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August 2017

FIRST CORINTHIANS

Inside Terry's Office:

The Book of Corinthians: Divisions in the Church

In seminary I would study the scripture concerning "the early church" in order to ascertain how the church should function today. I assumed that the hierarchy, mission, worship, fellowship, and, above all, theology of "the early church" should be duplicated in the church today. In the book of Acts we are told of a floundering, chaotic, and sometimes combative group of barely organized, rapidly expanding, loose knit community of people that seemed to only have a framework of beliefs in common. Now, in I Corinthians, we read of the founder of a church community desperately trying to say a dozen things in one letter; 1) I love and miss you, 2) I'm so disappointed in you, 3) Don't dismiss me just because I'm mad at you / I wouldn't be mad if I didn't really love you, 4) How could you be so dense? 5) Let me tell you about the birds and the bees, 6) You are delightful to God and me / I'm so proud of you, ... etc.

In other words, the early church was like a family! The apostle Paul was speaking to them like a father would to his children. Addressing all these emotional and relational topics in a letter is very difficult, but Paul works hard at trying to make his love and concerns known. Such balance is so hard to find. It makes me smile when I read "*I'm saying this for your own good*", because I know only a parent uses such a phrase. Paul is writing to his family.

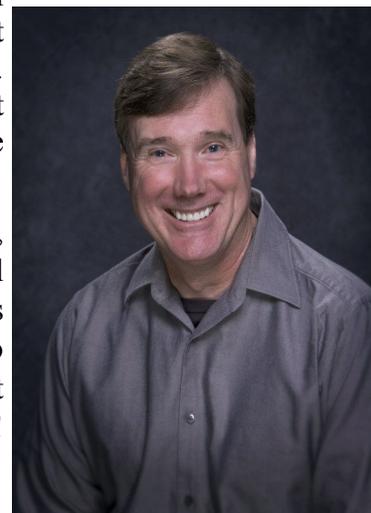
I believe that there are only two types of families; families with dysfunctions and dysfunctional families. The families with dysfunctions are those who talk about their dysfunctions and try to heal and grow. Dysfunctional families hide, deny, and/or are shamed by their dysfunctions. The early church was a Family With DYSFUNCTIONS.

When I began studying the early church I was hoping to find the proper ways to function so that "God would be glorified and He would bless my church". ... Yes, I ... and many like me, actually said those words, ... and believed them.

I couldn't seem to bring myself to believe the history lesson given to me in Acts or the fact that every epistle thereafter (completing the Bible) was written with correctives, rebukes, encouragements, and prayers for the dysfunctional church(es) *receiving* them. I was looking for the Biblical way that a church "should be" so that the church would "be effective". But, the early church never seemed to "get it right" and didn't seem concerned with measuring effectiveness beyond being true to Jesus Christ.

Soooo, my conclusion is that this wonderful mess of a church, with emotional, relational, and spiritual dysfunctions, is the model of how a church (and a family) should be. Their dysfunctions should be acknowledged and addressed. We have to be able to SAY and HEAR how we hurt and disappoint one another without losing faith in our love for one another. ... Lord, have mercy! Christ have mercy!

In His Grip, TWE



ESTABLISHING A PLUMBLINE IN THE HEART OF GOD'S PEOPLE

The Plumbline

Stand Firm!!

“Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”

1 Corinthians 15:58

“This is hard!” “I don’t know if this, he, she, they, I will ever change!” These are the laments that I have spoken and that I have heard spoken in my counseling office routinely. Just yesterday I prayed internally for the Lord to show me the way to release comfort and encouragement to a counselee who was discouraged and at the brink of hopelessness that things will ever get better. Honestly, it does appear that she has been the repeated victim of gross mischaracterizations that has cost her her family and now maybe her livelihood. I want to say, really Lord? Really? How much more? And, what, Lord, do I say?

The apostle Paul pastored a church in Corinth for eighteen months where not much happened. Corinth was a pagan culture; and talk about unhealthy patterns developed out of unhealthy circumstances, they were aplenty! Crabb comments in his forty-sixth letter of 66 Love Letters that Paul remained steadfast in telling the story of love to a quarrelsome, arrogant, and selfish people. The Corinthians still lived according to the saying, “All things are lawful

for me” (6:12; 10:23 NKJV) Although the people of Corinth lived more like Corinthians than Christians, Paul continued to call them to a new way of life. He never gave up on them and neither did or does God give up on His children!

