation, here's what the people are agreeing to: agreeing to the process of spiritual formation, which I define as a process, as a process by which the Spirit of God relieves the holy tension in the seeking, honest soul. Spiritual formation—the process by which the Spirit of God relieves the holy tension in the seeking, honest soul. How? By nourishing the passion for God that He has already placed in the soul so that the interior world of our ruling passions increasingly resembles the interior world of Jesus.

Can you imagine sitting across from somebody and just thinking to yourself, "Could the interior world of this woman actually resemble Jesus when He's hanging on a cross saying, 'Take care of My mother'? When He's talking to Peter who has betrayed Him and His only intent is to restore Peter to a deeper love relationship with Himself?" What passions ruled in Jesus in all the narratives we have all through the Gospels? And to be able to come together and say, "My purpose in coming together with you, your purpose in joining with me, is spiritual formation that I believe is a tension. You long to be like Jesus, but you're not a whole lot like Him and the Spirit of God can relieve this tension by nourishing the appetite for God that rules the heart of Jesus. 'It's my delight to do your will.'" Could it be my delight to do God's will with the memories of sexual abuse? Could it be my passion and delight to do God's will when my wife tells me she's leaving me? Could it be my passion and delight to do God's will when I discover my child's on drugs? Spiritual formation is not telling Dad, "Here's how to handle your kid." Spiritual formation is working, chatting, engaging with that dad in a way that awakens his passion for God so that it's stronger than even his passion for seeing his son walk a godly, moral, responsible life. Only that will free the father from engaging in a power struggle with the son.

Spiritual formation conversation is conversations that are rather rare. Spiritual formation conversation—the goal is not to have a good time, although it may be a good time. The goal is not to get something done, although much might happen. The goal is not to learn something

important, although many important things will be learned. The goal is to provoke holy tension that only spiritual formation can relieve. To become so preoccupied with God that, more than anything else, you want to reveal God's glory through being spiritually formed. You want to be the kind of person with another that, when the person engages with you, they catch the fragrance of Christ. They leave that conversation with you saying, "I think I know a little bit more of what Jesus is like and something in me is stirred to want that more than I did an hour ago." And now the tension is relieved a little bit because the impulse to move toward God has become strong enough that you're able to begin to say with the apostle Paul, "Wretched man, who's going to deliver me? I praise God. I thank God. The Spirit within me can relieve the holy tension as I learn to know what it means to walk in the power of the Spirit."

The process of spiritual formation requires, I believe, the twin setting of **solitude** and **community**. In solitude, the practice of spiritual disciplines creates space for the Spirit to do His deepest work. In solitude, you most directly encounter God under the authority of His Word. Certain things can happen in solitude in spiritual formation that happen better in solitude than in community. But, with all of our increasing and appropriate focus on solitude, let's understand that community is required as well.

In community, in the practice of SoulCare, through spiritually-forming conversations, something can happen that solitude maybe doesn't produce quite as powerfully or as effectively. And I would suggest it is the stirring of the holy tension between who I am and who I truly long to be that requires God's provisions for me to move forward in my life.

So now with the idea in our minds about the passions that rule us and the wisdom that guides us as we provide SoulCare, so now with the idea of moving into SoulCare conversations and wanting to have conversations intentionally devoted to spiritual formation, we need to think about what those conversations are going to look like. And I want to think about that topic under three headings. I want to think about the purpose—we've already mentioned it. I want to look at it more carefully. The purpose of SoulCare conversations—the agreed upon purpose, the actual covenant that exists between the two, or perhaps more, people.

I want to look at the provisions—what has God provided that makes SoulCare conversations possible, but, frankly, are not as clearly essential in the other kinds of conversations? It has been my experience that a number of elders' meetings have seemed to progress quite well by our agenda without the Spirit doing much at all. SoulCare conversations can never progress without the Spirit doing everything. What are the provisions?

And lastly, we'll look at the process. The purpose, the provisions, and the process.

And I want to say, just as simply as I can, that the purpose of conversation intentionally dedicated to SoulCare is a purpose which ought to be at the center of every conversation with Christians, but may not be the priority focus in every conversation among Christians. The purpose in an informational conversation, a task-centered conversation, a social conversation might be the purposes we mentioned, but somehow at the center there needs to be the recognition that there is a core purpose that governs a Christian every time he's involved. What is it?

I'll say it simply: The core purpose of every SoulCare conversation is to help people enjoy God so much that their consuming desire in all their relationships is to reveal the God that they've supremely enjoyed. That's what I believe it means to glorify God—is the sole purpose for everything.

If that's our purpose, we need to understand it better. We need to understand the provisions God has made to make that possible, and we need to understand the process by which the Spirit can make it happen through SoulCare conversations.

# Discussion Questions

Type of Conversation	Purpose	Implied Covenant	Degree/Type of Tension
Social			
Task-centered			
Informational			
Spiritual formation (i.e., SoulCare)			

Fill in the chart above by listing the following for each type of conversation:

- a) its purpose,
- b) the implied covenant, and
- c) the degree/type of tension found in the conversation:

How do the first three types of conversations in the chart above run at cross-purposes with SoulCare conversations?

Why do you think it is important to clearly state a covenant for those involved in spiritual formation conversations?

Define the process of spiritual formation, according to this course. How does this definition differ or agree with the definition you had in your mind before taking this course?

Why do you think that both solitude and community are necessary for spiritual formation to occur?



# Lesson 3 Study Guide

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**CC203**

## ***SoulCare Foundations III: Provisions and Practices***

The Rhythm of SoulCare: Four Movements

Updated 2015

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**Our Daily Bread**  
**Christian University**

# Objectives

In this lesson, you will re-examine the purpose of a SoulCare conversation.

When you complete this lesson, “The Rhythm of SoulCare: Four Movements,” you should be able to:

- Understand what a SoulCare conversation looks like.
- Explain how the movements of a SoulCare conversation accomplish the purposes of SoulCare.
- Describe these movements in the context of a SoulCare conversation case study.

# Transcript

## Course Title: SoulCare Foundations III: Provisions and Practices

### Lesson Three: The Rhythm of SoulCare: Four Movements

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

Listen to one of the most disturbing verses in the entire Bible, a verse that instantly jars our usual conception of God, our usual conception of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament book of Ezekiel, God is announcing His plans to send Jesus to earth to offer the gospel of grace to sinful people, and in announcing His plan, here's what He says, "I want you to understand," God says. "It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I'm going to do these things, but for the sake of My holy name." The gospel is not primarily for my sake or for your sake. The Gospel of Christ is primarily for the sake of God's holy name. What is all that about? I thought Jesus came to get me to heaven so I could be happy forever. And that is, by the grace of God, wonderfully included, but it's not the center.

What I hear God saying in this verse—and this relates to the purpose of SoulCare conversations that we touched on in our last presentation—what I hear God saying in this verse is this: "In the gospel, I'm going to give you provisions. I'm going to give you everything you need to accomplish the purpose that I know is best. I'm going to give you everything you need, not to see to it you suffer less. I'm going to give you everything you need, not to see to it every relationship you have with your spouse or your children or your friends goes well. I'm going to give you everything you need, not to see to it that your ministry and your church and your job and your health and your income all turn out just the way you want them to. I'm going to give you everything you need to reveal what I'm like to everyone who meets you. I'm going to give you everything you need to reveal the character that is Mine, this marvelous, loving, gracious, beautiful, perfect character—everything you need to reveal My character to other people. And as you do that, I receive glory, that brings Me pleasure, and you win as well." It's a win-win-win situation, because glory goes to God, joy comes to me, and community forms.

Folks, the purpose of SoulCare conversations is not what I fear we often think it is. The purpose of SoulCare conversations is not to get people to feel good about themselves. The purpose of SoulCare conversations is not to take a damaged soul and to get them to feel healthy and whole. The purpose of a SoulCare conversation is to put people in touch with the provisions that the gospel has supplied in order for us to achieve the purposes of God, and His central purpose is not less suffering and better feelings for me right now; His central purpose is, whatever happens in my life, when the cancer comes, when the divorce takes place, when the child rebels, the only guarantee I have is I have the resources to enjoy God in the middle of the mess and to enjoy Him so much that I'm consumed with the purpose of wanting to reveal what He's like, even when life is bad and everything falls apart. Now, that's a pretty high purpose.

The question naturally follows, "So exactly how do we do this? What does a SoulCare conversation look like? I think I know what a social conversation is; I know how to have a good time. I think I

know what a task-centered conversation is. I've served on committee meetings; I'm a deacon in my church. I think I know what an informational conversation is like; I teach a Sunday School class, or I go to sermons on Sunday morning and I learn certain things, but you're talking about a kind of conversation that really doesn't happen very much—where people are agreed to come together for the singular central purpose of honoring the agenda of the gospel that I enjoy Him no matter what's happening to the degree that even when I'm feeling sad, depressed, worried, scared, there's a reality beneath all that that actually makes me want to reveal what He's like to you, no matter what's happening in my life." That's SoulCare. To help people enjoy and reveal Jesus Christ.

SoulCare conversations, unlike social conversations, or maybe more particularly task-centered and informational conversations, SoulCare conversations don't follow clear steps. But they do flow according to a rhythm. I would love to see us become comfortable with the word *mysticism*. I would love to see us become comfortable with the idea that in SoulCare conversations there is a mystical flow, in the sense that a SoulCare conversation does not follow a pre-planned method. What happens in a genuine encounter between two people when SoulCare is taking place—and by the grace of God I've been there a time or two—when SoulCare conversations take place, I never walk away from them saying, "I did it right." I never walk away from it saying, "I followed the model. I've got the steps down pat." I walk away from it saying, "God showed up. The Spirit was there. Isn't this neat? This is fun." There's a rhythm to SoulCare conversations that depends on the presence of the Spirit, because what happens in a genuine encounter between two souls that is ruled by the passions of the Spirit, what happens is neither fully predictable nor completely manageable. Now, there are things we can do and things we can think about and this course has a lot to do with, think about this—interior world passions, and wisdom of what's happening in this person, and think vision—all those are ideas to think about, but there's a rhythm that transcends whatever method you might come up with.

If you try to reduce SoulCare to a technique or a formula, either you'll miss the person you're talking to or you'll go crazy trying to stick with your game plan. In reflecting on the freedom and mystery of the journey to God, G.K. Chesterton, the well-known English writer and thinker, and columnist actually, observed that there's a rhythm in the journey of walking toward God, and I would think he would include there's a rhythm in the journey of two people walking together toward God, where there's a flow that defies order. You will not get a clear order. The way Chesterton put it was this. He said that when you walk the pathway to God you'll experience the following: "Chess players will go mad. Poets never do."

Approach SoulCare the way you approach a game of chess and you'll go mad. It doesn't work that way. Approach it the way a poet approaches life, thinking about the rhythm, the flow, capturing the beauty, capturing the awfulness, capturing the whole picture of what's going on and somehow putting it together into words under some creative impulse. Be a poet when you're engaging in SoulCare, and perhaps the SoulCare will be more effective.

God tells us through Paul in Ephesians that we're God's poetry. We're His workmanship. We're His poetry created in Christ Jesus for good works. But it's poetry He's talking about. And what I believe He's saying is you and I can learn to flow with the rhythm of the Spirit as He moves us more and more along the path towards spiritual formation. SoulCare conversations must enter the flow, must enter the rhythm. That's why my interior passions are so crucial when I'm engaging in

SoulCare, because I've got to be tagging along with the Spirit and sensing His impulses and feeling His movement and sensing that the wind is blowing and adjusting my sails accordingly so that the flow of the conversation is a spiritual process as opposed to a mechanical process.

So, therefore, let me invite you to do what I must do, and to mutually embrace our inadequacy. I'd like to suggest that you tune into your right brain as well as your left and listen for the Spirit. I'd like to invite you, as we move into discussing the provisions and the practice of SoulCare and seeing what the provisions really are that God has made for a good SoulCare conversation, I'd like to suggest that as you continue listening in this learning conversation, that something in you quiets. Can you quiet yourself? Can you just relax for a moment and visualize yourself by still waters? Can you relax in the stillness of God's presence as we engage in spiritually-forming conversations that are, in fact, SoulCare? And as we approach them through an informational type of conversation where I talk to you and you listen, I ask that by the power of the Spirit of God that even now as you listen to me teach, and as I teach, that together we'll flow along with the rhythm of the Spirit.

As we look maybe for a moment at a little case study, as we think about an actual conversation that I recently participated in, and look at a few elements in it to see if we can't capture some of the rhythm of what a SoulCare conversation might look like, and as we seek to understand the rhythm of a SoulCare conversation, I urge you to get ready for the climax and the poetry when the provisions that God has made for spiritual formation explode. When somehow in the middle of a conversation where journeying realities are talked about, where we feel inadequate, where we're thinking vision and thinking flesh dynamics and reframing into the story of the soul and trying to get all of this figured out in our heads, but in the middle of it all become comfortable enough with these ideas to no longer let them be our master, but let them be our helper as we yield only to the master of the Spirit.

Maybe at some point the provisions that God has placed on our soul will explode and the holy tension will yield to a holy joy.

Let me suggest that there are several movements to the rhythm of spiritual conversation.

Movement number one: The opportunity for SoulCare presents itself when? Well, when you hang up a shingle and a person calls a secretary and schedules an appointment. That's okay. I do that. I don't think it's a bad thing. But there's no guarantee SoulCare will take place because somebody schedules an appointment with the therapist. It may, but it doesn't always happen.

The opportunity for SoulCare presents itself when someone senses enough grace in your spirit, when someone senses enough of a non-judgmental excitement over what they could become because of grace, to feel safe with you. Not to assume that you're never going to find fault because there's faults that sometimes need to be identified and sometimes pretty clearly and strongly. But the SoulCare opportunity happens when someone senses in your spirit that you have tasted grace yourself, that you've been stunned by grace in your own life to the point where grace consumes you, and they sense that if they were to share their most shameful secret, that you wouldn't be thrown into harbor and disgust, but you would say, "Where sin abounds, grace much more abounds, because I have experienced that."

SoulCare begins when the fragrance of grace encourages the experience of safety in somebody else where they're willing to share with you where they really are on the journey and drop the posturing. Notice the obvious implication of what I'm saying—that SoulCare begins with the work of grace in your heart, not with a framed certificate on your wall.

A woman says to you—maybe because you've chatted together in Sunday School class for the last ten or twenty weeks, or five or ten years—a woman says to you, as you're walking out the door of Sunday School class, "You know, I just want to say something real quick to you. I'm so mad at my husband. I just can't be nice to him anymore. He's really hurt me in some really awful ways and there's just...the way he's hurt me. If we would have a chance to talk about it, I'd tell you, but what happened last week is the culmination of a lot of things that have been going on for fifteen years in our marriage. And I've got to tell you that what he did last week, something died in me. And I'm just not there. I've been trying for years and something died. I'm sorry. I don't want to burden you with this, but I just had to tell you." I wonder why. Maybe the safety of grace. Your soul has opened that person to come as they are to another member of the body of Christ in a way that might open them up to the power of grace.

That, I suggest, is the first movement in the rhythm of SoulCare. Where the fragrance of grace creates the experience of safety that leads to a journeying reality being shared with a member of the body of Christ—movement number one.

The second movement: As that woman shares all this, what happens in you? Look into your own interior world and, if you're ruled by grace, and if you're attending to the Spirit and adjusting your sails to the movement of His wind, then what I would suggest is very possible (and I know it doesn't happen with you all the time; it doesn't happen with me), but what's very possible is when the woman shares, "Something's died within me given what my husband did," your major response could be excitement. Not, "Well my husband's causing me troubles too. And I met your husband I never liked him in the first place." Or, "It seems like you're being pretty unsubmitive here. And I feel kind of critical of your lack of spirituality." No, no, no.

It's possible that when the person shares what's happening, that your primary response is a sense of excitement that rises within you at that moment, right next to your profound sense of inadequacy ("I have no idea; what do I say to this woman?"), but with the inadequacy rises an excitement. Why? Because you're celebrating the presence of the Holy Spirit. This woman's a Christian. You're a Christian. Don't ever say that word lightly. You're a temple of the Spirit. The God of the universe dwells inside of this woman's heart. He dwells inside of your heart. The Spirit of Christ is present. He doesn't sleep. He doesn't take naps. He's always involved. He's always doing something, and is there an excitement within you because you're celebrating the presence of the Holy Spirit at this moment of interaction?

Now it might not be visible. Nobody watching would say, "My what a wonderfully spiritual conversation." It sounds like one woman grumping to another about a bad marriage. But you have different eyes. You're fixing your eyes on what is unseen. And you're saying, "There's something here by faith that I believe is true."

Then you enter—in just that moment walking out of Sunday School class—into what I call the practice of wonder. You enter into the practice of wonder. You anticipate the unknown future with joy and with confidence. “What’s ahead?” you ask. And you ask with anticipation because the Spirit is going to complete the work He’s begun in this woman’s heart. It might go through terrible valleys and trials and difficulties. They might end up getting a divorce. She might end up having affairs. But you stay with her for 20, 30, 40 years and eventually you’ll see the Spirit has worked in this woman’s life because the day is coming, if she knows Jesus, when she’ll stand before Him and He will say, “You’re my child. Welcome home. You are now Mine completely. And you’re visibly Mine.”

The Spirit’s at work. Can you enter the practice of wonder? Can you say, even as the woman grumps angrily and resentfully with no evidence of spiritual fruit about her miserable marriage and what has died in her soul, can you quietly say to yourself, “Aslan’s on the move”? The lion in C.S. Lewis’ Narnia story represents Christ. He’s on the move. Winter is ending. Spring is coming. There’s going to be a leaf budding on that tree pretty soon and I’m going to stick around to watch it grow.

If that’s your mood, then I guarantee that woman’s going to sense it. She’s going to be surprised by it. She might not say it. She’ll be stunned because most everybody else she’s ever shared her problems with—they felt pressured, “What do I say to her?” They joined her in her complaint. “My husband’s no better.” They’ve given her a Bible verse. They’ve said, “Can I have a word of prayer with you?” But there’s not been the deep sense of eagerness and readiness to follow the Spirit as He does that part of His work, which is better done in community than in solitude. That’s the second movement. You’re ready to enter another person’s soul in a way that provokes a tension between the reality of where she is—angry at her husband and dead toward him—and a hunger that the Spirit of God has placed in her soul with which she is completely out of touch right now perhaps.

You’re excited—movement number two.

The third movement in the rhythm of the Spirit. You’re immediately aware that as she’s talking, that more is happening in you than the Spirit’s movements. This holy tension that we’re talking about is not just her issue, it’s yours as well. Other passions then, the passions of the Spirit compete for your attention. Other passions are pressing for controlling you than the passions of the Spirit. You become aware of your own self-centeredness as she’s talking about her problems with her husband. I’m assuming you’re a woman talking with her; perhaps you’re thinking about your husband and the way he’s failed you and how you’ve not handled him very well and how can you help her—you’re not much of a wife yourself? You’ve had the worst fight of your life just last night. And you long to be powerful, but you don’t know how to do that, and you want to be helpful and you want to impress her and she’s taking the risk of trusting you with this information, and you’re not sure what to do, and all sorts of things are happening in you besides excitement and “Aslan’s on the move,” and the Spirit of God is available. A lot of other things are there, but that’s there too.

Be quiet for a moment and tune into the fact that there’s a tension within you and you’re not what you long to be. You’re not deeply ruled by the Spirit with great joy and peace at this moment.



You're frustrated and worried and feeling inadequate and angry at your own husband, and all that's happening, but be quiet for a moment and listen to the voice of wisdom. And what you'll hear is, "You know, the Spirit of God is alive in me and I would like to know Him well, and I don't know Him nearly as well as I'd like. I come to you, dear sister, with a tension that only the Spirit can resolve and I'd like to see you experience that same tension. Right now you're not in tension, you're just mad and feeling kind of justified about it. We're going to have a SoulCare conversation if God gives the opportunity."

The third movement is a sense of dependence on the Spirit as you move toward the SoulCare opportunity. You again, in your own life, enter into the cycle of spiritual formation. You become broken over your own sense of failure. You become repentant. "God, what I want so much is to enjoy You and reveal You to this dear lady. What I know is I must abandon myself to Your Spirit, because I can't make it happen and I have a confidence that You really are there. I had tasted You before. Your Word says that You're there. Oh God, wouldn't it be something if the true me, the woman that I really am as a Christian, could be released and what's alive in me could be poured into her and she could experience a holy tension that would result in her moving through brokenness and repentance and abandonment and confidence and release to be the woman that You've made her to be in the middle of this difficult marriage? God, I long for that." That's your third movement.

