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Relationship with God overlooked in age of counseling

Most of us have heard of the book, "I'm Ok, You're OK." It's kind of a manual for self-esteem written during the early phase of this age of psychology.

I've heard it said that today's sequel to I'm OK, You're OK should be entitled, "I'm Dysfunctional, You're Dysfunctional." Yes, many of us are struggling. There's a lot of bad stuff out there, with families falling apart, different kinds of abuse, the stress of our modern way of life. Many are in pain. They truly are having trouble just functioning. They'd give anything just to be able to get along, to have just a little peace in their lives.

So, we live in an age of counseling. The search for the right therapist is sometimes a long one. There's a sense that if we can find the right counselor, the one who really understands us, we can be fixed. We will be able to function again.

Medication has become a big part of this process. A large number of Americans are now on some kind of mood-altering drug which allows them to cope more effectively. Counselors and psychiatrists, once a certain drug has been prescribed, frequently have to adjust the prescription or prescribe a second or third drug which minimizes the ill-effects of the preceding drugs. Medical plans now cover most of the counseling and medication.

Is all this helping? Are we getting better? Is there something missing? I'd have to admit to being a little skeptical.

A friend of mine, a very effective counselor, tells me that he has begun sessions with large groups of adults in north Tulsa by asking the question, "What is the most important aspect of a person's well-being?" He tells me that 75 percent of the people to whom he addresses this question give the answer, "A person's relationship with God."

Do most counselors or psychiatrists seriously address this issue which is so central to our lives? I'm not saying there isn't an important place for conventional therapy, but it should never keep us from the One who can truly heal. It seems that so many times, we examine our past to identify those



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hurtful influences which need to be neutralized in some way so that we can be more functional. This seems on the surface to be perfectly reasonable, but what gets lost in the process?

When we begin tinkering with our lives, putting our past under a microscope, examining in great detail all of our significant relationships, the mystery goes out of our lives. The bottom-line truth is that our past, our hurts, our sins should all be perceived not as needing to be fixed so we can be functional in society but as redeemed by the saving blood of Jesus. That's where the healing

is, in connecting each of our lives with the mystery of the Cross.

Sound too abstract? Here's an example, a true story, of how it works: A young girl, about eight years of age, was raped by a relative. Right after it happened, she crawled into a space under the house. In that dark place, petrified by fear, hurt and shock, she wondered what she should do. To whom could she turn? She says now that she didn't know much about Jesus then, but, from what she did know, she thought He was the only one that could help her.

In the quiet of that awful space, she called out in her heart to Jesus, and He came to her. From that moment on, her life was transformed by the dynamic, healing love of Jesus. Now this woman is quite elderly and is a spiritual guide to many.

By identifying our own sufferings with those of Jesus, what seems to crush us can turn into a great blessing. Our hurts bring us closer to the innocent One who hurt for no other reason than to raise us up to a new life. In our zeal to be fixed so that we can be productive in this life, we might be getting farther away from Christ, who asks us to share in a special way in His redemption.

Jesus may heal us on the spot, or He may send us to a counselor or a psychiatrist. Ultimately, however, He is the only answer. As St. Paul said, "I have the strength for everything through him who empowers me."