“Every word in this letter highlights the plot of My story, My call to community, My vision of others-centered relating, and My Plan for your spiritual formation---My power to place within you the desire to love and to release that **love in the worst of circumstances, in the most hopeless of conditions, and in the most painful of relationships.**” (66 Love Letters, p. 245-46)

The biggest battle that we face is the belief that God’s love for us is demonstrated in our circumstances. If that is true then why would I believe that God loves me if my circumstances are so bad? We, therefore, place our hope in change in our circumstances. Our circumstances propel us back into our “destructive familiar” ways of coping and escaping. As a pastoral counselor I am inspired by Paul who modeled standing firm and trusting in God in the middle of the stuff of life. He was troubled but He never lost confidence in the Lord. So as I reflect back on yesterday with my counselee I am encouraged that the best that I can do for her is to move her towards God, trusting that He sees her heart and He will be her advocate. I did

tell her, “Girl, you walk into that room with the review board with your head held high knowing that you have been faithful to your calling.” Today as I write this she is so much on my mind! I am thanking God for the timing of this review of I Corinthians and for the verse that I will pass on to her that is in the last chapter of I Corinthians, **“Listen, stay alert; stand tall in the faith, be courageous, and be strong. Let love prevail in your life, words, and actions.” (16:13-14, The Voice).**

I am also confident that these thoughts today inspired from I Corinthians were for me as I can easily become discouraged in counseling wondering what good I am doing. I want to see change but change is a slow process. I hope these thoughts will meet you where you are today!

~

Carol Anne



What's Love got to do (got to do) with it?

Yes, as the title might suggest, I was a teenager in the 80's! Music video was a major cultural influence to my generation. Good or bad, I grew up having pictures of what thoughts, feelings, and emotions were "supposed" to look like. I don't think I would have to work very hard to convince you that images can be manipulated to look very different than what is reality. I can imagine that Paul might have faced similar issues when writing to the Corinthians. Here's a group of people trying to figure out how to live out this new belief system that was radically different than anything they had experienced before. Paul writes to them (and to us) to help them un-twist some of their beliefs and to help instruct them on both practical and relational dynamics. He helps them with structure, order, freedoms, history, spiritual gifts, and the most important-LOVE!

For most all of my christian journey, I have always believed that chapter 13 was a "to do" list of how to love others. The more I read, the worse I felt. I was never able to live up to all of that. It was almost depressing! Then a couple of years ago, I came across the passage in Matt 22:36-40. This is where Jesus tells the Sadducees that the greatest commandment is to "love the Lord your God with all your heart,...mind,...and soul" and to "love your neighbor as yourself." This was another passage that I had heard taught about so many times-all with the message that loving yourself was prideful and bad so somehow love someone else with that same level of intensity?!? Yep, more shame! But somehow, there is a connection to my ability to love my neighbor (others) and my ability to love myself. And furthermore, how I experience God's love for me is tied to how I love myself. So, what exactly does a "healthy-self-love" look like? I don't have near enough space to unpack that here; but, I'll help start the discussion.

I had always heard that this kind of love-agape-was this "unconditional" love. So, I went to the dictionary to see what "unconditional" meant; only to find the most typical definition-"without condition". The more I thought about it though, I realized that every time I made the statement "they would be a lot easier to love IF...", or "when...", or "except for...", etc, I was putting a condition on my giving love! I thought that to love "unconditionally" meant I wouldn't be able to see anyone's faults or shortcomings. What I've come to see now is that it is to love them WITH their faults and shortcomings. To love them how they are, where they are, and who they are right now! No if, ands, or buts! Isn't that how God loves us?

So now that we can begin to see the framework of love, and loving myself is the limiting factor in loving others and experiencing God's love, what does loving myself look like? By taking the "conditions" off, we can then go to 1 Cor 13 to look at the definition of love. I won't list all the characteristics of love here, but I encourage you to go read them yourself-but with a twist! Instead of reading the list with the view of "how I'm supposed to love others", read it as "how am I loving myself?" Are you patient with yourself? Are you kind to yourself? Do you take account of wrongs suffered? Etc. Remember this is not a performance for acceptance measurement-that's already been settled (thank goodness!). It's just a way to see where my filters are and to invite God in to see what is keeping me from a healthy self love. If you want to join this discussion, I have more tools and info to talk about-might even be working on a new class. You'll have to stay tuned for that one!

Remember, without love, we're only going through the motions. With love, we are free to give it (to others) and to receive it (from God and others). "We [get to] love, because He first [got to] love us."



Only maybe for another day??

Our fundraiser,

scheduled for August 15, 2017

has been **cancelled** for the present time.

We will let everyone know when this

event will be rescheduled.

Thank you for your continued prayers and support of Plumblin!