The fourth movement: On the foundations of spiritual passions flowing through you, you enter her soul confident that spiritual wisdom is available. There is a Bible, which tells us what's going on in our souls, which tells us what's wrong and tells us what God's provisions are. And you begin to move now with some thought that there really is a wisdom that I could interact on the basis of as I chat with this lady. And I can begin to understand more clearly how her flesh is operating. Flesh dynamics now becomes not a technical phrase, but a living reality as I'm experiencing this woman. But more than flesh dynamics, there's something else within her. There's a longing for her to be who she's not. And when she sees that, she's going to feel a holy tension. That will be the opportunity of the Spirit. "This is exciting. I hope we have a chance to chat. I wonder, could we go out to lunch today? Wouldn't work today? How about tomorrow? I'd love to chat with you. And could I ask you a question? As you share with me about your husband, I would love to have a chat with you about just what it would mean for the two of us to move toward becoming like Christ more and more, so we could respond to our husbands, and you could respond to yours and me to mine, in a way that is consistent with what God wants us to be. I know that's what you want. Could we get together for that purpose?"

Now you've set up a spiritually forming conversation. Your mind begins to move. You meet the next day. You prepare for it by prayer. You start thinking about being present with her in her journeying reality. You think about being a safe [place] for this woman. You begin thinking about the vision of what actually could happen a week from now, a year from now, a decade from now as she is more spiritually formed. What could this woman look like? How might she talk to me a year from now about the same husband, who fails her the same way, that would be different from the way she's talking about him now? How could she talk about him then in a way that I would see the fragrance of Christ in her? Because I really didn't see it much. But I have a vision for what it could be.

I wonder what is wrong with her. What are the flesh dynamics? You might say to her something like, “You can’t imagine, I would think, continuing to feel the way you do with your husband. The hurt you’ve suffered is so profound. But I would think the pain that you’re experiencing, you just don’t want to go on with that for the next year or two or three.” I can see you begin to introduce holy tension by talking about a pain within her soul that’s unbearable, that she’s resolving without the help of the Spirit. She’s resolving her pain by backing away from this guy. By getting busy with more church activities. She’s resolving her pain in wrong sorts of ways and you begin to talk about some of her pain. Not just to empathize, but to introduce an understanding of how her flesh is operating. You begin to reframe and say, “I’d love to know you even better. I know your husband’s kind of been failing in some pretty bad ways. Tell me about your kids. How about your background? What’s it like with your friends, and we’re kind of new friends—what’s it like to be with me? Talk about your journey with God. Let’s reframe this into the story of your relational soul.”

You begin to talk about her categories. As you listen to her talk about her story, you begin to think in categories of understanding. What is happening inside this woman? She is a woman who thirsts. What is she thirsting for? I know she thirsts for God, but that’s never come up. It seems to me like what she’s thirsting for more than anything else is a husband who loves her in a particular way. I wonder what her background is like. I wonder if her dad ever treated her warmly when she was a little girl. I wonder what’s going on in this woman. What is her thirst like that is keeping her moving towards some source of joy other than God? What does she believe about joy? What does she believe about the nature of the spiritual journey? Does she not see God as her supreme treasure? What really has been her deepest hurt that she thinks could be relieved if only her husband would treat her well? I wonder if she has eyes for some other man and she’s considering an affair. All that’s possible. What are her choices that she’s making as an image-bearer with relational capacities?

And as you get into all this kind of thinking, as you listen to the story of her soul, you’re going to come to a point where you say, “The Spirit of God is speaking to her right now, but I wonder what He’s saying. Maybe the Spirit of God is saying something along these lines, ‘The core of your being has been radically transformed by the gospel and I long to put you in touch with what is most alive in your soul.’” Is the Spirit saying that? Can you tag along with the Spirit and help her see that as a growing reality? What is happening in her soul that is different because of the gospel? What are the provisions and how do you help put her in touch with what Jesus has already done and is now doing in her soul through the Spirit?

# Discussion Questions

Restate, in your own words, the purpose of SoulCare.

Review what this lesson teaches about the following aspects of the four movements of SoulCare conversations:

- Grace
- Excitement
- Tension and dependence
- Confidence and thoughtfulness

How do you feel when you think of mysticism as an aspect of SoulCare?

Having read the case study of the woman from Sunday School class, in what way(s) do you now better understand the practice of SoulCare?

# Lesson 4 Study Guide

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**CC203**

## ***SoulCare Foundations III: Provisions and Practices***

The Doctrine of First and Second Things:  
Beginning to Understand Radical  
Dependence on Supernatural Resources  
for Supernatural Living

Updated 2015

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# Objectives

In this lesson, you will review the major aspects of SoulCare.

When you complete this lesson, “The Doctrine of First and Second Things: Beginning to Understand Radical Dependence on Supernatural Resources for Supernatural Living,” you should be able to:

- Recognize the four movements of SoulCare conversations in the context of a case study.
- Understand ways in which you can progress in spiritual transformation.
- Explain the concept of the “doctrine of first and second things.”
- Discuss God’s provision for pursuing “first things.”

# Transcript

## **Course Title: SoulCare Foundations III: Provisions and Practices**

### **Lesson Four: The Doctrine of First and Second Things: Beginning to Understand Radical Dependence on Supernatural Resources for Supernatural Living**

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

The movement of SoulCare conversations. First movement—an opportunity created by grace coming out of your soul and being tasted by somebody who then opens up with you in whatever setting.

The second movement—an excitement within you knowing that you now have the opportunity to touch somebody's soul with the life of Christ. You know the Spirit of God is on the move.

Third movement—you face your own interior world and realize there's a tension within you between who you'd long to be as an effective provider of SoulCare and who you are as somebody who is insecure and self-centered in a variety of ways. And as you deal with that and come before the Lord in brokenness and repentance and abandonment and confidence and release, then you begin to enter the fourth movement of thinking about their soul and coming to some understanding of what's happening within them.

And as you come to that understanding, you realize, “God, if You don't do something, nothing's going to happen.” And that's where you go back to the issue of excitement. The Spirit of God is present and you begin tuning in to what He's saying in a way that maybe the other person can't quite hear yet. Maybe because you've been walking with the Lord, maybe because you've been spending time with Him, maybe because you've gone through this cycle of spiritual movement of brokenness and repentance, abandonment, confidence and release. Maybe because of that, your ears are a little more tuned to the Spirit's movements, and maybe you're able to say to yourself—as this woman shares with you how difficult her marriage is—maybe you can hear the Spirit speaking to her, and maybe you can hear words something like this: “I intend...I am right now moving in both of your lives. In you, dear lady, whose husband has let her down so badly, and in you, dear sister, who is seeking to provide SoulCare, I am moving in both of your lives in order to make the interior world of your ruling passions more like My Son, in whom I found such great delight. And I will do it so that the Father's beauty is more revealed because that brings Him pleasure. And I'm not going to do it simply to make your life more pleasant. I'm not guaranteeing you your marriage will be better. I'm not guaranteeing you your husband will respond well to you when your interior world more resembles the world of Jesus. He may. He may not.”

But as you reveal God to your husband, “And that's what I'm about to do with you”—the Spirit speaking—as you reveal God to your husband because you enjoy Him supremely, you're going to experience His joy. You're going to experience His peace. You're going to experience His rest. And maybe you hear the Spirit saying something else. “Not only am I on the move to accomplish purposes within you, but I want you to know something.”—the Spirit's still speaking in the way

that you can hear maybe more clearly than your friend. The Spirit's saying, "I've already provided through the gift of Jesus Christ. I've already provided as the Father has given Jesus Christ to die for the sins of the world. And as you put your faith in His atoning work on the cross, I've already provided everything you need to spiritually form; right now, at this moment in time, you lack nothing. There is nothing you need in order to become mature that you do not at this moment have. All I'm going to do is awaken what is already present and I may choose to use this spiritually forming conversation to awaken the provisions that I have made through the gospel into your particular life."

And I may also be hearing the Spirit say, "Until you see how you're living with your husband who has let you down, until you see how you're living in ways that required the death of Jesus to forgive, until you realize that not only does your husband profoundly need forgiveness because he's wrong, until you realize that you are doing things that, apart from the blood of Christ, would leave you condemned, until there's an understanding of brokenness over your sinfulness, until that becomes clear to you, you will not appreciate or appropriate the provisions that I've made."

Let me sketch it in a familiar kind of a way. We've talked about people sharing their journeying realities. We've talked about our response must be to explore our own interior world as people share about their husbands who have hurt them in some deep ways. We've talked about coming up with a vision, thinking vision—what might the Spirit be doing? There's the excitement. We've talked about wanting to hear more than just the journeying reality, but rather, to reframe by saying, "Tell me more about the story of your relational soul. I want to hear you talk about your present relationships, not just with your husband, but also your children, your friends. I want to hear about your past relationships, your mom and dad, early childhood days. I want to think about our immediate relationship, just you and me, and I want to think most primarily about your deepest relationship with God Himself." And as you talk about the story of your soul, I'm going to be listening according to certain categories of understanding. I know, because the Bible tells me this, that you bear the image of God, and, therefore, you long for relationship and you have the capacities to relate, but I also know that you're fallen and, therefore, your natural tendency is going to be to use all of your capacities incorrectly in a way that does not reveal the character of God at all, and in a way that doesn't even enjoy God as the central treasure of your soul.

And so, I'm going to be listening to you as you talk about the story of your soul according to these categories. And as I listen to you talk, I'm going to get some understanding—never, never complete; no diagnosis in SoulCare is ever complete and never gets every loose end captured. But I'm going to get some general understanding and maybe some pretty deep understanding of the core problem that is happening in your soul right now, as you journey through the reality of a difficult husband. I'm going to get some understanding of your flesh dynamics. I'm going to get some understanding of how you are protecting your soul and how, because of your background, there's been some pain and you've determined to never be hurt again like that, and now that your husband is hurting you and you say that something has died in your soul, maybe that's more of a choice to never again engage with him because it brought such pain and you know that that kind of pain, given your experience, is what death is all about, and you're never going to experience it again. And so, as I think about all of these flesh dynamics, I find myself eventually saying, "Things really are a mess. Maybe we need to hear the Spirit speaking to all this. Because, frankly, let me say to you, dear lady whose husband has betrayed her and is hurting so badly, if all I can



do is to understand all of this, if all I can do is think about what you could be, and be present with your journeying reality, and empathic to that, and draw out your whole story, and understand it biblically, and see where you're going wrong, if that's all I have to work with, there's no power. Nothing is going to change."

Maybe there's another element to add to our diagram. Maybe it really is the element of God's provision for what can happen in the human soul. Maybe it's the element of God's provision for empowering people to move toward the vision for which they've been saved and, therefore, we need to add the whole idea of Spirit dynamics. What are the provisions of God that I'm calling Spirit dynamics that, if released through holy tension, could actually move a person closer to the vision and they could actually start talking about the fact that, "You know, I think I'm growing. I think there's been progress happening in my life. Has my husband changed? Oh, I wish he would. He really hasn't. To tell you the truth, he's gotten worse. To tell you the truth, I just realized he's having an affair. He filed for divorce last week. I don't get it, but there's something called joy happening inside of me and my life is getting worse than it ever was. I feel like I'm out of the wilderness, I'm out of the desert, and I'm actually eating the grapes of the Promised Land. Something is different going on. I'm a new kind of woman in the middle of a mess that hasn't changed."

Is that possible?

Are we transformed by renewing our circumstances? Are we transformed by getting our husbands to treat us better? Are we transformed by renewing our psyches and getting our internal world shaped up a little bit and repaired therapeutically? Or, are we transformed by renewing our mind to understand what Jesus Christ has done, is doing, will do? What are the provisions for progress that God has placed in the redeemed soul?

What makes progress possible? That's the question I want to think about with you in this presentation. What makes progress possible? We have an idea now of what progress looks like. Progress is not necessarily a better marriage. We'd love that. We pray for that. We want that. But progress is not limited or not centrally defined as a better marriage. Progress is defined as your interior world becoming more like Jesus so that your central delight is God and your central passion is to reveal what He's like to others, because He's so terrific—just like you've been to this fantastic restaurant; you've never had a meal like it in your life, and you tell all your friends, "Go here, it's unbelievable." That's maturity in the Christian life. I've been to the restaurant of God. I've tasted Him. He's delighted my soul in such a way that I want to tell you, no matter what's happening in your life, He's the one that can satisfy your soul. Abandon yourself fully to Him. That's maturity. That's what we're after.

What makes maturity possible? What makes it possible for us to move toward the vision?

Your friend's angry at her husband—for reasons that, if you were married to him, you'd be pretty steamed too. You're struggling a little bit, thinking, "I don't know if I could mature very much if I were in that particular person's situation." You know, in my years as a counselor, I felt that so many times. So many times people have come into see me and told me stories that seem so much worse than the stories that I have experienced, and to myself I've wondered, "I wonder if I would

have any joy if I were going through what that person's going through. I wonder if I would have any desire for God. I wonder if church would mean much to me. I wonder if I'd want to worship. I wonder if I'd evangelize at all if I had gone through what that person's gone through." I've asked those questions and you will too as you provide SoulCare.

But, is it possible that there are provisions? That there's something inside of me already, something inside of her already, that if known, explored, discovered, and touched, and, therefore, released, could actually move her toward the vision and maturity whether things change or not?

As you get to know this woman (to continue with the case study), as you get to know this woman and hear more of her story, you realize that she's been hurt before, a few times very severely. You hear her story of terrible sexual abuse. You hear her story of a father who wasn't involved with her at all. You hear her story of being date raped when she was in college. Folks, I'm often, even after talking with people for so many years in my capacity as a therapist, as a SoulCare provider, even to this day, I still hear stories that make me wonder, "God, how do You sit back and let it all happen?" It's just too awful. As you hear these stories of what's happening in this person's life, you start thinking, "How would I react if I had been there?" And you hear this woman, who has gone through all these horrible experiences (and the more you pull back the rug, the more bugs crawl out), and you begin to say to yourself, "In the power of the flesh—flesh dynamics—in the power of the flesh, given what she has gone through in her background, she has learned several things including things like: She's learned to hate her longing to be enjoyed. If I come as a cute little girl saying, 'Daddy hold me, here I am,' and Daddy's drunk and whacks me and storms out the door, I begin to say, 'The worst thing about me is how much I want what I can never have.' So I begin to hate my feminine soul that just wants to be hugged. I begin to hate my masculine soul that wants to move out and have somebody give me a round of applause for hitting the ball a mile. I begin to hate my longings for respect and love and I begin to trust no one. This woman perhaps is trusting no one, including God. She had prayed about that dating relationship when the date rape took place. Where was God when that happened? 'Who can I trust? I guess, no one.' So, therefore, she's committed herself, whether consciously or unconsciously, to protecting herself. 'I can't depend on God. He didn't do anything when that happened to me, and I had prayed, and I was walking with Him, and I had devotions that morning, and I was living a Christian life, and I was doing it right, and God wasn't there to bless me, so I'll look after myself in some form. And my husband now is hurting me. Well, I can't abandon myself to God. I better take care of my own pain because God really isn't very helpful for this kind of thing. The only way I could really handle this thing, I suppose, is to control others. I must find some way to protect myself by controlling somebody else as best I can, any way that I can, to make sure that they don't hurt me anymore.'"

And you begin to understand all that. All that's flesh dynamics. You begin to think about all that. With all the material we've covered so far, you have the categories to put some of that together, and your mind is moving all about and you're thinking, "Yeah, that's going on in this particular young lady. That's going on in this angry woman who's so angry at her husband for betraying her that she says something has died. I'm beginning to see the huge battle that is happening in her soul. What do I do?"

Well, do you help her accept her longings as good? Do you do that by healing her memories? Do you do that by having her remember that during the date rape Jesus was there? I remember years

ago talking to a woman who had been viciously sexually attacked, and she had gone to a therapist who invited her to remember the horrible event and to visualize Jesus there. She told me later that as she visualized the presence of Jesus during the horrible attack, she screamed out and said, “I already believed He was there. My problem is why didn’t He do anything?” Healing of the memories can be a good thing, but be careful with it.

Are you going to try to get her to accept her longings and say that your longings to be loved are really good? Is that your first priority? Is that what you’re going to do?

Are you going to try to prove yourself trustworthy, so at least one person in her life is worthy of her trust? Is that your core strategy?

Are you going to help her see how her self-protection with her husband and the way she’s backed away from this mean-spirited, betraying, angry husband who reminds her of the abuser when she was a child, and her boyfriend that raped her, and are you going to help her see that she’s backing away from this guy in a variety of ways and point out that that’s the sin of self-protection and bring her to repentance about that? Is that your core strategy?

Are you going to help her see both the ineffectiveness and the sinfulness of her attempts to control others, and are you going to exhort her to love wisely? Is that your core strategy?

Or, because of the gospel, can your core strategy in SoulCare be something very, very different? That if the gospel is *not* true, is absolutely insane. But if the gospel is true, then it’s the very best thing you can do.

Maybe if the gospel is true—and I believe it is and you do as well—maybe your core strategy is to stir up the love that is already within her for God. To stir up her delight in the beauty of God. To stir up her inclination to worship. Maybe there is something wonderful and alive in her because of the provisions of God that, because of the way you will touch her soul, can blossom and be released and she can move toward the vision of the woman God created her to be.

In order to make sense of all that I have just said, I want to discuss two topics with you in the remainder of this lecture. One leads to the other.

The first topic must be understood before the second will make sense. Topic number one—what I choose to call the doctrine of first and second things. Topic number two—God’s provision for pursuing first things.

First topic—the doctrine of first and second things.

Go back to this woman who was sharing with you at the Sunday School class and giving you the opportunity for SoulCare. You’ve gone through the various movements we’ve described, and you’re excited as you’re present with her struggle, and you know “Aslan’s on the move,” and you want to see the Spirit take hold of her life in a variety of ways, and you’re thinking about her as she shares her story. You wouldn’t know, just intuitively, just obviously, that there are at least two categories of things this woman wants. (We’re assuming now she’s a Christian.)

The two categories of things that she wants, both of which you'd support, both of which I'd support—you know that she would want to feel better about herself as a woman. She doesn't feel very good about herself. She's not been enjoyed and doesn't like herself very well as a woman, doesn't feel desirable, doesn't feel beautiful, doesn't feel wanted. She'd like to feel better about herself as a woman, and she'd like to have a husband who loves her better. And as she tells me she wants that, my thought is "I'd love for you to have that too. I think that would be wonderful to have." That's one thing she wants.

A second thing she wants, if she's a Christian, is...something in her really wants to follow Christ. Something in her really wants to experience God. Something in her wants to be a good Christian. And you would agree with me that both those things—to feel better about herself as a woman in the context of a good marriage with healthy, happy responsible kids, that that's a legitimate desire, and the desire to know Christ better and to be a better Christian is also a legitimate desire.

The question is this: Which has priority?

A familiar quote, perhaps, from C.S. Lewis, goes like this, "Put first things first and second things are thrown in. Put second things first and you lose both first and second things."

For me to live is to feel better about myself and have a better marriage. For me to live is being the kind of parent that produces kids that bring me great joy. For me to live is never getting cancer again. For me to live is having a successful ministry. For me to live is...put second things at the completion of that sentence and you'll never know God well and you'll never move toward the vision that God has for you.

Let me define first things and second things for you very simply. First things—first things are whatever your soul most desires that God longs most to give. First things—whatever your soul most desires that God most longs to give.

Does God long to give this woman a husband that loves her well? Of course He does. He's a very nice Person. He likes to give good things to His kids. He'll withhold nothing good from His children, the Bible says. And our response is, "Well then, how about giving me some of those good things?" God says, "I'll give you everything eventually. For now, I'm giving you the best." And exactly what's that? What your soul most wants. Well, what my soul most wants is to feel better about myself as a woman. I want to be fully recovered from my sexual abuse and have a terrific marriage. That's what my soul most wants, and I can see God smiling and saying, "No. I know what your soul most wants because I put the appetite in you. Your soul most wants Me. And that's what I most long to give."

First thing—God.

Second things—how do you define those? Second things are whatever you legitimately desire but what you'd be willing to sacrifice to get the first thing. Second things are whatever you legitimately desire—to feel good about yourself as a woman, to have a great marriage—whatever you legitimately desire but what you would be willing to sacrifice to get the first thing. Of course you want first things and second things, but there's a hierarchy, and you really would be willing to

give up everything in the second thing category in order to get the first thing. The second things are things that God may or may not give you in this life, but are guaranteed in the next one.

A woman's husband hurts her deeply. What's her first and second thing? A single person feels desperately lonely. What's his first thing? What's his second thing? A Christian man feels strong homosexual urges. What's his first thing? What's his second thing? A woman loses her job, the one she loved so much that provided her with a great income. What's her first thing? What's her second thing? A parent watches his adolescent child move in some terrible directions. I wonder what his first thing is? What's his second thing? In each case it's obvious what the person would strongly desire.

