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Changes That Heal

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Requests for information should be addressed to:

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ISBN 978-0-310-35178-8 (softcover)

ISBN 978-0-310-31294-9 (ebook)

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Published in association with Yates & Yates, www.yates2.com.

Cover design: Faceout Studio

Interior design: Denise Froehlich

First printing May 2018/Printed in the United States of America

To Julie and Christi
My prayer is that the fruit of your grace
can be seen in these pages.

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Acknowledgments

I did not set out to write this book. It is the product of a lot of people, without whose input this book would not exist. The ideas presented here are composites of many experiences over the last fifteen years that involve faithful servants of Jesus Christ, and I would like to acknowledge some of the persons specifically.

Dr. John Townsend, my friend and associate, has been instrumental in the development of the model presented in this book. Through many hours of dialogue and team teaching, his input and thinking have added much to my understanding of Scripture and of emotional life. I am indebted to him for the loyalty of his friendship, the discipline of his professional life, and the example of his heart, which is attuned to the hurts of others. We have taught this material together for several years, and there has never been a single presentation where some idea of his has not influenced my thinking. I am grateful for his involvement in the concepts presented here.

Dr. John Carter deserves many thanks for introducing me to the understanding of what an incarnational gospel really means, and to the understanding of the value of relationship at the center of any true scholarship. He was a model instructor at Rosemead Graduate School, and his continuing input over the years has shown me that Jesus holds all understanding in his hand.

Dr. Phil Sutherland's model of a wisdom perspective on the

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Scriptures gave me new lenses through which to approach the Bible, and significantly helped me to discover “new wineskins” that could contain the true miracle of therapy. Everything that I think about the ways that humans grow contains the seeds of his perspective. I am thankful for his input into the early manuscript as well.

Dr. Bruce Narramore’s thinking on the concepts of guilt and conscience, as well as on a process understanding of growth, were invaluable to me in my training. His commitment to training professionals has borne fruit for the last twenty years.

I will be forever grateful to Dr. Frank Minirth and Dr. Paul Meier, who fifteen years ago encouraged me to go into the field of helping. If it were not for them, I would certainly be doing something else with my life. And I am grateful to Dr. Althea Horner for her supervision and humanity. Her thinking about how people grow has been more than helpful to me as I have developed my own thinking. She has shown me that psychoanalysis must bow to love. Dr. Doug Wilson deserves special thanks for giving me a place to begin practice and for encouraging me to integrate that practice into ministry, as do the rest of CORE: Dr. Michele McCormick, Monte Pries, Ann Huffman.

Campus Crusade for Christ deserves special thanks for the development of this book. It was under their original request that this material was developed and envisioned. Loren Lilliestrand, then U.S. field director, put the original project together, and deserves much credit for its coming to fruition. In addition, other Crusade staff members have been very encouraging in the development of this work. Special thanks go to Mary Graham for thinking that this could be used in training, and Melanie Ahlquist for reading the manuscript.

The staff at the Minirth-Meier Clinic West have been superior models with whom to work in recent years. Their continued commitment to healing in the lives of others has encouraged me professionally as well as personally. I love seeing the fruits of their daily gifts to others. Dr. Dave Stoop has been a constant encouragement in the writing of this book, and his input as he taught the material with me

was invaluable. Thanks go to him for helping bring metaphor to life. Thanks also go to the Friday group for their application of faith to life.

Also I'd like to thank Dr. Anita Sorenson for reading the manuscript and making some helpful observations. I appreciate the support that Jana Swanson has offered personally and for interacting with the material.

Thanks to Scott Bolinder for believing in the book and for agreeing to publish this revised edition, to Sandy Vander Zicht for her thoughtful and meticulous work in making the manuscript more user friendly, to the rest of the Zondervan team for their encouragement and welcome, and to Sealy Yates for all of his encouragement and support and for the invaluable role he plays in the lives of Christian authors.

I am grateful to Maureen Price, Jody Coker, Lisa Leets, and the Growth Skills Foundation for their incredible work in getting this message to so many pastors and churches over the years. And many thanks to all the churches that have used *Changes That Heal* to help so many people.

If anything comes through in the message of this book, it is that the body of Christ is the only place in which we grow. My community of friends has been the place where I have “grown into” the concepts presented here. They deserve special thanks: Dr. Edward Atkinson for being a true friend through the years and showing me the Lord when he was not easily found; Bill and Julie Jemison for taking a new Christian in and walking through the early days of faith—their love and support will never be forgotten; Guy and Christi Owen for their supreme ability to produce a safe harbor for me; Toby Walker for keeping theology practical and being a truly giving friend; and my parents, whose early and sustained commitment to me have imparted much toward my ability to see God as good.

Changing in Him

Every week I see Christians who are suffering from a whole range of emotional problems: anxiety, loneliness, grief over broken relationships, resentment, and feelings of inadequacy. Often they have been struggling with these problems for years. They are people in pain.

The church is split on how to deal with these hurting people. Those on one side of the issue say that people who struggle emotionally are “in sin.” They “don’t have enough faith,” “are not obedient,” or “don’t spend enough time in the Word.” These people tend to blame the hurting person for his or her pain.

