



Northland Christian Counseling Center

"I COULDN'T LIVE....I COULDN'T DIE...I COULDN'T CHANGE"

To be severed from Christ is to be severed from all beauty and suicide actually started to make a crazy sort of sense. It was my six year bout with depression that kept me increasingly bent on suicide.

My earliest thoughts on life were that it would end. Sitting by my toy box I was struck by the un-doneness of mortality and in my little boy way I screamed out, "I'm going to die!" in an empty room. My father rushed in and seeing no obvious problem merely put me to bed.

I was about eight when my two older brothers molested me. Satan took the mic center stage, "You're a hopeless pervert." Even though I am a son of a pastor, attended church my entire life, read the Bible and knew the church lingo, my unconscious unexamined manner of coping with all of this self-hate and shame was to "live down, tip the scales, self-atone, get better, do the church thing. I would accrue so much merit and obvious value by my good efforts that you would need only acknowledge my right to live..." It's something I did without thinking. This sort of 'sanctification' slowly squeezed the life out of me, like struggling in quicksand, and in the 55th year of my life God began to let the quicksand do its work. While many considered me very religious down deep I knew I was all show and God knew this as well. My failing efforts to remain worthy of God spoiled my many hobbies and interests I had sought to fill the void. The beautiful home I had built became old hat. My anger wrecked the relationship with my wife and depression set in hard. In 2011 I was fired from my place of employment and was asked to step down from my duties at church. I spent most of that year sitting in a rocker. My wife desperately tried to help me while shouldering the complete load of our home, taking me to counselors and medical facilities while dealing with her own pain.

My descent into darkness continued and my dear sister recommended that my wife leave for her own safety. Even walking to the mailbox was frightening. Out of fear I would urinate outside even though there were 2 ½

bathrooms in my house. I received a \$5000 check I never bothered to cash. I walked laps in the house to calm my fear with my puzzled cat looking on. I tried to electrocute myself standing barefoot on concrete. I stood unsupported upon the corner railing of my two story deck gauging how to land on my head. I found the key to a locked .38 loaded hollow-point and toyed with it staring through the muzzle at the bullet...cocked. I ate literally nothing for two weeks straight and began to look emaciated. My wife made a surprise visit and threatened me to either go stay with other family members or be put into a nursing home. At the age of fifty-nine I reluctantly came to Grand Forks to stay with family.

A family member recommended I enter counseling at Northland Christian Counseling Center. I told my counselor at NCCC my story, concluding I was a well churched pagan, a son of Satan and in time only expected to enter judgement. I met with this counselor for over a year all the while he attempted to hold out grace and hope for me. I formed a bond with this counselor although I really felt he was wasting his time with me. The counselor would end each session with an appeal to continue and I would be struck with guilt in the vanity of it all.

Early in 2015 I told my counselor I saw no further point in counseling and felt the last good thing I could do with my gargoyle life was to not end it in the home of good people. I was taken to the psychiatric ward at Altru Hospital. I had three months of sleeping pills with me intending to take them all. The hospital had covered all the bases; confiscating my pills, shaving kit and toiletries, secured windows, locked and guarded doors, and close security. After observation the psychiatrist threatened court-ordered medication. I opted for shock treatment (ECT) because it would get me out of there quicker. I knew neither would work. All I wanted from life was death.

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I came home from the hospital as hopeless as ever; I couldn't live. I couldn't die. I couldn't change. I was at the lowest point in my life. One night I sighed out my grief prayer to no god in particular: Jesus had become a stranger to me and I hated His Father. The next morning my step-daughter knocked on my bedroom door and to my utter amazement she wished me a 'Happy Birthday!' along with breakfast. It was my sixty-first birthday and I didn't even realize it as I had lost track of the months. While I can't explain why, I saw her simple act of kindness as my God loving me as His very own-my truest birthday. I was stunned but

completely convinced. **My illness of the past six years and the course of my whole life was undone in a moment.**

It's been seven months and I am as surprised as anyone. The powerful knowledge of having been heard and beloved by God has blunted every evil in my life. All of my potential wickedness is still with me but I am God's beloved and He will see me safely home.

My counselor at Northland preaches and teaches grace. It is the only thing that will truly heal. He held out grace to me and I am a glimpse of what a restored life is. My depression is gone. It is gone!

"HONESTY" BY NCCC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, STEPHEN SEAY

In the last newsletter I talked about the importance of humility in helping people deepen and develop. This newsletter, I will talk about the second pillar needed to deepen and develop as a person and that is honesty. Of course most of us would immediately assume that the development of honesty is specifically related to being honest with others and that is true.

An even greater importance would be the development of honesty with us. Very little progress will be made with any client I am seeing who will not be honest with the realities that are going on in them. For example, if a couple comes in and one of them is determined in their justification to blame their spouse for the problems they are facing and that they bear no responsibility for what is going on, it will not go well. They are lying to themselves. **It is so easy to avoid the mess that exists in me and blame another person. It is easier to see another person's flaws than to look at my own.**

Another example is in the subtly I often see when people describe what is actually happening in a situation. I can almost be one hundred percent certain that whatever the person is telling me will be told in a way that minimizes what they did and how they acted, while attributing motives and actions of great unkindness to the other person. Lying has other even deeper, more profound consequences. Lying is in effect blinding the person doing the lying. It is a bit like this: if I try create my own reality which, in essence, is what lying is about, I'll never get to see God's faithfulness because I've become master of this contrived universe I'm creating. Really the only one fooled by a lie is the one doing the lying.

A greater issue even than lying to others or yourself is an attempt to lie to God. It is not that people do this consciously. I won't often hear a statement, "I lied to God." That is impossible anyway. It is that we are attributing to Him motives that He really doesn't have. It is more like, "Oh, He won't care" or "God is love and this makes me happy so He would want me to have this thing that makes me happy."

The term for what I just described is 'rationalization.' It simple is a way to get what we want. What of my neighbor? Do I then have to say everything about everything to my neighbor? No, it doesn't follow that honesty is saying everything about everything. The key is the motive. Is the next statement coming from love or is it about telling the truth in anger or hate or arrogance? The verse actually says, 'telling the truth in love' (Ephesians 4:15).

Many times what is honest can't be received because the growth in the person or in me isn't at a spot where I can handle the truth and out of love the full reality is withheld. Isn't that what we constantly do with our children? I discern that a sex talk with my 4 year old child isn't appropriate to their need so I don't say anything to them. Is that lying? No, it isn't. Someday I will need to have that talk but not just yet. I withhold because I would not want to hurt or deceive them.

Much more could be said about all of this, but in this small article just a few things that may help have been said...May God use it to His glory.