The job of SoulCare, the ministry of SoulCare, is to put the person in touch with what really is the first thing in their soul, and it's not a better husband. It's not a godlier kid. It's not a better job. It's not a marriage. It's not wholesome sexual urges. All good things, but you've heard the phrase, and it's a good phrase, "The good is the enemy of the best"—first things.

The gospel has been provided to us so that we can pursue first things in this life. The gospel has not been provided to us so that we can live in such a way to guarantee getting second things. Here's the question. You are here in your journeying reality, you are mad at your husband, something died in you because of what he did and when I hear what he did to you, I don't blame you a bit; something would have died in me too. That just was awful. That's where you are. What are you after? I know what I'm after—I'm after a better life of blessings. Feeling good about myself as a woman and having a better husband. Legitimate? Well, as a second thing, yes.

Anything else you're interested in? Anything else you want more? Well, I guess I'd like to know God. Guess I'd like the better hope of being intimate with Him.

I remember talking to a friend who struggles with sexual addiction, and he told me that once he heard me teach, and as he was sitting there struggling with knowing where he was with his sexual addictive urges and not feeling much victory, I asked a question that the Spirit took—a very simple question on my part—and somehow used it powerfully in his life. The question was this. "Next time you're sitting in a hotel room by yourself," I said to a big bunch of guys, "when you have the little flipper and you're looking to go through some channels and your urges to find something you shouldn't watch are coming strong, and you're saying, 'I shouldn't watch this; I know it's wrong; this is terrible; I got to; I wish this urge weren't so strong...'" The question I asked was this, "Do you desire anything more? Anything else that you want? Because understand—only when you want something better, will you give up your desire for what you shouldn't have. And only when you want most what your deepest appetite craves, only when you're aware that what you want most is God, will you give up your demand for second things."

God has provided us with rich realities in the core of our being. God has provided us, through the New Covenant, through the gospel, with provisions that, when we understand them, when we see there are Spiritual dynamics going on in this woman's soul, I mean, we understand how, as SoulCare providers, we can engage with people in ways that help the provisions that God has given to be released.

That maybe first things will become the ruling passions of somebody's heart. God has given us the provision so that first things can actually become first things. And second things can become legitimate desires, legitimate sources of satisfaction when they are realized. But when they are absent, they don't become sources of complaint, because we have the provision to pursue what's most important.

In the next presentation, I want to detail what those provisions are, but we're not going to understand that second topic—of God has given us the provisions to move toward first things, until we realize that the first thing that we're to pursue, the provisions that God has given us that enable us to pursue first things are provisions that don't give us the ability always to make our marriage better, or make our kids turn out right, or to make our lives go better—but the provisions of God always give us access to Him. To enjoy Him, to know Him, which is what the regenerate soul wants more than anything else.

# Discussion Questions

How can spiritual progress be assessed, according to this lesson? How does this understanding line up with other teachings on spiritual maturity that you've previously heard?

Explain how each of the following core strategies falls short in dealing with a person who as been abused:

- Healing of memories
- Helping the person trust again by being a safe confidant
- Teaching her how to love wisely

What strategy does the lesson instead suggest is most effective in SoulCare? How does that differ from the strategies above?

Define, in your own words, the idea of "first" and "second" things. What is the goal of SoulCare relative to first and second things?

Dr. Crabb commented to a friend struggling with sexual addiction: "... only when you want something better, will you give up your desire for what you shouldn't have." How does that comment affect you? To what extent are you in touch with the "something better" discussed in this lesson?



# Lesson 5 Study Guide

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CC203

## *SoulCare Foundations III: Provisions and Practices*

New Covenant Provisions: Entering Tension  
that the Spirit Creates and Resolves

Updated 2015

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# Objectives

In this lesson, Dr. Crabb discusses how perception drives emotions and choices, and why false beliefs are such a serious problem.

When you complete this lesson, “New Covenant Provisions: Entering Tension that the Spirit Creates and Resolves,” you should be able to:

- Grasp how Christians most deeply suffer—the holy tension that rages within us.
- Understand the prerequisite for deep learning and spiritual change.
- Cite and explain the four provisions God has made to help us progress spiritually.

# Transcript

## Course Title: SoulCare Foundations III: Provisions and Practices

### Lesson Five: New Covenant Provisions: Entering Tension that the Spirit Creates and Resolves

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

In this presentation, I want to make two points. Point number one: Tension is required for deep learning. Tension is required for deep learning to occur, therefore, SoulCare conversations must introduce a kind of tension into someone's soul that he or she has perhaps never experienced before—what I call a holy tension. Until a tension is introduced that only the provisions of the gospel relieve, there will be no interest in the provisions of the gospel. Learning occurs in the presence of tension. Spiritual change occurs in the presence of holy tension. That's my first point.

My second point is to suggest that an echo of the holy tension can be heard in a non-Christian soul, but the provisions of the New Covenant introduce a reality into the regenerate soul that lets the holy tension be felt with full consuming force until that tension in the Christian soul becomes so strong that relieving it becomes their greatest passion, and it's at that point that the provisions of the New Covenant become everything. It's at that point that we begin to say the gospel is wonderful. Grace is amazing. Jesus is all to me; for me to live is Christ.

Two points. Tension must occur for learning to develop and the New Covenant allows us, as Christians, to face the deepest holy tension within our soul that only the New Covenant can relieve.

Point number one: Learning requires tension. In social conversations, the goal is to avoid tension. In task-centered and informational conversations, the goal is to introduce a kind of tension that either cooperative effort or clear teaching and careful listening can relieve. But in SoulCare conversations, something deep in the soul must be disturbed or deep change won't occur.

Now, let me state my point in a form of a principle. The supernatural learning that changes us from proud into humble persons—supernatural learning that changes us from self-centered persons into God-centered persons—occurs only when the soul is in a state of arousal caused by deep disturbance. Now, if that's true, then you can hear an immediate problem. Most of us live our lives to avoid the tension that only the Spirit can relieve. We live for good times. We live for productive work. We live for learning what we want to learn. We live to avoid the tension that really could become our salvation in the sense of being delivered from our carnal, flesh-filled passion selves into the kind of people that God longs to make us and the kind of people we long to become, and, to put the same point differently, complacency, I would suggest a lack of awareness of the true battle that is happening in the soul, is the enemy of change. That's why Jesus in Revelation was so hard on the Laodiceans. They weren't hot or cold. They were just lukewarm. Everything's fine. How's life? Doing great. No problems. There was no deep tension in the soul. There's a productive, good, Spirit-led, holy tension that you and I need to experience.

You know, even secular people agree with a little bit of what I'm saying. From a secular research perspective, a noted psychologist named Kurt Lewin spoke once of the need for an attitude to be unfrozen by distress before it could shift—an attitude that we hold about a variety of things, whether it's racial prejudice or other attitudes that are obviously problematic and bad—they are not going to change until there's some kind of arousal that unfreezes the attitude that is so clearly in place.

Perhaps the simplest way to make the point that I'm after is to say—and this will not be a very popular thought, but if you've lived a while I think you'll agree with it and the Bible makes it clear—we need to suffer before we learn truth in a way that changes us. Let me say it again. We need to suffer before we learn truth in a way that changes us.

When I taught at a seminary, I was frankly disillusioned by a couple of things, and one thing I was disillusioned by was the mood, not all the time, but so often was, "Let's master the text of the Bible, so that once we know what it says according to our high-level scholarship, then we will be good Christians because we will have understood the text." As opposed to saying, "Wait a minute. Truth is a Person revealed in the propositions of Scripture, which, if it's going to get into my soul and make my interior world resemble Jesus' interior world, there has to be more than just a learning conversation. There has to be a SoulCare conversation where a certain tension is introduced which makes me thirsty, makes me desperate, makes me radically dependent on the truth of what I hear so that I begin to grasp after, seek after with all my heart and soul and mind and strength. I need to be moving after God and wanting him and desiring him. That won't happen if I'm complacent.

Suffering is required before we're going to learn truth in a way that changes us. Now we need to clarify that just one more little bit. May I suggest to you that the most profound suffering in the human experience is not caused by divorce, as awful as that is. It's not caused by rejection in some other form. It's not caused by failure when your business collapses or when, in high school you don't make the basket in the last second of the basketball game. It's not even caused by horrible things like abuse and beatings and sexual violations. It's not even caused by loss and by the death of loved ones and serious physical disease, as real as all that suffering is. That's not the kind of suffering that I'm talking about. It might be included, but it's not the core kind of suffering which, when the human soul experiences, is opened to truth in a way that changes the soul. What is the core suffering that you and I experience? It's the core suffering in the human soul that makes us thirsty for the provisions for the New Covenant.

The real battle in the center of the redeemed soul, the real battle in the center of my soul when I'm aware of it—which I'm often not—the battle that creates the deepest distress in my soul is not all the obvious forms of suffering which are real and terrible and clearly bring great pain into human existence, but the deepest suffering, the real battle is the battle between what I was designed to be and long to be as a Christian and the person that I am. Some people have expressed it this way: They said that the real battle is between the true self and the false self. And I don't think that's too bad a way of putting it.

It's the battle between my present reality and my eternal destiny. The day is coming when I stand before Jesus, when I am going to be like Him. I'm not like Him now in so many ways. There's

something inside of me that longs to be a different person than I am. That longs to treat my wife and my friends, my children, my grandchildren, that longs to treat people in a different way, that longs to have a different attitude toward financial wealth or financial failure. That longs to have a different attitude toward the prospect of disease or the enjoyment of health. There's something in me that knows I'm not who I was designed to be. And when I'm aware of the tension between how I experience myself and what I long to be, there's a suffering that I call a holy tension. That's the tension I'm talking about that is necessary for spiritual formation to take place at it's richest level.

As you engage in SoulCare conversations, as you chat with this woman that we've been chatting about in previous lectures (the woman who's so mad at her husband), you're always thinking then...you're in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in her. You're looking at this woman and saying, "What is her destiny? Why did Jesus save her?" He didn't save her to go to heaven. That's included and that's wonderful. He saved her to become like Jesus to bring God glory. That's why He saved her. Part of that is that she gets to go to heaven because her sins are forgiven, but the core reason He saved her is so that God could get glory out of the way that she lives on this earth until she dies and then forever in eternity as a trophy of God's grace. And you're looking at her and you're saying, "You know, the way your husband has treated you is just despicable; it's just awful. But I've got a vision and God has made it possible for you to live in a different way," you're saying to yourself.

And then you think about the vision of what she could become and you're in the pains of childbirth until it happens. You think about the vision and you think about the realities. She's bitter. She's mad. She's self-protective. She's controlling. And you're saying, "There's a gap. There's a distinction between who she is and what God saved her to be and what she longs to be." And therein lies the holy tension. And when you face both, that's when the holy tension develops.

So, at some point in your SoulCare conversation—which you wouldn't say to her if you were in a social conversation—at some point you might say, "Sally, when you're most aware of the presence of God, when you get up at two in the morning and go down by your fireplace and open your Bible and just ponder the Psalms, get on your knees before God, when you're most aware of the presence of God, would you describe the person you'd most like to be? When you think about the influence you'd like to have on your ten-year-old daughter who is just moving into puberty and becoming a woman and you want to influence her, and you want to have the kind of impact on her life that helps her become a beautiful woman of character and godliness. As you think of the kind of person you'd like to be to impact your daughter, describe that woman to me. Describe that influential mother to this precious daughter that you love so much. Talk to me about who you are and who you would like to become and how you would like to be in the presence of this husband who disappointed you. Talk with me about that."

That question might take an hour, or it might take a year to discuss and develop. You might get a lot of resistance, you might get a lot of frustration, you might get a lot of tears, you might get a lot of indifference. But as you think about that, believing that there's something inside of her that longs for the vision of becoming like Jesus because she's regenerate, and as that vision begins to take form, and as she begins to articulate it, and say, "You know, I'd just love to be more patient. I'd love for my daughter to see me when my husband hurts me actually want God more than ever. And actually not feel so destroyed and not feel so distraught and not get so angry or not be so

manipulative and nasty. I'd like her to see a woman of beautiful radiance who, because of God, remains whole. I'd like that. I think that would be a blessing to my daughter. It might even be a blessing to my husband which, I guess I sort of want that too." A tension's developing as she begins to see the vision of who she could be.

Together you might conclude, as you think about it at some length, that she would love to be so aware of her own wholeness as a child of God that nothing can threaten that sense of wholeness—so thrilled with the beauty that defines her soul because she belongs to God; so aware that she radiates the character of God, and that makes her a beautiful woman in the core of her soul; that she longs to become so aware of that that she has no greater ambition to reveal to her daughter, to her husband, to her friends...Who God is and what He is like; that she begins to think about what it means to live for the glory of God and to enjoy Him and reveal Him in the presence of anything that happens in this world. As that vision becomes clear in her mind, the tension will be introduced. She'll begin to feel the beginnings of tension. She'll sense the pull from one side that says, "Don't let me hurt anymore. I've had enough hurt. I want to protect myself. I don't like the pain that I felt. I felt it when I was a kid with my dad. I felt it with the sexual abuse. I felt it here. I felt it there. And I want no more of that." And that fleshly pull to say, "I'm going to see to it that my soul stays safe whether God helps or not." That fleshly pull will be very, very real.

She's also going to hear sentences like, "Your longings to be loved are very legitimate. He doesn't love you, so back away. That other guy that you met in Sunday School class—the widower—he smiled at you in a particular way and you felt alive as a woman. Well God wants you to feel alive as a woman, doesn't He? Well, then maybe it wouldn't be so wrong to go where you feel most alive. It's God's plan."

She begins to hear the voice of the flesh, the voice of folly. As she begins to hear that and if she is in SoulCare conversation with you, she might also hear the pull of another voice, not only the voice of, "Well, I'd like to feel better and that guy makes me feel better," but also the voice that says, "I have a vision for spiritual formation. Why am I trying to find myself? I've already been found. I have a higher calling than taking care of me. I'm not the point. God's glory is the point and when I live for His glory, something in me becomes whole and it's a win-win all around. I'm never the loser. God is no man's debtor. When I give myself to Him, something inside of me becomes indestructibly alive and I want that too. But it's all about Him."

Now the tension, the battle. The tension between the vision of spiritual formation and the appeal of self-preservation. It's like the cartoon picture that we've all seen of the person being tempted and here's the devil-like figure with the horns and the pitchfork saying, "Ah, go ahead and cheat on that test, or tell that lie, or steal that cookie." And you have the angelic figure on the other side saying, "No, don't do it. It's not what you want to do." It's kind of like that, but not entirely.

There's two things wrong with that picture. One is it presents the devilish force and the angelic force as kind of equal but opposing. That isn't the way it is. According to Scripture, the angelic force, if you will, the force for good, is deeper in the soul and the devilish force is not in the center of the Christian soul; it's on the periphery. So the strongest voice that the Christian hears from the center of his being is the voice of the Spirit.



The other thing wrong with the picture is so often when you see it in cartoons, the angelic voice is saying, “You shouldn’t. Don’t do it. It’s not right.” When, in fact, the angelic voice, the Spirit of God speaking in the center of the heart is not only saying, “Don’t do it”—certainly He’s saying that; we’re to be obedient—but far more centrally, He’s saying, “Do what you most deeply want to do.” And, because you’re a Christian, what you most deeply want to do is not to watch pornography. What you most deeply want to do is not back away from your husband. What you most deeply want to do is obey the law, because now, under the terms of the New Covenant, under the provisions of God, the law is no longer merely external to us. It’s still binding, but now it’s in us and what was formerly a requirement, is still a requirement, but now it’s a desire.

And now the voice that’s good is saying, “Indulge your deepest desire,” which at times will feel like a disciplined choice, because you’ll be aware of other desires to go against the law, but the message is not just, “Do right.” It certainly is that. The message is, “Do what most appeals to your regenerate soul.”

The battle between the good self and the bad self, the false self and the true self is very, very, very, very real.

What I want us to understand as I move to the second point of the provisions of God, what I want us to understand is that as you talk to that angry woman who is so mad at her husband, as you begin to articulate a vision for what she could be, and the power of God, and how she could be a whole woman and radiate the beauty of Jesus and impact her ten-year-old daughter and actually be a blessing to her husband, and most importantly, glorify God and please him, as you think about this vision, you can make an assumption. And let me tell you, the assumption is huge. I’ve already said it, but let me underline it now.

Because of the gospel, what the woman should do is exactly what the woman most wants to do. In the core of her soul, what she should do is her “first thing” passion. The problem is she may not know it. That’s where SoulCare becomes vital. Your job in SoulCare is to believe what grace has done in spite of the visible evidence. She’s just angry. She has no desire to bless that guy. She’s just mad at him. But if you quietly believe and pray and stay involved with her, you can be assured that in the corner of her being, the Spirit has already done a work, the Spirit is doing a work. The Spirit will do a work. That’s where you get wildly excited about the fact that what she ought to do is what she most wants to do, and your job is to help put her in touch with that. Your job is to believe that what grace has done has included an actual change in the woman in her deepest heart so that God’s holy standards have become her passionate desires.

Now, can you imagine if you deeply believe that as you’re talking with her? Can you imagine when she talks about how mad she is and if your mood were not one of scolding, “Well, you shouldn’t be like that. The Bible says you need to submit to your husband and let’s read the passages. I’ll tell you what it means and you need to do it”? Or if your mood were one of, “Well let me do therapy with you. You’ve been damaged by a lot of pain. Let’s see if we can’t relieve your pain a little bit, or get you to cope a little more healthfully with your situation”? Suppose you really believe that in the core of her soul she wanted to do what God has commanded her to do. If you believe that, that’s going to create a dynamic in your relationship that’s going to arouse her interest and stir up something within her, maybe bring her to a point of recognizing her appetite for God.



I hope you're catching what I'm saying so far in this presentation. I'm saying that spiritual change occurs in the presence of spiritual tension. And I'm saying that tension that produces spiritual change or is a context for spiritual change is the tension between the vision of what could be if the Spirit were ruling your heart and the reality of how you're living now. And when that's seen, the tension that's produced is a tension that can only be released by the work of the New Covenant.

And that leads me to my second point, which I want to spend the last few minutes telling you about very simply.

The New Covenant has introduced a reality into the human soul that sets up the holy tension that it then relieves. May I say to you, as you listen to my brief presentation of the New Covenant—very, very brief—that you would do very, very well to get two books. One by Dwight Edwards called, *The Revolution Within*, and the other also by Dwight Edwards, a workbook companion volume to *Revolution Within*, called *Experiencing Christ Within*. And in those two books—one a Bible Study, the other a presentation of teaching—you'll get a grasp of the New Covenant that I believe can be the foundation for a change in your life and for helping you to become a rich provider of SoulCare.

I'll summarize very simply what I believe the New Covenant provisions are that Dwight deals with in some thoroughness. There are four provisions.

The provisions that make Spirit dynamics a reality in this angry woman's life, the provisions are four. First is a new purity. Let me define a new purity for you. The new purity that is ours because of the radical power of the blood of Jesus, which means I'm forgiven and accepted. The new purity means that my acceptance before God is a gift rather than something earned by performance. Therefore, it cannot be lost. Therefore, at every moment, no matter what I'm doing, God is singing over me with delight. It doesn't mean He's thrilled when I'm sinning. It doesn't mean He won't discipline me for my sin, but it means that He has put me in a position of radical acceptance before Him. I'm now His child and He consistently looks at me with delight. When I grasp the power of grace that has given me a new purity, that becomes part of the impetus to live in the light of God's calling. And that makes sin just a little less attractive. A new purity—the first provision of the New Covenant.

Second provision is a new identity. If you are a Christian, then you are no longer an alcoholic or a sex addict or a homosexual or a divorced person. What you are is a Christian who happens to be divorced, who happens to struggle with alcoholic urges that you give into way too often, but your identity is no longer "alcoholic." Your identity is Christian. We can only say of ourselves now, if we're to be biblically correct, "I am a saint who sins." No longer do I say, "I'm a sinner who sins." I'm God's treasured possession. That's my identity. With flesh dynamics, I still sin a bunch. I still have huge problems. I still need forgiveness every day, but my core identity is that I'm a Christian. I'm a child of God. Let me tell you why that is, or let me illustrate what I mean by that at least.

I've shared before that my wife has been a victim of sexual abuse. She told me after a number of years of marriage that when she was a little girl, there was a middle-aged man in her neighborhood who just happened—in a very wholesome way—to love little kids, and he took a good, wholesome interest in my wife when she was a young girl—three, four, five, six years old—and he happened to discern, because he paid attention to her, that she loved the flower violets, and every spring in

York, Pennsylvania, he would take her to a field where violets grew wildly and she would pick these little violets as her special bouquet and—Uncle John was his name—and he would put her back on his shoulders, and she would carry her treasure of violets back home, and when Rachel told me that story about how Uncle John had blessed her soul by attending to her love of the beauty of violets, she wept. She cried.