New Fall Classes

Plumblineline will be offering the following classes beginning in September:

Co-Dependency: *Were you raised to be nurturing, caring, loving and responsible? That's a good thing....right? So I'm doing these "good things" and yet I'm called a "control freak", bossy, selfish, and obsessed? Can someone tell me please...when did nurturing, caring, loving and being responsible become such bad things? If you are struggling with these issues, then this class will be of tremendous support and encouragement to you. Taught by Marion Fuller. Class Begins Sunday September 10 from 2:00 to 4:00 P.M.*

Boundaries: *What are boundaries and why are they important? Boundaries are unseen structures that protect us from harm and support healthy, productive lives. Boundaries are personal property lines that define who you are and who you are not, and influence all areas of your life. They give you the freedom to walk as the loving, giving, fulfilled individual God created you to be. Taught by Michelle Carpenter. Class begins Tuesday September 12, from 6:30 to 8:30 P.M.*

Safe People: *Want to discern safe from unsafe people? Do you need practical steps for leading you to individuals who truly make you a better person by their presence in your life? Do you want to take ownership of your own unsafe tendencies and become a safe person for others? Countless individuals have invested themselves in others only to be used, abused, or abandoned. They have lost their sense of security and personal value in the process. Would you like to avoid repeating your own mistakes? If you are ready to look inside your self for blind spots or vulnerabilities and outside to evaluate the nature of others, both good and bad, then please join us as we learn to identify the nurturing people we all need and want in our lives. Taught by Margo Hanne. Class begins Wednesday September 13, 6:30 - 8:30 P.M.*

Each class is \$70.00 and runs for 10 weeks. Please visit our website, www.plumblinelineonline.com, or enroll at the office.

COMING THIS FALL!

September 7-November 16, 2017

Thursdays, 6:30-8:30 P.M.

Soul Care Training VI Unit 4

Taught by Terry Ewing

Unit Topic: Family Dynamics

The Family Dynamics Unit will be 11 weeks. Class will **NOT** be cancelled for fall break the week of October 19, 2017.

The weekly topics being covered are:

- * Developmental Psychology
- * Parenting
- * Blended Families
- * Essentials and Nonessentials of Faith & Ethics
- * Family Systems
- * Trauma Processing
- * Identifying Personal Traumas
- * Introduction to Dissociation

The required reading for this unit will be Terry's manuscript of his newest Stickman book, **Stickman's Family**, and **Living from the Heart Jesus Gave You** by James Wilder and assorted authors. The second book identifies the difference between Trauma A and trauma B and will be a valuable treat for trauma processing. The manuscript will be distributed with your course curriculum. Living from the Heart can be purchased through Amazon.

The cost for the unit of study will again be \$250 with a **\$50 deposit due by Thursday, August 10, 2017**. The remaining \$200 will be due by the first class session, Thursday, September 7.

For further information, please visit our website at www.plumblonline.com.

Stickman's Prayers

Plumblin's newest book, *Stickman's Prayers* has been published and is now available at Plumblin!

stickman's prayers

the everyday practice of
"loosing prayers"
and the ministry of
"exploratory prayers"



Michelle Carpenter
Terry Ewing
Erin Garcia
Margo Hanne
Carolyn Knippers
Carol McNamarra
Sue Merrill

Would you be surprised to know that the "Prayer of Jabez" was a joke?

Would you be happy to know what kind of prayers are appropriate for you to pray for yourself and what kinds are meant for you to pray for others and others for you?

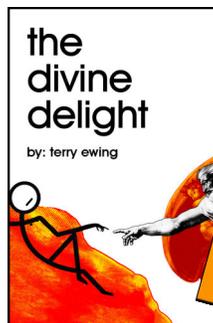
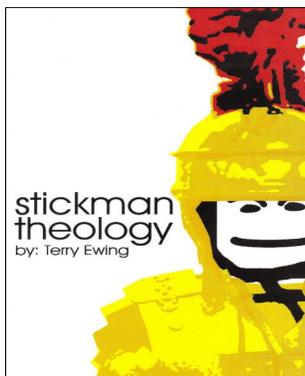
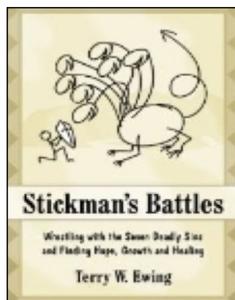
Would you like confidence and freedom to simply enjoy your personal and ministry prayers?

Praying is the most natural thing in the world for Christians; an on going conversation with our best friend, counselor, and confidant; gratitude to our Savior and provider; intercession on behalf of our friends; requests to our Creator. In this regard, a book on prayer may seem presumptuous. When you write a book on Prayer aren't you suggesting that some are praying wrongly, or, at least could be praying better?

That really is not the kind of message we look to promote. So...why the book?

The *Stickman's Prayers* serves two purposes. First, to challenge some ideas that other teaching and preaching concerning prayer has promoted. And, to offer simple encouragements to personal prayer and prayer ministries.

Available at Plumblin for a suggested donation of \$10.00 each



Did you know you can download

Stickman Theology

On your KINDLE?

Did you know that when you shop on Amazon, you could be helping to financially support Plumblin? Through the Amazon smiles program, **Amazon will donate a portion of the sales to Plumblin.** All you need to do is go to smiles.amazon.com, designate Plumblin Ministries, and start shopping! Amazon will then donate 0.5% of the total sales price to Plumblin. Please remember to bookmark that page and you can help us as you shop!

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