What struck me in the course of a lengthy conversation with my wife, as her tears over the way Uncle John loved her came from a deeper place; they were deeper tears than her discussions with me of how she had been abused. And I came to a very simple, but very profound conclusion and it's this: Love touches the soul more deeply than evil. I've been loved by Jesus. My soul is defined by His love. It's my identity.

Third provision—a new inclination. Not only a new purity, not only a new identity because love touches the soul more deeply than evil, but also there's a new inclination. This to me is the pivot point. This is the center of it—there's a new appetite. The Spirit has created in us a new heart. Ezekiel 36 talks about this. Jeremiah 31 does; Paul talks about it in Corinthians. The Spirit has created in me a new heart that actually wants to do what the law requires. The law has not changed in content, it is simply changed in location and now it is within me. That's why I believe, not in an accountability model of sanctification, but rather in an appetite model of sanctification. I believe that growth and spiritual maturity has to do with identifying your deepest desires and wildly indulging them. Indulgence is the key to growth. Indulgence of what? The flesh? Of course not. Indulgence of the Spirit. Indulgence of your new inclination, your new appetite.

The sexual abuser may say, “I so badly want to be pure, but I still touch little girls, oh wretched man that I am. I long to be pure. There's an inclination in me now to be pure.” And he will, therefore, need for victory to understand the fourth provision. Not only a new purity, not only a new identity, not only a new inclination, but also a new power.

The Spirit of God now lives in me. And somehow, in a SoulCare conversation between the SoulCare provider in whom the Spirit of God lives and the SoulCare recipient in whom the Spirit of God lives, some mystical transaction of power—the Spirit of God coming out of one and into another—can touch this person who is pure because of the blood of Christ, whose identity is there, because love touches the soul more deeply than evil, whose disposition is to want God more than sin, and because the power of God is released sometimes in a SoulCare conversation, this person can feel an explosion within them that makes them want more than anything else to feel the empowerment to move toward the vision for which God created them. The provisions in the New Covenant mean everything to SoulCare conversations. If that's true, what does a SoulCare conversation look like? We'll begin looking at that in the next presentation.

# Discussion Questions

What do you think about this statement: "... something deep in the soul must be disturbed or deep change won't occur?" What was wrong with the Laodiceans' complacency? Why must Christians suffer? What Scripture supports this view?

What is our "core suffering," the greatest battle and deepest distress we experience as Christians? To what extent do you experience this battle as your greatest pain? Why are we often not as aware of this "deepest distress" in our soul as we are aware of the pain of divorce, death, rejection, violence, etc.?

Define the concept of holy tension. What desires conflict in this battle? How does the New Covenant help us face this tension?

Describe the difference between the following:

- Not doing something because it's not right

- Not doing something because it's not what we most deeply want to do

What do you most deeply want to do?

How does each of the following New Covenant provisions relieve the holy tension in our souls: New Purity, New Identity, New Inclination, and New Power?

# Lesson 6 Study Guide

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**CC203**

## ***SoulCare Foundations III: Provisions and Practices***

New Covenant Community:  
What the Spirit Makes Possible

Updated 2015

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**Our Daily Bread**  
**Christian University**

# Objectives

In order for a person to be willing to be known by you, you will have to become a safe person. What does that mean? That's our topic for this presentation.

When you complete this lesson, "New Covenant Community: What the Spirit Makes Possible," you should be able to:

- Reiterate with clarity the vision behind this SoulCare course.
- Define what you can offer to another in the process of providing SoulCare.
- Be a safe listener for a person in need.
- Recognize the occurrence of interpersonal pull as well as its relationship to being safe and ways to resist it.

# Transcript

## Course Title: SoulCare Foundations III: Provisions and Practices

### Lesson Six: New Covenant Community: What the Spirit Makes Possible

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

Let me again state the vision that moves me as I teach this course. I walk through malls, I sit in coffee shops, I eat dinner with friends, I attend small groups, I sit in church and often I wonder—I wonder, of all the people that I see every day in so many different settings, “How many of these people,” I ask it of myself, “do I...how many of these people feel deeply known? How many feel the freedom with just one other person to reveal all the crazy and wonderful and nonsensical and significant and shallow and deep and weird things that are going on inside of them? How many people feel safe enough with just one other person to be known?” And I ask also, “How many have ever been richly explored by one gently curious person? By someone who is fascinated enough to ask questions and really listen? How many have wanted to be explored and seen and understood because another person was genuinely excited to enter into their interior worlds? How many have said, ‘I want you, not only to know me, but I want you to explore all that’s within me, and something in me says that you want to do that and that makes me want to be explored by you. You seem to want to enter me with an excitement about the fact that I exist and the fact that things are happening inside of me and you have a belief in who I could become, and because I trust all that, I want you to go beyond knowing some things about me, but I want you to deeply explore me’? How many of the people that I see in church every Sunday or in all the coffee shops and all the malls—how many have ever been known or deeply explored? And how often,” even more significantly, I wonder, “How many have ever been discovered?”

Young singers and actors go to Hollywood or New York hoping to be discovered. I wonder how many Christians go to church hoping to be discovered. I wonder how many Christians go to church on a Sunday morning thinking that maybe in this setting, because of this small group, because of this conversation, because of this Sunday School class, because of this community, that the uniqueness of who I am, my unique personhood is going to be discovered by an appreciative community that actually honors the uniqueness that God has built into me. How many ever, ever speak with someone who is non-intrusively discerning, who listens in order to discover the deep work of the Spirit in somebody’s soul, who has the wisdom to see beneath all that is confusing and tangled, all that is ugly and sometimes disgusting, and to see beneath all of that to the life of Christ that remains pure and alive beneath the mess?

And then finally, I wonder how many people who crowd in the church every Sunday, how many people who bump into others in crowded lobbies before church, how many who trip over others as they crawl across ten people to find an open seat, how many who greet a dozen people with a pleasant smile before church and a dozen more after church, how many know the experience of having their souls touched? People bump shoulders in church every Sunday, but how often do their souls touch? How many have spent time with just one other person who felt truly authentic, whose involvement was not staged, whose interest was not inappropriate, whose friendliness was not overdone?



How many people have spent time with just one other person who was so aware of the life of Christ within them, so in touch with the vibrant reality of the Spirit dwelling within the deepest part of their soul, that was so aware of it that they were able to release it into another person? How many folks have experienced that kind of a spiritual encounter? How many have even had a single conversation? I ask this of myself. How many have even had a single conversation where there was an explosion that took place because of the conversation? An explosion of joy, an explosion of hope and meaning and resolve, because their appetite for Christ was so aroused by the Spirit operating through that conversation? How many people have been able to walk away from a conversation, saying in a new way, for just—maybe just a moment—for me to live is Christ and that means more to me now because of that conversation than it ever meant before. That's SoulCare and that's the vision that impels me as I develop the material to teach and share it with you folks.

Let me share in sketch form all that I've just talked about. Here's a person who's involved in SoulCare with another person. This person is sharing with the one individual somehow, "I'm struggling. I present who I am to you." And you want to provide SoulCare for the other person. Does the SoulCare provider offer, first, a level of safety that stirs the kind of freedom that results in the person receiving SoulCare, desiring to be known? How many SoulCarers offer a kind of excitement about the prospect of knowing somebody else that stirs a sacred curiosity that produces in another a great desire to be explored. "Please talk to me. Ask me questions. Let me know." How many people have a purity of motive as they are interacting with somebody else that inspires a level of trust that deepens the willingness to be explored? How many SoulCare providers have the kind of discernment that produces a confidence in the other that makes the other person say, "Keep talking until I'm discovered. I know there's something unique in me by the grace of God. I'd love for somebody to find that." And how many people offer the release of Christ within them that stirs a life in the interaction that results in the other person feeling deeply touched by the Spirit of God? That's my vision of SoulCare and it all begins with two people talking, perhaps in a small group, or often with just two. It might begin with small talk. It might begin with enjoyably social conversation. It might begin with task-centered conversation, or it might involve an informational conversation with one person teaching another, but it all begins—whatever the conversation is like—it all begins with an aroma where one person senses the fragrance of grace in another.

You all know what I'm talking about when I say that you've met people that you've said to yourself instantly, "I'll never share a single thing with them. We're going to keep things at a very sociable level. In this particular committee meeting, this person is useful for our agreed upon purposes, but I have no intention of going out for coffee with that woman afterwards, or chatting about the problems that are happening in my life."

But SoulCare begins when you see somebody, and something in you is drawn, something in you is stirred, you sense that in the other person there's a God-centeredness. Who has sensed in you, who has sensed in me, a God-centeredness, a wholeness that doesn't need to be aggressive, but isn't afraid to enter? An other-centeredness that feels genuine, not contrived, an awareness that you really do want to know God? How many people do you know that you just sense, "This person wants to know God and they want that more than they want anything else"? When that person is drawn to you and your interior world is ruled by the kinds of passions that stir the

aroma—the fragrance of grace—then somebody else is going to want to talk to you. At that point, a conversation begins.

As you listen to that person speak, as they begin to share something of their struggle, as they begin to share wherever they are in their journeying reality, it could be light at the beginning, it could be heavy, it could be a variety of things, but as they begin sharing, something in you—if you’re providing the various elements that we’re talking about—something in you becomes aware that there’s a desire in the other to connect. You realize that in this conversation, there’s an opportunity for something that goes way beyond sociability. You realize that this person is saying something to you that invites you to meet them at a level that most people are never met. They might say that plainly. They might say, “Can I talk with you about some really hard things that I’ve never discussed with anybody else?” Or they might talk about it much more obliquely, much more gradually, but you sense a desire for something real, something genuine, and you’re aware that the Spirit is doing something, there’s an opportunity for SoulCare that’s developing. There’s an opportunity for an experience of God that could be produced because the two of you are talking.

At some point this person makes known to you a part of their pilgrimage, a slice of their life, maybe a difficult circumstance, maybe a health problem, maybe a difficulty in a relationship, a concern over a child, maybe some feeling of depression or anger. They share something about their journey, and as you listen, you find an impulse rising within you that you know is supernatural. As they’re talking, you find yourself saying, “I really would like to enter the battle for this person’s soul.” This is not a normal conversation. This is not your average, “How you doing? Good to see you. Praise the Lord! Here’s our prayer. Things are fine.” But there’s something about what’s happening that you know the person has sensed something in you that they are wanting a deeper level of connection, and something rises within you. You want to enter the battle for this particular person’s soul and you follow your heart. You feel inadequate. You don’t know how to do it. You’re not sure what direction to go. You’re wondering why this is happening to you, but you decide to trust the Spirit of God working within you and the decision you make at some point in this early stage of SoulCare is this: “I will engage with this person on behalf of God, under the Spirit’s direction, depending on the resources of Christ.”

May I say it very simply? When you make that decision, when the person senses something in you that makes them open up with the message “I’m willing to be known by you.” (And when you realize it, you’ll never know anybody who is not willing to be known.) And you have a rare privilege of knowing somebody, and when you sense a desire in you to enter the battle for this person’s soul, at the point you make the decision that “I will contend for this person’s soul under the authority of God, with the direction of the Spirit, using the resources of Christ”—at that point SoulCare has begun.

What then? Internally, without putting any of this into words, you start thinking certain things. Two things happen simultaneously within you as the person is sharing their burden, sharing their concern.

Number one—you pay attention to what you’re feeling in the presence of this person: how you’re feeling about this person, how this person is making you feel, what you’re aware of that you want to do as you talk with this person. Do you find yourself wanting to be cautious? Do you find

yourself wanting to go slow? Do you find yourself wanting to intimidate this person with your knowledge? Do you find yourself wanting to impress this person with your compassion? You find a number of things happening inside of you. The SoulCare process has begun as you attend to your own interior world, not judgmental, not trying to change what you discover in yourself, not condemning yourself, saying, “Oh man, I’m such a mess. How can I possibly give SoulCare? I’m aware of wanting to impress this person, and I wonder what they’re thinking of me. I can’t possibly engage in SoulCare.” No, you simply say, “That is a part of my interior world. By the grace of God I’m going to believe that there’s more to me than that. All I’m going to do now is be aware of what’s happening in my interior world. I’m going to start with that.” You begin by doing two things simultaneously. That’s one—be aware of your internal world.

And at the same time, you begin to wonder, “What might the Spirit be doing in this person’s life? What might this person look like if the Spirit had His way? What do I find spiritually alive and attractive in this person? I’ve only been talking to this person for five minutes; is there anything inside of me that notices, that discerns a life in the other that draws me to them? Am I aware of something in them that feels unique? Am I aware of something in them that feels alive?” And you begin to think about the word *celebrate*. You begin to think about the word *vision*. The idea of excitement begins to rise within you as you do these two things simultaneously. “Here’s what I’m aware of in me, and here’s what I’m aware of as I engage with this unique bearer of God’s image.”

As you listen, and as you pay attention to your own interior world, and as you begin to think vision, before you allow yourself for even a moment to wonder what might be wrong in this person—now let me pause here for a second. One of the most natural things in our Christian culture is to think very quickly of “I wonder what’s wrong. I wonder where this person is moving in the wrong direction. I wonder where they’re showing their selfishness. I wonder where they’ve mishandled childhood pain (if you’re therapeutically inclined). Where’s something going wrong in this person?” If you’re involved in rich SoulCare, the person is talking to you, attracted by the aroma of grace, you’re aware of your interior world to some degree, you’re aware of some vision for the person—before you even allow yourself to think for a second about what could be wrong with this person, before you even hint at the idea of flesh dynamics—you must focus on being present to this person in their journeying reality.

You must focus on being present as a safe person who encourages this individual to experience the kind of freedom that makes them say, “I really made a good decision in talking with this individual. I really want to be known by this person.” Folks, if you fail here, SoulCare isn’t going to happen. As a person begins to share, if you begin to think of, “You know, I think I can see some things that might be going wrong. I think the way you’re responding to your husband—I’m not sure if that fits 1 Peter chapter 3. Can we talk about it? I’m not sure if the way you’re handling this really is the way a Christian ought to be handling it; maybe I can give some advice along these lines. I wonder if perhaps you could try this and this and this.” If you start identifying with something that’s wrong, I’ll guarantee that person, at some deep, internal level, will shut down and the process of SoulCare will be aborted.

So, your first thought, as you’ve thought about your own interior world, thought about a vision for them, and you’re thinking now about flesh dynamics—what’s wrong with the person—but before you ever get there, your question is this: What does it mean for me to be a safe person that creates a sense of freedom in the other that makes them not only willing, but eager to be known?

I want to spend the rest of my time in this lecture suggesting what I believe is the single most important element, and I think the most overlooked element, in a relationship that helps someone feel safe enough to feel free enough to be known. What is it that helps somebody feel safe? I believe it can be expressed in a phrase. A person feels safe enough to face themselves and to share freely with the desire to be meaningfully known if, and here's the phrase, if that person realizes that they can ***neither control nor destroy you***. If they know that no matter what is happening in them, no matter what they do, how they interact, whether they yell at you, tell you some morbid secret, have a subtle way of maneuvering you, that they realize that "This person is strong enough, that they are ruled by a power stronger than me, and there's nothing that I could say or do that would threaten them, that would maneuver them in one direction versus another, that would make them want to go in a direction other than what they want to go in." I am only going to be safe if I know that I can neither control nor destroy you.

People want to impact the one providing SoulCare. They don't want a therapeutically neutral person. They want to know that you are warmly engaged and genuinely care. What they don't want is to be able to manipulate you or to threaten you.

I remember a woman who came to see me some years ago. She came into my office and sat down, and she sat down very primly and properly, and it was very clear that she was a bit of a celebrity. And she was aware of her celebrityism, and as she sat down very elegantly and very nicely attired, and her mood was one of, "I want you, Dr. Crabb, to take me very seriously and to recognize I'm an important person. And I expect you to offer a certain kind of deference toward me."

I made a choice—maybe unwisely, I don't think it was, as it turned out anyhow—I made a choice to say that if I were to stiffen up in response to being around a celebrity, if I were to be star struck, and if I were to sit there with a certain degree of dignity and decorum that I think that she deserves, I don't believe she would feel safe. And so what I did—I slouched back in my chair and threw my legs over the side of my chair and sat back and said, "Do you want a cup of coffee?"

She said, "No, thank you."

And I sat up and looked at her and I said, "And even if you wanted one, you wouldn't ask for it 'cause you're not sure if that would be appropriate and polite and proper."

And she looked at me and said, "I'm a little offended."

And I said, "Well, am I right?"

And that led to a very strong relationship with her. Why? I believe she began to feel safe with me because she couldn't control me. With all the ways that she was used to controlling people, it wasn't working with me.

One man that I know of was afraid that his murderous anger, if he made it known to the person he was chatting with, would so unnerve the other that whenever he discussed his anger, he always tempered it. He was afraid, "If I make known what is really happening in me, it'll destroy you. You won't be able to handle it. You'll have to minimize it in some form. I cannot feel safe with you."

Let me put the whole thing another way. Effective SoulCare will only happen when the provider of SoulCare is so centered in God that the power of the other person never rules. Now think about that. What does it mean for me, as a provider of SoulCare, for you as a provider of SoulCare, to be secure enough in God to not be controlled by what is happening in the other, to not be controlled by the other person's opinion, to not be controlled by the other person's effect on me?

A woman for whom I'm providing SoulCare currently, said to me these words (and you tell me how you'd respond if you heard these words.) I actually wish I heard words like this more often, but this is what she said. In the course of one of our SoulCare chats she said, "I don't know anyone who sees me as clearly as you do. I don't know anybody who directs me more powerfully to God. I'm just so privileged to have a chance to be with you. It's a two-hour drive to chat with you. I'd drive five hours for that."

Now what happens? Well, a part of me kind of responds with, "I admire your taste." I feel a little puffed up. I want to forgive her maybe for her exaggeration, or wonder if, perhaps, it's true. What's happening? I'm not centered in God. The woman's controlling me. And at that moment, I'm not safe for her. At that moment, she's going to shut down if her extravagant compliments have an effect that reaches to the very center of my soul.

No compliment from another human being should ever reach the exact center of your soul. The center of your soul must be controlled by God and what He thinks of you and His involvement with you and not somebody else. And if it's otherwise, you're not safe as a SoulCare provider.

I could have dismissed her comments as exaggeration. I could have been drawn to it as high encouragement, but if the center of who I am is affected by what she said, then I'm not going to be a safe person for her.

As you hear a compliment, as you hear an attack, as you hear shocking revelations, or as you hear suspicious maneuvering in somebody else, feel what you feel, but if you're going to provide effective SoulCare, prayerfully attend to who you are as God's child—who is neither threatened nor bolstered significantly by what you hear.

To help you provide the kind of safety for someone to be freely known, let me introduce one more concept that should bring our lecture to a close. It's the concept that I call *interpersonal pull*. As you pay attention to your own interior world, what do you sense that the other person wants you to feel or to do? Whatever that is, that's the interpersonal pull of the other person on you. They are pulling you in a particular direction. A snippy person might be pulling you to dislike them. They might come in and be arrogant and offensive and irritating and their pull is, "Don't like me, therefore, I can leave this hour unaffected by saying, 'Just like everybody else, he couldn't stand me.'" Because they were able to destroy your compassion for them with their snippiness.

A friendly person might be pulling you to never criticize. So often in marriage counseling, I've heard one person in the couple sitting in front of me being especially kind to me, very, very friendly, and the pull is—understand that inner conflict—"There's nothing that I'm doing that's worthy of criticism because I'm such a friendly person." If I give into that pull, I'm not safe for that person to want to be known.



A person who takes over a conversation might be pulling you to never get too close to them.

Two suggestions: Don't be quick to verbally identify the pull. Don't be quick to saying, "It seems to me that what's happening right now between us is you're pulling me in this direction; you're being so friendly, you're setting me up to never criticize you for anything you're doing wrong." Don't be quick to do that because to do that before a deep level of trust is established may make you seem like someone who evaluates and judges more than enters and cares. Don't verbalize the pull that you're identifying too quickly. You may go through a whole SoulCare interchange and never verbalize it, but be aware of it.

And when you feel the pull, this is my second suggestion. Number one: Don't articulate it too quickly. But my second suggestion is when you feel the pull, look inside of yourself and ask, "In the presence of this person, what seems clean and free and loving as a response? Am I centered in God, am I listening to the Spirit, am I really thinking of this person's well-being, or am I moving in the direction now that they have really determined that I move in? What feels clean versus controlled? What feels free versus pressured? What feels like an expression of my love versus a necessity in response to have her interacting with me?" Remind yourself that you want to respond to the Holy Spirit's pull and never to the other person's.

To the snippy person, you might say—there's a thousand possibilities—you might say, "I feel that there's a fear in you about something. I feel that you're afraid of something," as they are reacting snippily. That might be what you say.

To the overly nice person you might say, "I wonder how deeply enjoyed you feel by someone."

To the one who controls the conversation, you might quietly listen for a long time, not because you're unable to speak, but because you strongly choose to accept them where they are right now, even though they are very, very controlling. That might be what you believe the Spirit is leading you to do. Don't be controlled by their pull. And if you refuse to be controlled by their pull, because you're controlled by the Spirit, you'll be a safe person who will create a freedom in the other that longs for them to be known. And they'll want to go further; they are going to want to be explored. What's required for you to be the kind of person that causes the other to long to be deeply known, richly and fully explored? That's our next presentation.

# Discussion Questions

What feelings arise in you as you read questions like, “How many people feel deeply known? How many have been richly explored? How many know the experience of having their souls touched?”

As you listen to a person’s struggles, you can provide SoulCare by offering:

- Safety
- Excitement
- Purity
- Discernment
- Release

Which of these do you offer now to your friends? Which do you need to strengthen? How do these encourage your friends to share deeply with you?

Describe a person you found safe to talk to. What made this person safe? Why did you want to be “really known” by this person?



A person will feel safe with you if they realize that they can “neither control nor destroy you.” You probably have a definition of what it means to be safe in your mind. How does Dr. Crabb’s definition agree with yours? Differ? (Review this part of Dr. Crabb’s lecture before you answer this question.)

When you give in to the other person’s “interpersonal pull,” how does that make you unsafe to them?

How might you sense “pull?” How might it feel to resist pull? If possible, give an example where you gave in to and/or resisted pull in a recent conversation.

# Lesson 7 Study Guide

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CC203

## *SoulCare Foundations III: Provisions and Practices*

Safety and Excitement: What Makes  
Someone Willing to be Known and Explored

Updated 2015

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Our Daily Bread  
Christian University

# Objectives

In this lesson, Dr. Crabb explores how “*Spirit-centered excitement* creates in you a *sacred curiosity* that awakens the hungry soul in another to want to be explored.”

When you complete this lesson, “Safety and Excitement: What Makes Someone Willing to be Known and Explored,” you should be able to:

- Become the kind of person who creates in others a desire to be explored.
- Review what it means to be safe and not to give in to interpersonal pull.
- Explain important lessons about SoulCare from David’s prayer in Psalm 139.
- Discuss the ways in which Spirit-centered excitement creates a sacred curiosity in you that awakens another person’s desire to be explored.

# Transcript

## **Course Title: SoulCare Foundations III: Provisions and Practices**

### **Lesson Seven: Safety and Excitement: What Makes Someone Willing to be Known and Explored**

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

I spoke recently with a man who was involved in a really tough marriage. As I listened to him over the course of several conversations, at one point I felt that I could see some of what was causing the difficulties, and at least a little bit of what he could do that could make things better. And so, unwisely, I shared it with him as soon as I saw it. And as I shared with him what I thought was wrong, and as I painted the picture of where the difficulties had arisen from, and as I made a few suggestions as to some directions he might go to improve things in his marriage a bit, his response was very positive.

He responded by saying, “You know that’s really helpful. That makes sense to me. That’s something that I know I should do. That’s going to be hard, but yeah, that makes sense to me and I really appreciate your input.”

And as he said it, I just had the intuition (and you’ve been here with people), I just had the intuition that his words, though sincere, were not coming from a very deep place within his soul.

As we chatted the next time, it became clear that he had done nothing of the direction that I had suggested. There was no change whatever in his life and I believe that at least part of the reason, from our human perspective, was that this man had not taken part in the process of being explored. This man had not owned what he was saying. He had not seen what I had revealed to him for himself. It didn’t come out of him; it came, rather, out of me. I believe I short-circuited the work of the Spirit of God.

In this presentation I want to talk to you about what it means to be the kind of person that allows exploration to become real and rich and full so meaningful change can take place.

We talked first about safety, and I suggested that you will be able to provide SoulCare only if you are safe enough for me to want to be known by you. And if you’re going to be a safe person, that’s going to make me feel like, “You know, I really think I want to open up with this guy. I want to open up with this gal.” That’s going to happen to the degree that I know I cannot control you. That’s going to happen to the degree that I know that there’s something controlling you that’s more powerful than me and my strongest efforts to get you to be angry with me, to get you to rebuke me, to get you to like me, to get you to flatter me, to get you to go easy on me, [to the degree] that none of my power controls what you do. When I see you as strong enough to be controlled by another power, by the Holy Spirit, more than controlled by me, then I’m going to be willing to open my soul to you. You see, otherwise, if you’re not that strong, then every time I chat with you, every time I share something, I’m going to be censoring what I’m saying in terms of whether it’s going to have a certain effect on you.

It's really like going to the doctor and knowing that if you make certain complaints known, the doctor might be threatened and so you don't tell the person the whole story. You don't want to be fully known by an incompetent physician. But a physician who's willing to say, "Whatever you tell me, I will take into my information bank, and I will be controlled by good medical knowledge (of which I possess a great deal), and my movement toward you as a physician will be controlled by what I know to be right and best, and it will certainly be in response to what you say, but controlled by something other than you." That's what a person has to feel if they are going to enjoy the process of SoulCare, if they're going to be willing to be known by you. You must first be able to take your marching orders from the Spirit of God and not from the person you're chatting with and secondly, you need to be aware of the person's pull and know when you're being tempted to give into it and how perhaps you can resist that and give them what the Spirit of God is pulling you to give, not what they're pulling you to give. That's the first topic we've talked about.

From the willingness to be known, if SoulCare is to be effective, the person receiving SoulCare must be not only willing but eager to go beyond being known, in the sense of "I have no secrets. Whatever you see, I'll be willing to share with you whatever's going on. You can see everything. But I want to be more than just seen. I want you to have a curiosity about me. I want you to explore me. I want you to get to know me at the very depths of my being. I want you to be incredibly,—in a pure, sacred way—profoundly curious about me."

What does it mean to be in the presence of somebody that makes you willing to be explored? That's the next step, and that's our topic for this presentation. I want you to think for a moment about how few people have ever been explored by another human being. I've been in small groups, you've been in small groups, where people want to get to know each other so you say, "Catch us up on your past week." And the person will share, "Well this past week I went here. I did this. My husband and I had a fight. Our son's got a bad situation going in school right now." And we share a bit of this, but how many times does the sharing feel very incomplete because there's no time. There's no opportunity for anybody else to be curious about who you are for a long enough period of time with a certain kind of energy that makes you want to be explored by them.

I would suggest that it's very, very rare for any human being, in the course of their entire life, to be explored in the way that SoulCare actually requires.

Listen to David's deep longing when he came before God and he earnestly prayed these words, "Search me, O God. Search me and know my heart. Test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me. And lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139: 23-24). Here's a man who is begging to be explored. Search me, know the very depths of me. Understand all there is about me. See if you can find something in me which is getting in the way of my moving toward the vision that you, God, have for me. I want to be known. I want to be explored.

I see at least four things in that particular prayer of David's. The first thing I see is the obvious. David wanted to be thoroughly explored. I could name a number of people that I know well who would say, "I have no interest in that. I prefer the surface life. I prefer the social conversations." And I would suggest, as an article of faith, that every one of us longs to be explored because we bear the image of the Trinity—a community that knows each other profoundly, and as image-bearers, we long to be known intimately. We long to be deeply explored, but we're scared. We're

scared of what's going to happen when you explore me. We're scared of what's going to be revealed, and so we just prefer to keep things simple. David wanted to be thoroughly explored, and I believe that's true of every human being.

The second thing I observe in the prayer is that David was willing to have his ugly side explored. I find myself quite willing to have you explore all my virtues and all of my talents and all of the things that are wonderful about me and that might take two or three minutes, but I'd love for you to take a longer time with it and to stay with the topic.

But when you start saying, "Well, you know, now that I've come to know you, I'm aware of some things about you that are problematic," then I find myself wanting to back away. Not David. God, search me. See if there's something offensive—if there's any offensive thing in me that's getting in the way of my reaching toward the vision for which you've saved me. David was willing to have his ugly side explored.

Thirdly in this passage, what I see is that he knew that he could only be led on the spiritual journey by somebody who had explored him.

We speak a lot of spiritual directors in recent days—soul friends, spiritual directors, SoulCare, all the same broad category—and all that it really boils down to is that if we are going to walk the journey to God, we walk it better together than we do alone. I need you. You need me. But you're not going to have power in my life unless I'm willing to let you explore me. I can only be led on the spiritual journey by somebody who is exploring me. That's the third point that I see in David's prayer.

And the last point was that he had a vision of something so wonderful—"lead me in the way everlasting." He had a vision of something so wonderful that he was willing to face everything painful in order to get there.

I rather think that a lot of our shallow community, a lot of our efforts to keep at a distance from one another, are really rooted in the fact that we have no vision of what could be.

I have two grandchildren. I wish I could show you pictures and talk about them for the next couple of hours. Two beautiful, gorgeous grandchildren. And there's something in me that longs to be a deeply spiritual man so that when my grandkids—now ages four and almost two, as we speak—as they mature into ten-year-old and fifteen-year-old and twenty-five and thirty and fifty and sixty, when I'm long home, that I would love to think that maybe there was something about my life that made an impact on them. So my granddaughter might save herself for marriage. So my grandson might never take drugs because of Pop Pop, because of Grandpa who had a certain kind of power. Could I be that kind of person? Could I glorify God? Could I be like Jesus? Could I be so led by the Spirit that the people that I care about so much—my wife, my sons, my daughter-in-law, my grandkids, my friends—that because of my involvement in their life that they could actually walk a good path partly because of my influence? The way everlasting has incredible joy, incredible power, incredible reality. Do I have a vision of what that could be? And maybe if I do, I would be willing to pay the price of letting you explore me, if I thought it would move me in that direction.

That's what I heard David saying. See if there be any offensive way in me that's getting in the way of my moving toward the path of everlasting life. I want to be all that you want me to be.

Well, this presents a problem as I see it. This little prayer of David's, of wanting to be thoroughly explored and letting his ugly side be known and knowing that he only be led by somebody who had explored him and having a vision of what could be that made him willing to pay any price, any painful price of exploration—this presents a problem. The problem I think maybe is this: If you want to provide SoulCare that leads people along their journey to God, if that's really what you want to do—if you're taking this course because you're really trusting God that something in the way we're thinking together will help you become an effective provider of SoulCare and draw close powerfully to other people, if you're looking to be involved in people in a way that encourages their appetite for God, developing so strong that it's more powerful than any other appetite, if that's the kind of thing that you're really after, then we really have a problem here. And the problem is that people don't want to be explored. They are not in touch with their desire to be explored and you cannot explore anybody without their cooperation.

You've got to become the kind of person who creates in the other a desire to be explored.

Now let me guess. If you're with me in what I've just said, if you're aware that you would very much like to provide effective SoulCare and draw close to people and effect your grandchildren and to effect other people that you interact with, and if you want to be able to explore others, and you know that people tend to resist that and we keep our distance, and if you would really like to explore people but know that you cannot explore people without their full cooperation, then my guess would be, that if you are like me, your response is, "Great, I'm with you in all this. Tell me what to do. I need to know how to explore people, and I need to know what it is that I'm looking for. Tell me the right questions. Tell me what's inside people. Show me how to get there. Give me the ability to move into people's lives with penetrating insight. And if you do all that, if you give me a method and content, then maybe I'll be able to pull this exploring process off a little more effectively."

Well, we do need wisdom. We need some understanding of what we're looking for when we explore people's souls. But the blocks to letting somebody explore us are so much more tied up with who we are than with what we know.

When you're sitting down having a chat with somebody (I hope you become very aware of this), when you're sitting having a chat with somebody, understand that, at every moment, they are reading you. They are assessing their own internal world as they are engaging with you and they are making a decision at every moment. "Do I want to go further? I just put my foot in the water. Do I want to take the next step? Do I want to take the next step? Do I want to actually get in over my head? Do I want to go all the way in being fully explored by this person?" What kind of a person do I need to be? What kind of a person do you need to be that encourages others to want to be explored? That's the question that we're addressing in this particular presentation.

Suppose a man says to you (and this is close to what a man recently said to me), suppose a man says to you, "I get a lot of feedback that I'm just too sure of myself. I get a lot of feedback that I come across rather cocky, a little arrogant, kind of know-it-allish, and my wife even said that she's



afraid of me. That she won't get into a conversation with me because I always win the debate. I'm always the one who knows the answer and I can beat her intellectually and logically and she says that I'm just not very sensitive to where she is and this really confuses me. I don't see myself that way at all. I know I'm good at what I do. I'm a very confident, professional person. And I generally know my own mind, but I really do care about people. And especially my wife. I don't want to be closed, but I can't figure out why people just won't respond to me in the ways that I wish they would. I guess this spiritual fruit of patience and gentleness and maybe humility is lacking in me. Any thoughts?"

Now look. What are you saying? There's a lot to be explored here. Here's a human being sitting in front of you who needs to be explored. What's happening inside of you as he says all this? You're struggling to think vision. You're struggling to think about the presence of the Spirit of God and His availability, and really all that's occurring to you when you're honest about your own interior world, what you're saying to yourself is, "I don't like this guy. How did I get stuck with talking with him? This guy is one arrogant pain in the neck. How am I ever going to break through to get this guy to see that he intimidates everybody and actually seems to enjoy it? Should I tell him that I'm thinking all that? Am I being a phony? Am I being a hypocrite if I don't tell him that? What am I supposed to do? I'm turned off by this guy." And you're the provider of SoulCare? What do you do?

Well, two thoughts. Question one: Are you centered enough in Christ to resist his [the other person's] pull? Now that's the topic of our last presentation. But think again about it in this context. Are you centered enough in Christ to resist his pull? You want to tell him off. You're drawn to tell this guy what you really think of him, and remember that whatever you naturally want to do as you interact with some other person, more than likely, is that person's pull on you. If you feel like telling him off as you naturally sit here and engage with him, the chances are very strong that is not the Spirit impelling you to say something to this guy, it's this guy's pulling on you, so that if, in fact, you do tell him off, then he can dismiss you and all possibility of SoulCare is gone.

Is your desire to tell him off coming from a strong and secure and loving place within you? Or does the way this man is relating impel you, pull you, to want to move in that direction?

Suppose you decide not to say, "Do you have any idea how you come across? Can I tell you right now what's happening in me as you're interacting with me?" Suppose you resist that. It might feel incisive and powerful to speak like that. It might feel like you're being a pretty strong person to be able to say to him, "Let me tell you what's happening in me as we chat." But maybe at that point, if you say that sort of thing, you're really out of touch with how much you long for the life of Christ in you to touch the hidden life of Christ in the other person. And when you become aware that that's what your SoulCare motivation is all about, then you begin responding to the pull of the Spirit, responding to the pull of your deepest soul, and not responding to the pull of this individual. Are you strong enough to not respond in the way that you're being pulled to respond?

And if you answer that question well, then maybe you're ready for question two, the second thought: What am I excited about as I speak with this man? Now, I understand that question is not going to come naturally. The guy's arrogant. He's pushing your buttons. You're wanting to prove that he can't control you, that you're a match for him, that you're strong enough to handle him.

All that's happening in you, but as you resist the pull and yield to the Spirit, then go to the second direction and ask this question, "What am I excited about as I speak with this man?"

Listen to a simple principle. Spirit-created excitement creates in you a sacred curiosity that awakens the hungry soul in another to want to be explored. Now let me say it again. Spirit-created excitement creates in you a sacred curiosity that awakens the hungry soul in another to want to be explored.

You could say to this man—I don't recommend it, but you could say to this man interpretively—"As I sit here with you, I think I can feel what your wife and friends might be feeling. I sense an insecurity in you that's hidden beneath your way of relating. I sense an insecurity in you that's terrified to be really close and you're sabotaging any opportunity for meaningful intimacy and you're covering up all your insecurity with a self-assured style of relating that keeps you one up and blocks any kind of closeness at all." You could say all that and that might be entirely correct. You might be entirely accurate. And it's also possible that if you talk like that to this person, that man might actually be taken aback in a respectful way. He might respond by saying, "No one has ever talked to me like that before." He might respond with a mood of "You know, you're not afraid of me like everybody else is. I've gained a respect for you." And you might think that you've done something really good. Well, maybe you have. But let me throw some cautions into it.

As you move in this way and the man responds with, "You've got a point," my guess is that more likely than not, this man will find a way to resist movement in the direction you suggest. Even as you say, "I think it's your insecurity that you're covering up with your excessive control and your intimidating style, and I wonder if you would move toward your wife in a different way; you are not responding to Ephesians 5. God talks about loving your wife as Christ loved the church. Are you sensitive to her? Are you listening to her? Let me teach you some listening skills. In your insecurity you're ignoring the kind of sensitivity that God commands you. Let me suggest you move in different directions." And as he says, "You've got a point. I agree with you," my prediction is, there will be no change.

Why? Very simple reason—it's what I said as I began this presentation. Because as you present this kind of material to this man, he has not been given the chance by you to cooperate with the process of being explored. And until the awareness of what is inside this man comes from deep within him, until the Spirit of God actually reveals to this man "This is what's going on in you; it's not just that Larry or this other SoulCare provider has figured it out and dumped it on you, and you're forced to say, 'Yeah you've got a point.' But when it's something that comes out of your own depths and you're able to say, 'This is really true and I can see it whether Larry agrees with it or not, really isn't the point. I have been taught this from Someone deep inside of me, the Holy Spirit.'" Until he has meaningfully cooperated with the process of being explored, he'll not own what's revealed. It will have no life-changing impact on his life. It might look like it. He might weep tears of apparent repentance. He may tell you how insightful you are. He may express admiration for how quickly you saw through him. He may affirm your toughness and say how you aren't afraid of him like most people. But whatever insight you give him will not be life-changing until he cooperates with the process of being explored. It did not come from the Spirit of God speaking directly and deeply from his soul.

To illustrate the process very briefly, think back for a moment to Nathan, when Nathan confronted David. You recall David had committed adultery and murder and he was covering up his sin. It was not during that time, I presume, that David said, “Search me, O God, and know my heart and see if there be some offensive way.” At that time he was not praying that prayer, I assume. He was covering up his sin and trying to get on with his life, hoping that his sin would not be found out and that life would go on very smoothly for him.

What did Nathan do? Did Nathan come to David and say, “Look, I know what’s happened. You’ve committed adultery and a murder, and I want to tell you it’s awful, and I want to tell you the biblical way of handling your miserable failure. You need to confess your sin. You need to repent. You need to live very differently. You need to own where you’ve been wrong. David let me tell you what you ought to do.”

Is that what Nathan did? And the answer, if you know the story is, “Of course not.”

God’s Spirit knew that there was a hidden part of David’s heart with which he was not in touch. There was a hidden part in David’s heart that actually wanted God. And I would suggest—this might be stretching it a bit, but you ponder the text and see if you might agree—I would suggest as Nathan came to David, inspired by the Spirit of God, not giving into David’s pull as the King (to stay away and don’t mess with the king), not giving into the desire to confront him and tell him exactly what’s wrong. But Nathan came to David and basically felt the excitement of awe. “God, You’re at work in this, Your child’s life. You’re at work. That awes me.” As he felt the excitement of awe, and as he felt the excitement of possibility—a man who has committed this level of sin could actually be restored. Folks, never be discouraged by the level of sin that you confront, that you meet when you’re talking with people. If there’s an excitement over the fact that the Spirit does not give up on His children, and the Spirit has the power to take this person, no matter how low they’ve sunk, no matter how bad the marriage is, no matter how depressed the individual might be, the Spirit has the power to move in their life, and if there’s an excitement of both awe and possibility that is ruling within your soul, then “Your spirit, God, maybe could actually work in David’s heart to bring him to brokenness, repentance, abandonment, confession, confidence, and release. It could happen, God, in David’s heart, and I come to him with a mood of excitement because of You, awe of what You’re doing and awe in the possibility of what could happen. More than anything else, God, I long to follow Your spirit.” Was that Nathan’s attitude?

So he told David a parable—you know the story [2 Samuel 12]—an indirect approach to creating space for God’s Spirit to work. Am I suggesting that in every SoulCare interaction we make up parables? Maybe. Maybe not. That really isn’t the point. The point isn’t “the method.” The point is that when you’re filled with spiritual excitement, when there’s the excitement of awe over the presence of God in another, and when there’s the excitement of possibility over what God is up to, then I would suggest—and this is a bit of a radical principle—I would suggest that whatever you do is going to be just great. If you’re filled with excitement, then you will have a sacred curiosity, not a morbid curiosity, not a voyeuristic curiosity, but a sacred curiosity. You’re entering into holy ground and you long to know what’s happening in this person’s life. And as you move into this person’s life with a sacred curiosity, there’s going to be something in them that says, “I like being explored. I want to take part in the process.” What does it mean to be the kind of person who stirs in the other a desire to be explored?

# Discussion Questions

Psalm 139:23-24 reveals King David's desire to be explored deeply. What did you learn from the four observations this course makes about this passage?

Why are we often unwilling to be deeply explored? Why was David willing?

How do you feel about this statement: "... if we are going to walk the journey to God, we walk it better together than we do alone"?

Dr. Crabb states, "I rather think that a lot of our shallow community, a lot of our efforts to keep at a distance from one another, are really rooted in the fact that we have no vision of what could be." What compelling vision would give us the desire to be deeply explored?

How does this sentence strike you? “...whatever you naturally want to do as you interact with some other person, more than likely, is that person’s pull on you.”

Think of some examples where you felt this “pull” recently and how you knew you shouldn’t give in. Describe how being centered in Christ might help you not give in to another’s pull.

Think of a friend whose problems annoy you. Now, write down some things that can excite you about your friend’s spiritual journey.

“Whatever insight you give [another person] will not be life-changing until he cooperates with the process of being explored.” Why is this true?

# Lesson 8 Study Guide

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**CC203**

## ***SoulCare Foundations III: Provisions and Practices***

The Purity of Self-Awareness:  
Encouraging Trust in Another

Updated 2015

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**Our Daily Bread  
Christian University**

# Objectives

In this lesson, Dr. Crabb explores why we have, at times, a profane curiosity corrupted by an “arrogant spirit of superiority and condemnation.” He then challenges us to develop a “purity of gentleness” that allows us to speak difficult things into our friends’ lives.

When you complete this lesson, “The Purity of Self-Awareness: Encouraging Trust in Another,” you should be able to:

- Find a way to say difficult things, to share the wrong, the bad, and the ugly in a SoulCare conversation.
- Recognize when you, at times, have a profane curiosity corrupted by a spirit of superiority and condemnation.
- Develop a purity of gentleness that allows you to speak difficult things into your friends’ lives.



# Transcript

## Course Title: SoulCare Foundations III: Provisions and Practices

### Lesson Eight: The Purity of Self-Awareness: Encouraging Trust in Another

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

Let me tell you about two seemingly unremarkable conversations in which I personally experienced profound SoulCare. The first one occurred late at night with an older man who has been a real mentor to me—a very spiritual, godly man who, whenever I talk with him, he rarely makes eye contact with me. At first, when I would chat with him and he would look away, I wondered if he were aware of me, if he was listening to me at all, and I'd be sharing some difficult things. One particular time that I'm thinking of, late at night, I was sharing some struggles in my own life, and he was not looking at me, and I was wondering, "Are you listening? What are you aware of?"

And then I began to realize that this man was aware of something far bigger than me. He was aware of an excitement about what the Spirit was doing. He was aware of the larger story into which I could fit. He was aware of passions within him that could actually move into me on behalf of the Spirit, for the sake of God. He was aware of things far more than just my little life.

After sharing with him some difficult things—he listened for perhaps an hour with very little conversation—he offered maybe a few reframing kinds of questions, and after I wore out from sharing all these things that were hard in my life at the time, I got quiet and he sat back, and I remember he reminded me of Sherlock Holmes sitting back and closing his eyes and smoking his pipe as if to think very hard. And then finally he looked toward me, maybe for the first time in the whole hour's conversation. And he said words that, as I share them with you, may seem powerless as you hear them, but to me they ignited something in my soul. What he simply said was, his first words essentially in the entire hour were, "Larry, remember, the Lord always leads gently." Something in my soul just quieted down. Something inside of me rested. Our conversation was over. When he said that, he stood up and said, "Well, it's late."

And I went to my bedroom and I literally collapsed on the floor and wept for probably half an hour and said, "Lord, I will pay any price to know You the way that man knows You." Because his words were perfectly suited to me at that point. That's one example of SoulCare that I received.

The second example, a conversation that took place over a three-hour breakfast, again with an older gentleman for whom I have profound respect—a man that when I'm in his presence I feel a strange urge to be quiet. I don't feel like talking much for whatever reason when I'm with this man. It isn't a reluctance; it isn't a refusal to be known or explored or discovered or touched, but it's more a sense of awe, a sense of reverence in the presence of this man. What makes that happen with me?

In the course of a conversation that lasted literally three hours, he was inviting me to join a ministry that he was a part of, and he was sharing some stories about other team members. And as he mentioned one particular man who was on the same team that he was inviting me to join, he began speaking very critically of this man. He began letting me know how this man was failing in a variety of ways and how he really was a rather disruptive influence in this community, and as I was listening to this godly, older, wiser man talk negatively about a brother that I did not know and had not met, I noticed something, and it struck me with a gale force. As I was listening to a stinging criticism of a man that I had not met, the thought occurred to me, if the criticized man were here listening to this gentleman talk about him, this gentleman would not change a word he was saying; he wasn't talking behind his back. And the man who was being criticized—it dawned on me with just a strange sense of reality—he would have felt profoundly respected, loved and honored in the middle of having a lot of his junk exposed.

And I found myself thinking, “How do you pull that off? How would a SoulCare conversation...can I talk to you about things that are bad in your life, if I see them, about things that are wrong, about things I really don't respect, about things that don't draw me to you, about things that I think should really change? How can I talk with you about those kinds of things without you feeling rejected? With you feeling actually drawn more to me in the middle of my exposing your flesh dynamics?

First two conversations—keep them in mind as I talk with you a little bit about the fact that when we're involved in meaningful SoulCare, it's inevitable that tough stuff is going to get discussed. It's inevitable that sometimes there will be hard words that need to be said. Flesh dynamics will be looked at and, understand this, flesh dynamics are always ugly. Maybe they are subtle, maybe it's the subtle sin of self-protection, maybe it's obvious sins like adultery, but when we talk honestly about a person's life, when we enter a person's life for the purpose of SoulCare, inevitably at some point difficult things will come up. How are we going to talk to the person with just the right words?

“Larry, remember, the Lord leads gently.”

How are we going to talk to the person with the Spirit so that even when we're discussing ugly things, they don't feel put off and demeaned and dishonored but somehow are drawn? How do we do that?

When Nathan said to David, “Thou art the man,” he was rather obviously exposing flesh dynamics. Here was a man who had committed adultery and murder, and Nathan said to him after the parable that got David stirred up against this person who had committed this heinous evil, Nathan then said, “You're the one I'm talking about.” Now, here's my question. What was his tone of voice? What did David hear as Nathan said, “Thou art the man”? What was the look in his eyes? Was there a look in Nathan's eyes of just disdain and disgust and a fury and, “How can you do something like this? You're a disgusting human being. Get out of my sight”? Was that the mood with which you envision Nathan speaking to David?

Or was he speaking...can we imagine a little bit here? Was Nathan maybe speaking to David with a holy excitement? No mood of tolerating sin. No mood of “Well, your sin isn't that bad, but maybe

you ought to think about it.” Not that at all. But was he speaking with the holy excitement, but an excitement that said, “Yeah, you have fallen so far short of God’s unbelievably high standards, but what I want to say to you, David—and my tone as I say it to you, is ‘I’m excited over what the Spirit can do in your life’—He has the power to restore you”?

Was there a mood of excitement—an excitement both of awe that the Spirit is present and possibility of what David could do in response to the rebuke?

When Saul heard Jesus say to him on the Damascus road, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?” what was His tone of voice? Was it a distancing anger? Did Paul hear the message in those few words, “How dare you treat me this way? Get out of my sight”? Was that the mood of Jesus that you envision when Paul was hearing these words on the Damascus road?

Or do you envision what I envision, that when Jesus spoke those words to Paul, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” Do you envision that what was happening there was an unyieldingly firm spirit? Jesus was not compromising. There was no mood of, again, “Well, you’re doing a few things that aren’t so good, but let’s chat about it.” No, “What your doing is despicable. What you’re doing is as wrong as it can be and I am unyieldingly firm in My commitment to holiness. I am the Holy God”—Jesus speaking. But can you not envision a deeply tender voice that you cannot contrive, that is not a technique, that has to come out of the spirit of love and grace that comes in the deepest recesses of our Lord’s heart? What I hear Jesus saying to Saul was something like this, “Saul, you are very wrong. But I am here to empower you to become the man that, if you knew it, you’ve always longed to be. Saul, I mean you good. I’m not out to get you. I’m out to redeem you. My heart is infinitely tender toward you, even though what you’re doing is despicably wrong and offensive.”

I’ve often wished that I could have seen the eyes of Jesus when He looked at Peter after Peter had betrayed Him. It must have been a look of infinite tenderness that melted Peter into tears that drew him to Jesus, that did not distance him from the One who looked at him after his terrible betrayal.

When SoulCare requires—and it often will—that we speak of difficult things, that we talk with the person we’re sharing with about their failure, about their fear, we talk with them about their pride as well as their pain. When we engage with them about their lust as well as their loneliness, we must speak—I want to suggest in this presentation—with the purity of the Spirit’s gentleness. We’ve talked about other aspects of how we must relate to people: There must be a safety. There must be an excitement, and now I want to talk with you about purity.

What is the purity with which I can speak with you? What is the purity with which you can speak with me about things in my soul that are ugly, that are bad, that are wrong, that when I hear them I have an inclination to be defensive, to minimize it, to hate myself, to give up? How can you speak with me about things like that in my life with a purity that actually draws me into a deeper fellowship with God as opposed to causes me to retreat? That’s the question for today in our particular presentation.

If we begin to explore another person, if we are safe people who cannot be controlled by the other, and the other person realizes that our center is in Jesus and not in them, and we take our marching orders from the Spirit and not from the person, then that person is going to feel some safety. They are going to feel a freedom to want to be known, and if they then discern within us that our mood toward them is one of excitement, the excitement that the God of the universe has actually come down to indwell this person and indwell me, and the two of us as Spirit-filled people are actually in a conversation, and if I'm living in the excitement of standing on holy ground and also in the excitement of what could happen because of our conversation, then maybe the other person is going to feel inclined to go beyond simply being, "Yeah I'm willing to be known but, you know, I'd like you to explore me. I'd like you to hear the story of what I dreamt about last night. I'd like you to hear the story of, yeah, my wife and I had a terrible fight the other day. I'd like you to hear the story of, you know, I really am failing sexually. There's a pornography problem I haven't discussed with anybody. Maybe I'm willing to be explored about all the things that I normally don't want anybody to know about because of your excitement."

That exploration, however, as we get into it, in everybody's life, if they are honest, will stir discomfort, and it will stir a sense of fear in the one being explored. What are you going to find? What will the x-rays show? You all know what it's like to be nervous about x-ray results from your physician. What's he going to see? What's he going to tell me? Is he going to smile? Is he going to frown? Is he going to shake his head and say, "I'm not sure what I can do about this"? I'm a little scared about being explored. I heard one person say recently, "Every time I faced my childhood hurts, every time I've talked about the fact that I'm so angry over the way my father treated me and now I feel the same thing from my husband, and I'm just so angry about that. Every time I get explored and get open about this kind of a thing, I don't see that it goes anywhere. I leave the conversation just feeling worse. And my reaction is, 'Why bother with all that?' Just dump all that junk somewhere and just live the superficial life and have a good time and go back to social conversations where the purpose is to have a good time, and forget the notion of SoulCare conversations, which do get kind of messy, which do get rather difficult and can become disruptive and painful at times."

Must I really face what's ugly? Must I face all of me? Must I face the stuff that's bad within me in order to get to the stuff that's good by the grace of God? In order to get to the reality of the Spirit of Christ within me, the new creation that's there, in order to get to that, must I dig through all the dirt and the mud? I'm not sure if I want to do that.

When I first began to teach counseling, now about twenty-five years ago, I became—in the early stages of my both counseling and teaching career—I became very aware of what was wrong with people. I became very aware of the subtleties of sin. I became very aware that when a young girl was sexually abused that more was happening than just pain being inflicted. There was something in that little girl's soul that was looking at God with her fist clenched in His face and saying, "How dare You let this happen to me? I will not trust You. I'll handle things without You. Is that clear?" And I became very aware of these subtle, very deep sins of what I call self-protection. And I became almost obsessed with exposing all of that kind of thing. And I believe in the course of conversing with now, at my age, maybe thousands of people, and seeing some of their flesh dynamics, and seeing some of their failures, and sometimes feeling a bit of a proud eagerness to let them see it, "Can I show you where you're wrong? Do you see what you just did there? Can you

understand how you're handling this? Can you see how, because of what happened when you were ten years old, there are certain patterns that are developing and they are happening right now between you and me? Can I show you all of that?" As I began to expose flesh dynamics earlier in my career, there was very little of the purity that I'm speaking of now. God, by His unbelievable grace, I still think was able to use some of my conversations to be of help to people, but I think a fair number of people felt either beaten down or, strangely enough, proudly insightful. "Now I can wear the glasses too. Now I can see these subtle sins and now I can become a judge of others and I can be in a superior position." There was a certain form of gnosticism involved in the smugness that developed from all this.

Part of the fault, as I've already indicated, was mine. My curiosity that led others to let me explore them was, I believe in hindsight, corrupted by a certain arrogant spirit of superiority and condescension. There wasn't a sacred curiosity. It was a profane curiosity. My mood was, in fact, Gnostic. "I can see what you can't. I can see wickedness in you that you are denying and I will use my discerning questions and my aggressive personality and my piercing confrontive abilities to get you to see it."

I want to warn you against that. Nothing kills SoulCare more quickly than the spirit of superiority. "I know what you don't, but in my kindness I'll condescend to let you join my inner circle of special knowledge."

C.S. Lewis once warned university graduates of the insidious danger of feeling oneself to be in the inner ring. Well, I'm suggesting what purity isn't. I'm suggesting this third element, this purity of gentleness, this purity of the Spirit's gentleness which creates in the other a deeper willingness to be explored—I'm suggesting that this purity that I want to see more and more in my life and I encourage you to consider in yours, is easily missed.

What does it mean to develop the kind of purity that I'm speaking of? What does it mean to develop the kind of purity that, when it energizes my look into your flesh dynamics, that you actually experience, not a sense of being beaten down or a sense of superiority yourself, like I shared, but rather, it inspires a sense of trust that looks at me and says, "You know, I'd like you to explore more. Yeah, it's painful, but there's something exciting about this. It's painful, but there's something wonderful, something enticing, something drawing about the exploring process"?

Someone is putting one foot in the water to see if they want to swim. They've smelled the aroma of grace. You're having a good SoulCare conversation. They are making known to you their struggles with their spouse, their struggles with their kids, their struggles with depression, their joy in the Lord, their wilderness experience, how God has met them in a certain way, but now He's disappeared again. They're making known whatever their journeying reality is and you're doing all the things that we've talked about so far. You've searched your own heart to see what your internal realities might be. You envision what the Spirit could do in the person's life. You're sensitive to the person's pull, but you quiet yourself in the presence of God so that you remain a strong person, controlled not by the person's pull but by the Spirit. You become safe. You've fixed your eyes on the unseen world of the Spirit's presence and movement, and you find a rush of excitement developing in you as you engage in SoulCare conversation. You reframe the conversation into the story of their soul and your excitement mounts as you get some idea of the flesh dynamics that are



going on. You get some idea, “You know, this person is really mad and I think I understand some of where their anger comes from. You know, I think I’m seeing how the flesh is really at work here.” Now that you see that, what do you do? What does it mean to expose flesh dynamics with purity? What does it mean to talk about a brother who’s not sitting at the breakfast table and to speak very negatively about him in a way that, had he been there, he would have felt loved? How do you do that?

May I suggest that before you say anything by way of rebuke, before you offer even a hint of “here’s what I see that’s wrong,” before a word comes out of your mouth, before your eyes begin to squint with a mood of “I think I’m seeing something wrong here,” before any of that happens, may I urge you with all the passion that I have within me, before you do anything like that, reflect on what Paul said in Romans 2:1. Listen to what he said: “At whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things” [NIV].

What does that mean? Paul is talking to religious people who were judging others for sexual sin and for idolatry. Suppose you are talking to a man who is involved in a pornographic addiction, and suppose that’s not one of your struggles. You’re not involved in pornography, but this guy lets you know that he’s into pornography every night for a couple hours on the Internet, and as you hear that journeying reality, and you look beneath the surface, and you see all the junk that’s beneath his sexual addiction, and you’re beginning to want to share something of what’s happening within him, that’s perhaps beneath the sexual addiction, how do you judge yourself? How do you say, “Well, whatever I see in him, it’s actually true of me too”? Because you’re saying to yourself, “Honestly, I’m not really involved in pornography. I don’t really have that particular struggle.” You don’t commit the same sins. What did Paul mean?

Well, what Paul didn’t mean, quite obviously, I think, is that every man is a sexual addict and that every woman is a bulimic. That isn’t the case. He did mean, however, that every one of us, every one of us, whether we have never been involved in sexual addiction or whether we’re into it every day, that every one of us engages in activity that’s designed to nourish our souls without God. That’s what that man is doing. That’s what I do, maybe in a different way. Every one of us engages in some kind of activity that’s designed to nourish our souls without God, and every one of us is prone to believing—and this is the root of it all—every one of us is prone to believing that there is a pleasure for our souls available in a source other than God. I believe that—as a natural person without the Spirit (so do you), that lies behind your sexual addiction, that lies behind my unique set of struggles. So before I judge you, before I start talking about your flesh dynamics, can I develop the purity of a humble spirit that says, “I’m not speaking from ‘above’”? The old cliché is true, the ground really is level at the foot of the cross, and I never must be in a position of superiority, even though I don’t have the exact same struggle that you have, and I may have been a Christian for more years, and may have moved a little further in my journey—but that’s only by the grace of God.

To prepare yourself for the ministry of SoulCare and to think about how you and I can both develop the purity of a humble, gentle spirit that exposes sin in others without an arrogance and a superiority, to move toward that kind of purity, think with me for just a moment about how often you’re involved in a conversation like this. Think with me how often you’re involved in a conversation, the details might be different, but a conversation like this where somebody who is

not present is being criticized. You've heard this before, haven't you? "Man that guy is so cheap. Whenever we're all out to dinner, he won't look at the bill and then divide it by the number of people. He wants to itemize the amount. He doesn't want to say, 'Well, the bill is sixty bucks. There's four of us, so we each pay—whatever that is—fifteen dollars.' He wants to say, 'Wait a minute. I didn't have dessert. And I didn't have the appetizer. So I think my portion should be eleven dollars as opposed to fifteen.' Man, that guy is so cheap."

And somebody else says, "Yeah, it's not like he's broke. Whether it's fifteen dollars or twenty or ten—my gosh, he makes a hundred grand a year. The least he could do was just flip out a twenty dollar bill and not worry about it and say, 'Here, take the tip out of that.' He's just not like that. Is he?"

And everybody's agreeing with that and somebody else says, "I find that so irritating. That just drives me nuts. I throw up my hands with this and 'cause my attitude is...I just toss out the twenty dollar bill, and I can't afford it as well as he can. I make a more generous tip."

You've all been a part of that conversation, haven't you? Details are different. May I suggest to you very simply that the spirit energizing that conversation that I've been a part of and you have too, disqualifies me from offering SoulCare? The spirit energizing that conversation, if it's the same spirit that still lurks within me as I converse with you—SoulCare will not be accomplished. The purity of a humble spirit is not present. But just suppose that you, because you have a vision for providing SoulCare, that you, because you long to be a part of the body of Christ in a way that can relate to other people and be an instrument of the Spirit in moving people toward the vision for which God saved them, because that passion is within your soul, so God receives the pleasure of people trusting Him more and more.

Suppose all that is on your mind, and you're in the middle of this conversation about this guy that just won't put up a twenty dollar bill and is itemizing his accounts too scrupulously—suppose you were saying, "You know, I don't do what that man does. I don't commit that particular social sin, if you will," but suppose you said, "Yeah, that guy really is cheap." (And it's true. That is cheap.) And suppose you would say honestly, "It drives me nuts. Bugs me too, just like it bugs you." Sure, that's honest, but suppose you added, "You know, even though I'm not like that, even though I do flip out my twenty dollar bill and don't worry about it, yet I'm sort of aware that certain business deals I make really sure that no one takes advantage of me. I see to it that I don't come out on the short end of the stick on the business deals, and you know, even more, I could get so ticked at my wife when I've been complimentary to her and she responds with a critical spirit. I'm not sure if I'm a whole lot different from that guy." Suppose you were to say that. My guess is you wouldn't be invited to many more conversations like that. But it might be that one of those people who is sitting there being critical—if you're not saying this with a superior spirit of "notice how spiritual I am," if there's a humbleness, a humility about your way, maybe one of those critical people will seek you out for a conversation of SoulCare.

Listen to what Jesus said as we wrap up this presentation. Jesus said in Matthew 7:1-5, "Do not judge, or you too will be judged . . . Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? . . . You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly," [NIV] and you'll have the wisdom to deal with somebody else's flesh dynamics if you judge yourself first.



Who would you trust with your soul? The person who criticized his cheap friend with no thought of his own failings? Or the person who recognized his friend's flaw honestly, but spoke with a purity of gentle humility because he was more aware of his own flaw. Purity creates trust, which encourages the process of exploration. And humility comes from seeing your own flaws, and when I see my flaws, the Spirit gives me wisdom to more clearly see yours in a gentle way that makes you want to be explored.

How then do we move from the purity of gentleness into a discernment that understands what's really going on and needs to be dealt with? That's our next topic.

# Discussion Questions

Think of a way another person has hurt you profoundly. Now, imagine a way that you can honestly say about that person's action or attitude: "It's true of me, too!" Share your thoughts about this.

Share a time when you felt "respected, loved, and honored in the middle of having [your] junk exposed." How did your friend share negative observations about you in a way that you didn't feel attacked or abused?

Someone says, "Every time I get explored and get open about this kind of thing, I leave the conversation feeling worse." What might another person have done or said to cause this type of reaction?

Give examples of occasions where you have exhibited "profane curiosity" about your friends. What made your curiosity profane?

Define, in your own words, a "purity of gentleness."

# Lesson 9 Study Guide

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## CC203

### *SoulCare Foundations III: Provisions and Practices*

Discernment: Building Confidence in the  
Process of Discovery

Updated 2015

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Our Daily Bread  
Christian University

# Objectives

In this lesson, Dr. Crabb introduces the “appetite” model of SoulCare, and explains why the “interpretive” and “accountability” models do not adequately address the core disease of our souls. Also in this lesson, Dr. Crabb explains the seven maxims for wise and *discerning* SoulCare.

When you complete this lesson, “Discernment: Building Confidence in the Process of Discovery,” you should be able to:

- Describe the type of *discernment* that enables SoulCare to occur.
- Define the core disease of the human soul.
- Understand why the “interpretive” and “accountability” models do not adequately address the core disease of our souls.
- Explain the “appetite” model of SoulCare.
- Know the seven maxims for wise and discerning SoulCare.

# Transcript

## Course Title: SoulCare Foundations III: Provisions and Practices

### Lesson Nine: Discernment: Building Confidence in the Process of Discovery

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

The real work of SoulCare is not done through insightful interpretation nor firm confrontation. I hope that relieves you a little bit. When we think about SoulCare, we so often think about the higher level of SoulCare that our culture thinks of as professional therapy, where people are able to make these brilliant connections and come up with insightful interpretations that change people's lives, or we think about the moral idea that if we can just firmly and aggressively and strongly enough confront people that somehow they'll change.

It's my position—this will come as no surprise to you after all that you've heard me say—but it's my position that the real work of SoulCare does not centrally consist in either insightful interpretation (although there is a place for that), nor firm confrontation (though there is a place for that). But neither is central. Both may be involved, but the real work of SoulCare is accomplished by...(and can you now finish the sentence?).

The real work of SoulCare, I suggest, is accomplished by a certain kind of relating in which the deepest appetite of the soul for God is stirred. The core disease in our soul (if we're talking about soul cure or SoulCare, then we have to understand that there is a disease in the soul that we're agents of actually doing something about), and the core disease of the human soul is that we treasure someone or something more than God. We believe that there is better food for our souls in what God could *provide* than in relationship with Him directly. We don't want the *blessor*, we want the *blessings* and that's the core disease in the soul. "God be useful. I don't want to worship you. I want to say thanks once you've given me the blessing." That's the core disease in the human soul.

And the gospel has not only forgiven us for this wretched disease (and I hope we realize how wretched that is, to look at God and say, "Frankly, You're not much. Just use Your power so I can have all these blessings," as opposed to saying, "You're unbelievable. You're the exact kind of person that my soul lusts to enjoy, and You're making Yourself available to me to enjoy You. That's unbelievable," and the fact that we don't do that is wretched sin), and the gospel not only forgives us for this disease of a bad appetite, if you will, but it has also planted within us a good appetite, a holy appetite. The Bible calls it our new heart and it's part of this new nature or new creation that we are in Christ and it's the belief in that, the belief that there is a new appetite in the soul of every believer that makes SoulCare such an exciting enterprise.

If we understand the New Covenant (and again I refer you to Dwight Edwards' two excellent books dealing with New Covenant realities), if we understand the New Covenant, then we can realize that SoulCare conversations at their best will never follow an interpretive model, which says, "Let me see if I can figure out what's wrong with you and once you understand what's wrong, you'll be

all better. Let me see if some profound insight will change your life.” If you realize the truth of the New Covenant, that there is an appetite waiting to be released, then your focus will not be on an interpretive model, nor will your focus be on an accountability model. When you grasp the reality of the deep appetite planted in the spirit of the human soul, that’s just awaiting release, then you realize that accountability is not the key to change, and that really undermines the way a lot of Christian people think. It changes the way a lot of us think as parents, as husbands, as wives, as counselors, as pastors, as Sunday school teachers—we want to hold people accountable to change. Is there a place for accountability? Of course. Is it the center? No. It’s not the center.

Rather than becoming moral technicians to determine what a person should do and trying to figure out how to arrange the reinforcers and the punishers to get them to do that, there’s a whole different approach that New Covenant theology suggests for SoulCare conversations—not the interpretive model, not the accountability model, but a model that I want to call the appetite model. It’s a model where we take seriously that the New Covenant is true. That there is an appetite within me that you have the power—if you relate to me in the power of the Spirit and relate to me with the passion and wisdom of the Spirit—that you have the opportunity to stimulate within me. That’s the appetite model of SoulCare.

And in the appetite approach, the way we relate, the way I relate to you, the way you relate to me, releases passions of grace out of my soul into you that stirs up the work the Spirit is already doing. And the focus of my attention, in an appetite model as I SoulCare with you, the focus of my attention in an appetite model is always on what the Spirit is doing. It’s not on what’s wrong with you. Do I pay attention to flesh dynamics? Of course. Do I sometimes have to talk about them, hopefully with the purity of humble gentleness? Yes, absolutely. Is that the center of my focus that I can help you see where you’re wrong? No, that’s never the center of my focus in an appetite model.

The center of my focus is always what the Spirit is doing, what He wants to do, and the fact that there’s something in you that wants to cooperate. And when I begin with whatever wisdom God gives me out of a pure spirit of humility to help you see, “You know, you’re living out of some flesh dynamics here,” and maybe I’ll say it firmly and loudly at times, but the effect is going to be to create that holy tension we’ve spoken of. “You know, this is how I’m living. I’m not preferring God at all. I’m preferring broken cisterns to satisfy my soul.” That’s just not right and that’s in dissonance with something that I can be aware of within me, a passion, an urge, a force, an inclination, put there by the Holy Spirit in the New Covenant. That’s at dissonance with an appetite within me that really wants to go toward God for all of my satisfaction as opposed to demanding my husband treat me a certain way, and my kids ought to not disappoint me so much, and, well, that hurts, but there’s an appetite for something greater. So when you can feel the tension between the two of those you’re ready for the Spirit to do His deepest work.

I want to illustrate, in the course of this presentation, what it means to be discerning—what it means to discern the work of the Spirit in the regenerate human soul, and to put the work of the Spirit and the appetites of the new nature next to the flesh dynamics in the way that creates the holy tension that releases the deepest desire of the heart to move toward God. With all that in our mind, thinking about how we can be discerning people that actually discover the work of the Spirit in the soul, with that in our mind, let me just give you a simple little case study to set the stage for my comments in this presentation.

A woman is distressed over her husband's rough way of handling her kids. As she tells her story—you're a woman friend and you've met each other; you know each other fairly well; she's been attracted to you as a safe person; the fragrance of grace seems to come out of your soul to enough of a degree that this woman wants to chat with you—and you're having lunch together, and a SoulCare conversation begins. She says to you, "Can I tell you some things that are just bugging me at home? My husband is so rough with our kids and it just drives me nuts."

And as she tells her story, and as you reframe her specific journeying reality into a more fully understood reality, and you hear how she relates to her husband generally, and to her kids, and how her relationships generally work, you begin to get the idea in your head, "You know, this woman feels to be like...what's that word I read in some psychology book in my freshman class? She feels like she's passive-aggressive. I think that's the phrase. It feels like she really is trying to control something, but she's doing it very sweetly and very passively. But there's an energy within her that's still trying to make things happen according to her understanding of what ought to be. I think this woman sitting in front of me is very angry." You're into flesh dynamics now.

"She feels very angry to me and I think she yearns to control. She's a demanding woman, but she hides it behind very supportive smiles, very spiritual kinds of talk, very pleasant suggestions to her husband, which he predictively ignores and resents." And as you're listening to her talk, you're thinking, "Boy this is really kind of ugly. I don't think she's handling her husband very well at all. I'm not quite sure what submission means in the Bible, but I don't think it's this," and you're starting to think of a vision. Suppose the Spirit of God got hold of her. What would a godly woman, what would Jesus Christ incarnate in a feminine form, how would a godly person handle a husband who mistreats the kids? What would godliness look like?

And, by the way, it's right there a lot of us stumble, because we don't know. We don't have a good picture of that. Ponder that, think about that, wrestle with that, study your Bibles about that, look at your own life in terms of that, and get a vision of what would a godly person do in the middle of this situation with a husband who was handling kids, which, if the woman's report can be trusted, maybe really isn't very good at all? Then maybe she has some very valid criticism as to how her husband is mishandling her kids.

As you're thinking about vision and how she's handling things, passive-aggressive, and you reframe her story even more into her past story, you hear more about her relationships, and you discover that her father, as you hear more of her story, was a very weak and compliant man. You hear that her mother was a bit of a controlling woman as well, and this woman in front of you, as a girl, never felt safe with her dad. Her dad was never a strong man and she noticed how her mother could always maneuver her dad to do certain things, and you realize this woman's a carbon copy of her passive-aggressive mother. My gosh, she learned how to behave, how to handle life, from a mother whose example really wasn't so good. Her fleshly strategies have been shaped by her background and you're beginning to understand these flesh dynamics.

Now, what do you discern at that point, as you're willing to move toward the exposure of these flesh dynamics with a spirit of purity, based on humility, that results in gentleness, not condescension, not arrogance, as you realize that although you don't commit the same sin, the same kind of energy is in you, and you're prepared now to deal with these flesh dynamics in the



spirit of purity, but you want to be discerning about the very real truth that beneath all these flesh dynamics, the Spirit has His own set of dynamics.

There are Spirit dynamics, which, if released, could move her toward the vision of what God calls her to be. These flesh dynamics, so long as they're in place, they're going to support her journeying reality of being a passive-aggressive woman in the presence of her difficult husband. How do you deal with that? How do you discern the deep work of the Spirit that's present that could be released? That requires wisdom. That requires discernment.

As I was thinking about the word *wisdom* and thinking about, "What's it mean to be wise as a provider of SoulCare?" my mind went to one of the biblical books of wisdom, the book of Proverbs. Then I began looking through how the inspired writers of Proverbs talked about wisdom. I noticed in chapter 9 that the writer presents two voices that are speaking to the people who are simple—people who don't know quite how to handle things and the people who lack judgment, who, when they handle things, tend to handle it not in the best ways, and here are people who are confused by life and they hear two voices. Each voice says, "You who are simple and lack judgment, come into my home and I will show you the way."

Two competing voices. The Bible calls one voice Lady Wisdom. The Bible calls the other voice Lady Folly. And they give very, very different appeals. Very different ideas or understandings of how to live life. Lady Wisdom invites people to eat food that she has prepared. Lady Wisdom invites people to eat food that she has prepared and that she freely offers to the hungry soul. Lady Folly suggests that people should find whatever they want, even though it's not been provided for them, and steal it. She says stolen food tastes better, and then she says when you eat the food in secret it will even be more delicious. Lady Folly says one thing; Lady Wisdom says something quite different.

Lady Wisdom says that no one will understand her message until first they make God the first thing in their lives. Lady Wisdom says the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Lady Folly never mentions God at all.

It's also curious that the writer of the Proverbs indicates that Lady Folly speaks in a loud voice. Lady Wisdom is not said to speak in a loud voice, and that suggests to me that unless your SoulCare conversation is still, contemplative, and quiet in the presence of God, wisdom will not be heard, because wisdom whispers. If your life is noisy, if your conversations are noisy, you will hear the voice of Lady Folly and you'll miss the voice of Lady Wisdom.

As I pondered that passage in chapter 9 of the book of Proverbs, I drew three conclusions. The three conclusions can be put, very simply, these ways.

Number one: In wise SoulCare, if you are a discerning provider of SoulCare, then you will see problems that only the resources that God provides can handle. "Come, eat food that I have prepared," says Lady Wisdom, and a wise SoulCare provider will see something going on in a person's life that they had no adequacy apart from the Spirit to deal with, that natural human resources cannot handle.

Let me put it differently. If you see a problem that mere advice, insight, or affirmation can solve, you haven't seen the real problem. You've got to see a problem, if you're discerning, that only the grace of God can deal with, only the New Covenant can handle. That's the first lesson I draw from the messages of Lady Wisdom and Lady Folly.

The second lesson I learned from their messages is this that in wise SoulCare people end up moving in directions. They feel inclined to handle their life in a way that brings no shame. Food is not eaten in secret. The food from wisdom is eaten publicly. And I can share with anybody without guilt or shame or embarrassment how I'm handling things if discernment has guided me. There's no shame in wise SoulCare.

The third thing I learned is that what we see in wise SoulCare, if you're discerning into my life, that what you see and what you will help me see will cause us both to tremble before God as we tremble before nothing and no one else. And to tremble before Him with a fear that only grace can relieve.

What I want to do in the rest of this presentation is I want to offer seven maxims for wise SoulCare. This is my effort to codify a little bit the notion of discernment or wisdom. Here are seven maxims, seven principles if you will, that if we imbibe these and digest them and live them out, then maybe there will be a discernment developing within us as SoulCare providers that when we're engaging with other people that other people will not only feel known and explored, but they'll sense that something wonderful beneath everything that is terrible is being discovered. They'll feel very believed in because our discernment has moved into their lives in a way of saying, "I can see the bad. I can see the good that's there by the grace of God, and I can see the direction that, if you were to go, would depend entirely on the provisions of wisdom. I can see directions that, if you were to go, there would be no shame attached to them. And I can see what's happening in your life in such a way that you would stand before God absolutely quaking apart from grace, but with grace, resting in Abba's arms."

Seven maxims that perhaps indicate or reflect these principles. Now, as I offer these seven maxims for providing wise, discerning SoulCare, I urge you to measure them, to evaluate them, to see whether or not everything that I say now in the next few minutes is consistent with the three criteria that I drew from the book of Proverbs. The three criteria, to summarize them again very simply, are these—and keep them in mind as you hear me elaborate on seven maxims: The first criteria is...See what requires grace. The second: Say what brings no shame. The third: Submit to the centrality of God. See if these maxims reflect the voice of Lady Wisdom as opposed to the horrible, but appealing, voice of Lady Folly. Seven maxims for wise SoulCare.

Maximum number one: You are understanding a person's flesh dynamics only if you feel totally defeated. You're understanding a person's flesh dynamics only if you feel totally defeated. Let me develop that thought.

Understand that sin always seems reasonable to the sinner. It makes sense for a woman raised by a compliant father and a sweetly controlling mother to follow the same style of relating. It seemed to work reasonably well. "Mom and Dad kind of got along and Dad seemed to go along with Mother's passive-aggressive style, so this is the way to handle people in my life—particularly men,

particularly my husband, and it seems more reasonable the more I think about it. I mean, after all, I was hurt by my Dad's weakness, and if I were to actually give myself to my husband, well, wait a minute, he's really kind of weak just like my dad and he's going in some pretty bad directions, and I would be hurt even more, and the more I think about it, the more my sinful style of relating doesn't seem sinful at all. I don't need the Spirit to pull this off. I don't need forgiveness from all this. Yes, I'm a Christian. Praise God for forgiveness. For what sin? Well, I'm not sure, but I know I'm sinful. But not in this area."

The voice of Lady Folly makes good sense. There is a way that seems right. The end thereof are the ways of death, but Lady Folly doesn't mention that. You will never—for that reason, because it makes sense—you will never argue a person out of living by the flesh. That's why education is not the answer. It's sanctification. [Education] only deepens resistance. When you try to educate me into living properly my response is, "My sin makes sense." You're understanding a person's flesh dynamics only when you know you're totally defeated and, therefore, totally dependent. Maxim number one.

Maxim number two: You don't always have to reveal the bad to release the good. You don't always have to reveal the bad to release the good. When SoulCare providers gain insight into the human soul, it is tempting, as I mentioned in a previous presentation, to go Gnostic, to parade your special knowledge about sin and flesh dynamics and to say it to people that, in a way that is designed really more to impress them with your knowledge and to initiate them into your inner ring of special understanding. Understand that you don't always have to do that.

An old Puritan named Thomas Chalmers once talked about the expulsive power of a new affection. When someone becomes aware of their appetite for God, when they actually begin to trust Him to always do them good, when they enjoy Him as the most wonderful Person in all the universe, the effect can be the same as a treasury agent studying an authentic dollar bill so well that he recognizes a counterfeit only because he knows the real thing so perfectly. You don't always have to reveal the counterfeit, you just focus sometimes on the work of God and that can be enough to expel the dark forces in a person's life. Keep that in mind as a maxim. Maxim number two.

Maxim number three: When abuse in any form—sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse—when abuse is uncovered, you are less concerned with the pain it caused, though that pain is very real and very deep, and you are more concerned with the self-protection the pain has provoked and justified.

Empathy without movement toward releasing one's appetite for God is anemic. Don't just say, "That must have been awful. I can't believe what you've suffered." Don't just say that. There's nothing wrong with saying that, but don't just say that. Don't stop there. Say rather, "As I hear what you've gone through, what sounds so despicable and so awful and I hurt so badly for you, and I weep with you as you weep—but I still have a question. I wonder what shifted in your soul when your father did that to you. I wonder how that affected your relationship with God. I want to see how the pain in your background has provoked and justified an approach to life that really is in the power of the flesh." Maxim number three.

Maxim number four: This is cumbersome. Stay with me as I read it to you. To create the illusion that life works without God, people must deny two things. In order to sustain the illusion, to create and sustain the illusion that life works without God, people must deny two things. Number one: They must deny the core desperate pain of an empty soul that only God can fill. Whatever they use to try to fill it becomes their master, their addiction. They must deny the depths of the pain that nothing can fill but God. That's the first thing. The second thing is they must deny the core heinous sin of valuing something other than God as the greatest good in life, and when that happens—when the core sin of treasuring some good more than treasuring God, saying there's goodness over here that's superior to the goodness of knowing God—when that sin takes place and when we deny it, when that happens, then self becomes the center of life. Then the whole point is not the glorious God before whom I submit and whom I obey and whom I worship and whom I love; it's now, rather, *there's* a source of good; get it into me; I'm the center of everything; self matters more than anything else. Then wise SoulCare will often bring a person in touch with their core pain and their core sin, and the experience will begin the spiritual cycle by introducing brokenness. That's maxim four.

Maxim five: Nothing in the past explains present emotional problems. It can only illuminate the strategies a person has chosen to make life work without God. Nothing in the past explains present emotional problems. We're not victims. It can only illuminate the strategies a person has chosen to make their lives work without God. We're agents.

Maxim number six: You cannot force conviction of sin. Suggest what you see in a person's flesh dynamics only when you sense a release from the Spirit to do so.

And finally, maxim number seven: When someone asks, "Well what should I do? I've been involved in SoulCare conversation with you now for two or three weeks or two or three months or two or three years. Tell me what to do. How should I handle my husband who is mean to our kids, and how can I handle my husband who doesn't do things the way they should be done?" When someone asks, "What should I do?" here's the maxim: It usually means they don't know who they are. Once you know who you are in Christ, the Spirit gives wisdom to move in directions that are wise and that honor Him. That's why Jeremiah says, when the New Covenant is in place we'll no longer need teachers to direct us. When we know who we are, when the Spirit indwells, we'll move in right directions.

Seven maxims for wise SoulCare. What we're ready to do now is to look at the actual process of having already known somebody, come to knowing somebody, coming to explore someone, discovering the deepest appetite for God within their soul, how then do we touch that appetite in a way that moves people toward the vision? That's our next presentation.

# Discussion Questions

Why do “insightful interpretation or firm confrontation” not accomplish the real work of SoulCare? What is wrong with the interpretive and the accountability models? What does accomplish SoulCare?

What is the core disease of the human soul? Why is it wretched? Why do we often not personally sense that this disease is really so vile?

What is the focus of attention in the “appetite” model of SoulCare?

Share times when you’ve experienced the “loud voice” of folly and the “whisper” of wisdom. How might these experiences help you provide SoulCare?

# Further Study

## **Exercise 1:**

This lesson teaches that in discerning SoulCare, we:

- See what requires grace.
- Say what brings no shame.
- Submit to the centrality of God.

Explain each of these statements. Reflect on occasions when you have experienced these aspects of wise SoulCare.

## **Exercise 2:**

Explain how each of the seven maxims for wise SoulCare may help you provide effective SoulCare:

- You feel defeated.
- You don't necessarily have to reveal the bad in a person in order to release the good.
- You focus less on the pain of past abuse, but on the self-protective response to that pain.
- You recognize that people deny their core desperate pain (that only God can fill) as well their core heinous sin (of valuing something more than God).
- The past at best illuminates the strategies that a person uses to make life work without God.
- You cannot force conviction of sin. Wait until the release of the Spirit allows you to suggest what you see as a person's flesh dynamics.
- When a person asks, "What should I do?" it usually means they need to know who they are in Christ.

# Lesson 10 Study Guide

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**CC203**

## ***SoulCare Foundations III: Provisions and Practices***

Releasing What Is Alive:  
Touching the Soul with Power

Updated 2015

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**Our Daily Bread  
Christian University**



# Objectives

In this lesson, you will re-examine the central message of the SoulCare course.

When you complete this lesson, “Releasing What Is Alive: Touching the Soul with Power,” you should be able to:

- Identify what kind of person you need to be in order to provide effective SoulCare.
- Touch another person with the life of Christ in you in order to become an instrument of soul restoration.
- Explain what it means to be a “released” person and how to become released.
- Describe four rhythmic movements that release Christ from you to another person.

# Transcript

## Course Title: SoulCare Foundations III: Provisions and Practices

### Lesson Ten: Releasing What Is Alive: Touching the Soul with Power

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

Now we've reached the point of all that I've been saying. Have you heard the central theme running through each of these presentations on SoulCare? Have you heard the central message that I've been wanting to communicate? Here it is: By engaging in a certain special kind of conversation, you can be used of the Spirit to literally restore someone's soul. You can arouse another person's appetite for God so that that person becomes more aware that all his joy and satisfaction is available only in Christ, so aware of that that he will persevere in the battle to resist sin and live for God.

You and I can have that affect on each other. SoulCare conversations are the means that God has ordained whereby we can be useful in restoring each other's souls. Listen to Peter speaking to all of us. Here he is, an old man looking back on a long life marked by failure, but more marked by never giving up. And listen to what Peter said toward the end of his life. He said these words, "And the God of all grace who called you to His eternal glory in Christ..." that isn't just harps on clouds, that's supreme joy, that's feeling wonderful for eternity, that's being in the presence of the most satisfying Person that ever has existed forever and enjoying intimacy with Him without any mar whatsoever.

"The God of all grace who called you to that, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you've suffered for a little while," after you've spent some time in the wilderness, after you've struggled a bit, after some things have gone wrong, after your soul has dried up a bit and needs restoration, after you've suffered for a little, while Christ Himself will "restore you and make you strong, firm, and steadfast" [1 Peter 5:10 NIV].

Is it possible He wants to use His body for the work of restoration? Is it possible that SoulCare, our topic for this entire course, really is conversation that restores the soul?

What kind of conversation is that? Well, it's not as we've seen before. It's not social conversation, where the purpose is simply to have a good time. It's not task-centered conversation, where the purpose is simply to get something done. It's not informational conversation, where the purpose is to learn something. Conversations that restore the soul to zealously living for God by arousing our appetite for Him are SoulCare conversations, where the purpose is to touch—that's the topic in our last presentation in course three—where the purpose is to touch another soul with the life of God that's in you.

What's required? What's required for you to be a SoulCare provider? What's required for you to be sitting down with a friend, with an acquaintance, and they sense the aroma of grace in you when they open up, and you want to provide SoulCare? You want to be an instrument of the Spirit in the restoration of this person's soul. What's required?

Well, we've already covered a couple of points. We've already covered the thought that, first, you must be a safe person. You must be somebody who is so filled with your own longing for Christ that no one else has final power over you. Then you'll be strong enough to let other persons feel the courageous freedom to be known in your presence and to let you know what they rarely reveal. To provide SoulCare, you first must be a safe person.

To provide SoulCare, you, secondly, must be an excited person, so filled with passion over the truth that the Spirit of Christ is literally present in the other and at the moment that you're speaking, in the middle of this conversation with the other, the Spirit of God is right now working, and as you've discerned that and believe that and by faith know that to be true, an excitement rises within you and you become wonderfully curious, not intrusively, not voyeuristically curious, but sacredly curious, and you listen with an eagerness, you ask questions with fervor and you, thus, encourage the other person to cooperate in being explored.

And thirdly, you must be a pure person—that was our last presentation—so committed to personal holiness that you never criticize another without first criticizing yourself more severely. And, therefore, humble enough, having abandoned any good estimate of yourself apart from what Christ has done, that you inspire trust in the other that deepens their willingness to be explored. (That was actually two presentations ago.)

In the last presentation, we talked about what it means to become a discerning person. Safe, excited, pure, and then a discerning person, so filled with the wisdom of the Spirit, so possessed by the Spirit through many trials and failures that have taught you radical dependence on Christ, knowing that when Christ shows up things happen; if He's not moving in your life, nothing happens. Without Him you can't do anything. You become a discerning person such that the other person feels a confidence in you because you're dependent on the Spirit. You're operating with the Spirit's wisdom, and they feel a confidence in you that you will discover what is alive and wonderful in them that is beneath all the junk and all the stuff that they are so ashamed of. You need to be that kind of person—safe, excited, pure, discerning.

But you also need to be one more thing. And without this last element, it all falls apart. Without this last element, all that I've said so far really doesn't amount to much. My last topic: You must be a released person, so aware of the life of Christ in you that nothing matters more than pouring it out on others—something like a cheerleader on the side of a marathon race handing a glass of water to one of the runners halfway through, and when they see that glass of water, and they take it from your hand as they run by, and they take a sip, and then they discard the cup, they're saying, "I feel revitalized. There's been a refreshment of my soul. My soul has been restored because you gave me something that if I had not received, my soul would not have been restored the way it now is. And I'm grateful to you for it."

What does it mean to touch another person with the living water of Christ that is flowing out of your soul? What does it mean to become a released person who literally touches the soul of another with the life of Christ? That's what we're thinking about in this last presentation.

And again, understand that without this last element, without being a released person who touches another with the life of Christ within you, that everything we've thought about so far is

woefully incomplete. You can be present as somebody shares their journeying reality; you can envision what the Spirit longs for them to become and what He could do in their lives. You can explore your own interior world and discover the passions in you that maybe are not the best. You can reframe and listen to someone's relational story and make sense of it with your categories of understanding. You can understand how wounds from the past and present and blessings from the past and present actually interact to form a fleshly structure to life and how flesh dynamics are running this person's life. You can even understand spirit dynamics and have a good grasp of New Covenant theology. You can understand all of that, but, as Paul says, without love it amounts to nothing.

Without the active love that releases something alive from you into somebody else's soul, all that we've covered in these twenty-nine lectures really won't amount to much. If you and I fail to realize the life of the Spirit in us, if you and I fail to realize and release the life of the Spirit in us in the way that touches the soul of another, we're not going to achieve the great purpose of SoulCare. We'll not be an instrument of God in restoring anybody else's soul. Let me put it a little more positively.

If you do release, if you and I together release the life in us in a way that touches the soul of another, then we can arouse the other's appetites for Christ and so strengthen them to follow Christ in the middle of whatever life throws at them. That's SoulCare. Not solving problems so life works better, but strengthening pursuit so God is more enjoyed. That's SoulCare.

Well, with all that in our minds (it's a lot), what does the process look like? What is the process of touching? What do I mean when I use the metaphor of touch? I'm not speaking of physical touch—there's a place for that; there are dangers to it—but I'm speaking of spiritual touch. I'm speaking of a conversation where something literally comes out of me and into you that restores your soul. What does that process look like?

Well, it goes without saying, I presume, that the more fully you have entered the battle, the more fully you have moved into somebody else's life by following the Spirit's movement in all the ways we've discussed, the more you've grasped all that we've talked about in these twenty-nine lectures, the more you've understood what it means to be present for journeying reality, and to envision what somebody could be, and to look at your own interior world, and to reframe so you hear more of their story of their soul. Then you listen with categories of understanding, and you understand flesh dynamics and how the bad stuff is working in their lives, and you realize what God has done in the New Covenant, and spirit dynamics make sense to you. The more all that's in place, the more all that's enveloping your thinking and your heart, the more that's taking place, the better suited you will be to touch another person. The better you will be able to put into an exact expression of what they need, the life that is inside of you.

All that I said there, with all that verbiage, all that I said is this: that we really have to know each other. Christians aren't good at that. Non-Christians aren't good at that. But if we listen to each other, if we engage with each other, if we enter each other's lives, and see what's happening in each other's lives, and see what the Spirit is doing, then after entering and seeing, maybe we'll be better equipped to touch with the words that can restore the soul.

Death and life, the proverb says, is in the power of the tongue. Death and life are in the power of the tongue. That means that I can say words that could damage you. There are death words, and I suppose all of us could remember death words that have been spoken to us—words that still sting to this day. Maybe some of us can recall life words. That's SoulCare—the Proverbs talks about that.

In Ephesians, Paul contrasts unhelpful words—he calls them unwholesome words—he contrasts unhelpful words with helpful words, suggesting that if we intimately know the needs of another, we'll become aware of the exact right words to say. If you want to know what to say to somebody, it isn't a matter of mastering technique, it's a matter of entering their lives. If I know your needs, if I know you because I've entered your life, then I will know the Spirit will give me wisdom on what to say.

The life of Christ within us is kind of like a medicine cabinet full of life-giving medicine. The wise person looks at the medicine chest, sees all the bottles of pills, all the good things that are there in the medicine chest, and looks at the person and sees what the needs are, and knows that yeah, it's that medicine that is pulled off the shelf and is poured out through your soul, through your words into the heart of another and their soul is restored.

Listen to Paul's exact words in Ephesians 4:29: "Don't let," Paul says, "don't let any unwholesome word come out of your mouths." The word for *unwholesome* is a Greek word that literally means something which, after a period of time with sitting there, begins to spoil. It's a word that was used to describe fish that were left in the open market non-refrigerated, non-iced down, and after a couple of days, the fish was no longer a wholesome opportunity for eating pleasure and for healthy food; it was corrupt, and if a person ate that fish, it would cause problems within their body. Paul says, don't say words that over time will cause problems; rather than that, Paul says, say "only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs" at that moment. How do you know their needs? Well, by doing all we've talked about—by entering and seeing and thinking and having certain kinds of passions, certain kinds of wisdom, certain kinds of relational energies toward people. In the middle of all that, you know their needs; then you're able to say, helpful words, powerful words that may benefit those who listen. That's what Paul says in Ephesians chapter 4.

What I want to do in the last presentation with you now is I want to suggest four rhythmic movements that I believe can help you touch a soul by releasing Christ in you—four rhythmic movements. You've heard me use the word rhythm quite a bit. I like the word; it just gets away from the notion of mechanics. It gets away from the notion of technique and method and formula, and it helps us realize that the work of SoulCare is the work of the Spirit operating through us where we become sensitive to the wind of the Spirit. We become sensitive to how the wind of the Spirit is blowing, and we adjust our sails, and we flow with the rhythm of the Spirit. What does that mean as we seek to touch each other?

Four rhythmic movements that perhaps can encourage us to touch each other more powerfully with words that build up, and no longer speaking unwholesome words to each other. If we had the time, I would like to talk with you about unwholesome words. I'd love to talk with you about how when somebody shares they are depressed, or having marital struggles, or their kid is a mess, thinking of all the unwholesome words that have been said. One gentleman I know lost a child, a

five-year-old child, to a gruesome accident. The child died and several people in his church said, “Oh, I’m sure your wife can get pregnant again and you can have another child.” That’s a pretty grotesque example of an unhelpful, an unwholesome word. They didn’t know the battle in that man’s soul. There was nothing said that was restoring that person’s soul.

Wouldn’t it be something if the church became a community of passion-filled people—filled with the passions of the Spirit? Wise people filled with the wisdom of the Spirit that could actually move with the Spirit in saying words that restored because we’ve entered and come to know and explore and discover each other’s lives.

Let me assume then that you’ve listened well. You’ve thought hard, you’ve quietly envisioned what the Spirit could do. You’ve seen the ugly mess of self-centered flesh dynamics. You’ve entered the story of somebody else’s soul. You’ve placed your complete confidence in Christ. You know the New Covenant is essential for any change as you release what is happening in the person’s heart by the Spirit’s grace. All that’s taking place now, and now it’s time for you to speak words that touch.

Rhythmic movement number one: Be prayerfully sensitive to what is stirring in the moment within the sanctuary of your own soul. Be prayerfully sensitive to what is stirring in the moment within the sanctuary of your own soul. Learn what it means to access the deepest inner place in your own heart where the Spirit lives, where He breathes, where His wind blows, where you actually hear the Spirit’s voice, and you say words at the Spirit’s urging. You don’t quench or grieve, but you abandon yourself to the Spirit, because you’ve been prayerfully sensitive as you’ve been interacting.

Can you see how easy it is not to do that? Can you see how easy it is in the course of conversation just to react impulsively and to say whatever you feel like saying, as opposed to taking a moment and maybe even closing your eyes as a person is chatting and just tuning in to what is happening within you at the deepest level of your soul? You can know if you’re accessing the spiritual life within you by measuring whether what you feel, by measuring whether the impulses that are rising within you, the words that are beginning to form on your lips that you are about to say, by measuring whether all of that is dominated by pressure, impatience, quarrelsomeness, insecurity, proving something. If you’re aware of all that involved in your impulses, then you’re in touch with the fruit of the flesh.

But if, rather than that, you’re aware of something that you want to say to this individual, some words that are occurring to you, that just feel alive to you and you begin to measure them and it becomes apparent that these words really are filled with a great love for this person—you really like this person; you want to bless this person; you want to bring glory to God; you want to release the Spirit in this person’s life; you want them to grow in Jesus—and all that is coming up within you and there’s a patience. You don’t feel like you have to say it, but you long to say it. There’s a gentleness about you. When you sense all of that, then maybe you can say, “This is the fruit of the Spirit. These are words that come from God.”

And understand a very practical point, that as you chat with people in a SoulCare conversation, nothing’s wrong with long silences. Sometimes long silences are required for you to tune into the



inner sanctuary of your own soul. I've only recently become comfortable when people are chatting with me to let a long silence take place, and sometimes literally sit back and close my eyes. Sometimes even to say to the person, "You know, I just want to spend a few moments meditating right now. 'Cause I would like to tune into what the Spirit is saying," because apart from the Spirit I've nothing to offer this person. With the Spirit I have a lot to offer this person. I could be an instrument of SoulCare. I could be an instrument of restoring your soul, but it's got to be from the Spirit, so be prayerfully sensitive to what is stirring within you, in the deepest part of your soul, in the sanctuary where the Spirit of God resides. That's movement number one: Be sensitive.

Movement number two, as you think about framing words that will touch the soul, movement number two: Make sure that you, as a SoulCare provider, are in a relationship where you receive SoulCare. We never outgrow our need to be in relationships where we receive. Frankly, it's easier for me to give than to receive, because giving doesn't seem to require the same kind of obvious humility. It doesn't seem to require the same level of risk. It doesn't require the same kind of vulnerability. If you're going to provide SoulCare, don't ever assume that you are now in a position where you no longer need to receive SoulCare. It is right and necessary and healthy to trust your heart as you become aware of what stirs within you, but remember that the capacity for self-deceit remains.

I remember recently strongly rebuking a man I was caring for. At the time, my rebuke seemed wise and I would have said to you that it came from the inner sanctuary of my soul and it came from the Spirit. And talking it over with a friend a little bit later and sharing with him what happened in this conversation, I began to see how much self was in my rebuke. I was proving something. I was feeling discouraged and weak and this was my chance to feel strong. When I gave this rebuke, it was for my sake; it wasn't for him and had very little to do with the Spirit. I wouldn't have seen that without being in a relationship where I received SoulCare. Movement number two: Be in a relationship where you receive SoulCare.

Rhythmic movement number three: Offer what you are aware of in your heart as a gift to the other. Offer what you're aware of in your heart from the Spirit as a gift to the other.

Now, understand that you'll make mistakes, as I did with my self-corrupted rebuke of that gentleman. But realize that as you engage in SoulCare, you only have two choices. Either make a thousand small mistakes as you engage in SoulCare, or make one big mistake by never taking the risk of entering somebody else's life. Offer what you're aware of within your own soul as a gift, knowing it might not be the best gift, but offer it anyhow. Offer it as a gift and realize that when you're offering your words, when you're offering what you sense the Spirit is saying in your own heart and you want to give it to another as a gift, that when you're offering it as a gift, you're not offering it as negotiation. Gift and negotiation are opposites. That means that what you give has no strings attached. There's no agendas. There's no demands. It's like sharing the gospel with somebody. You offer a word of witness. The Spirit takes over from there. You might persuade. You might get passionate. You might press your point, but internally you should not feel, when you're evangelizing or SoulCaring, you should not feel as though you're working hard to make something happen. When that's your spirit, you aren't offering a gift; you're making a point. You want something to happen. But whether it does or whether it doesn't isn't up to you, because you're dependent on the Spirit. Offer what you have as a gift with no strings attached. That's movement number three.



The last one, rhythmic movement number four (please listen carefully to this): Exercise your full freedom in Christ in what you give. The gift could be most anything. See the freedom that you have to be uniquely you. Don't try to be somebody else. Don't try to say, "How would so-and-so do it?" Take the uniqueness of your own abilities, your limits, your own personality, your strengths, your weaknesses, take you—who you are—and in the freedom of who you are before God, give whatever is within you. The only boundaries to what you give are three:

The only boundaries to what you give, number one: Is what you're offering consistent with Scripture?

Secondly, does it seem clean and expressive of spiritual fruit?

Thirdly, from what you know of Jesus, can you picture Him saying what you're about to say to this person right now?

These criteria are not restrictive to the spiritual heart deliberating. Your gift of touch could be a strong, firmly expressed rebuke to your son. I once told my rebellious adolescent son that he was entirely free from my control, but that if he chose a certain lifestyle, he would also be entirely free from my support. That could be a terribly wrong thing for you to say to your son. It was the right thing, I believe, for me to say to my son. For me, it came from a heart that was filled with excitement over what God could do in the life of my son. It wasn't a power play. It wasn't an effort to be a good Christian parent. That was my gift of touch to my son.

Your gift of touch could be a Nathan-like parable to a friend who you know is having an affair. It could be a gift you give after months of prayerfully waiting on God after you discover his sin. Your gift of touch could be a letter of affirmation and honor to a discouraged friend and you believe that these words might be used of God to restore his soul.

Your gift of touch could be an image that depicts the flesh-spirit struggle. I recently told a tall, powerfully built man that the way he related to his wife made me think of him wearing a dress (a rather offensive image to this gentleman), and I suggested in the course of our conversation, "You know, it might be a good idea to take off your dress. I think you'd look better in a pair of pants." That was a gift of touch.

Your gift of touch could be a simple offer to pray. "You know, as you shared these things with me, I just, I just want to pray." You might even feel led in your freedom to get on your knees. You might feel led in your freedom to fall flat on the floor. Your gift of touch could be an instruction in a particular spiritual discipline. It could be a particular passage for the person to meditate upon. Or, it could be the gift of silence, knowing that your friend needs time alone with God. The gift of touch—whatever the Spirit puts within you that you freely give with no strings attached.

Well, that brings us to an end of this particular course. I want to say as we close that I sincerely trust, I sincerely trust that this course on the provisions and practice of SoulCare has encouraged you to the possibilities of what could happen to the Body of Christ. I hope it has encouraged you to think more about what might happen when you have lunch with a friend tomorrow. What might happen as you relate to your husband, to your wife, to your child, to your Sunday School class, to

your small group. Are there possibilities here that we've just begun to explore? I sincerely hope this course on provisions and practice has been helpful in that respect.

In our last course, we're going to study how SoulCare could revolutionize the Christian community.

# Discussion Questions

What does it mean to be a released person? Why is being released important to SoulCare?

Why must we really know each other in order to touch each other?

Give examples of “unwholesome” words you’ve heard from Christian friends when you were in pain. Give examples of unwholesome words you’ve uttered.

Why is silence acceptable—even necessary—in SoulCare?

Why do you need to receive SoulCare while you are providing SoulCare? Who fills that role for you?

What does it mean to offer your heart as a gift to another with no strings attached? How can your offer overcome “a thousand small mistakes?”

In SoulCare, you have the freedom to touch your friend’s life in your own unique way. How do you feel about that freedom? List the three boundaries to this freedom found in this lesson and discuss why they are important to effective SoulCare.