The answers Christians on this side of the argument tend to give sound a lot like the ones Job received from his friends. “God is trying to teach you something.” “Look at the blessings you still enjoy.” “God is testing you.” “Give thanks in spite of your circumstances.” The speeches of Job’s three friends contain elements of truth, but do not often help the person in pain.

A despairing person should have kindness from his friend, said Job, “so that he does not forsake the fear of the Almighty” (Job 6:14 NASB). Job recognized, as only a person in pain can do, that simple answers not only fail to relieve pain, they can literally drive a person further away from God. The hurting person who takes this sort of advice to heart often has two problems instead of one: the *pain* she

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originally had, plus the *guilt* over not being able to apply the answers she was given.

The help offered to Christians in emotional pain over the years has done untold damage and has led many to reach the conclusion Job did: “You smear with lies; You are worthless physicians. O that you would be completely silent, And that it would become your wisdom!” (Job 13:4–5 NASB).

Faced with this kind of help, sufferers either learn to fake healing to remain in the church, or leave the church, deciding that their faith provides little solace for their emotional pain.

People on the other side of the issue reach out and try to touch the pain of hurting people. Looking for answers that work—and not finding them in the church—they turn to psychology. Often psychological methods succeed, and hurting people find relief. But now these people are in a quandary. Was it God or psychology that provided the cure? They know that the relief is from God, but there seems to be no biblical system by which to defend it. They just know that “it works.”

As a Christian, a psychologist, and a fellow struggler, I have stood on both sides of this fence. I have tried the “standard” Christian answers for myself and others, and have come to Job’s conclusion: they are worthless medicine. I have also tried “baptizing” psychological insights so that they would somehow feel “Christian.” This didn’t work either.

Several years ago I found myself saying to God, “I quit. I really don’t know what helps. God, if there is something that does, you will have to show it to me.” Over the next few years, God led me on a spiritual journey in which he graciously answered that simple but desperate prayer.

My purpose in this book is not to get enmeshed in the church’s debate between psychology and theology. I have a different goal in mind. I want to show you that there are biblical solutions for your struggles with depression, anxiety, panic, addictions, and guilt, and that these solutions lie in your understanding certain basic developmental tasks—tasks that you may have failed to complete when you were growing up and tasks that bring changes that heal. These tasks

involve growing up and into the “image” of the one who created you. Let me explain.

The Bible says that we were created “in the image of God” (Gen. 1:27). We were created “like” God. Theologians have filled libraries with books about the attributes, or characteristics, of God. They distinguish between God’s incommunicable attributes—he is immutable (changeless), omnipotent (all-powerful), infinite (without limitations), omniscient (all-knowing), omnipresent (everywhere)—and his communicable attributes—he is just, righteous, holy, loving, and faithful. Obviously, we can’t reflect God’s incommunicable attributes: we can never be all-powerful or all-knowing. But we can become more loving and more holy. The more we become like him in these attributes, the less we will struggle with emotional problems.

The apostle Paul writes that God “predestined [us] to be conformed to the image of his Son” (Rom. 8:29). What he means is that our goal is to become more like him. Our destiny is to pursue this family resemblance to God. The problem we face is figuring out *how* to become more Christlike. How do we work on becoming “holy” when we feel so powerless to control our eating habits? How can we be “loving” when we’re burned out by all the requests for our time and energy?

Since becoming like God doesn’t seem practical, we try to solve our day-to-day problems by splitting them into two different categories. We ask, “Is this an emotional problem or a spiritual problem?” If we are struggling with an emotional problem, the Christian psychologist is called in; if it’s a spiritual problem, the pastor gets the call. We assume that our depression, panic, guilt, or addictions have little or nothing to do with our spirituality; they are two separate issues.

But separating our problems into “emotional” problems and “spiritual” problems *is* part of the problem. All of our problems stem from our failure to reflect the image of God. Because of Adam and Eve’s fall into sin in the Garden of Eden, we have not developed the “image” of God in the vital areas of our person, and we are not functioning as we were created to function. Thus, we are in pain.

CHANGES THAT HEAL

In the course of my own spiritual and professional journey, I have identified four aspects of the personality of God that, if we would cultivate them, would greatly improve our day-to-day functioning. God is able to do four things that we, his children, have difficulty doing:

1. Bond with others.
2. Separate from others.
3. Sort out issues of good and bad.
4. Take charge as an adult.

Without the ability to perform these basic godlike functions, we can literally remain stuck for years, and growth and change can elude our grasp. In this book I will explain these four developmental tasks, the barriers that get in the way of our achieving them, and the skills we need for completing them.

Because we live in a fallen world, we all have deficits in all four areas. Transforming the effects of the fall and growing in the image of God is not an easy task. But God has promised that the “good work” he began in us, he will carry on “to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 1:6).

But before we set about this task of growing into the image of God, of changing in him, we need to take a brief look at two major qualities of God’s character—qualities that, if properly understood, will help us undertake our journey with vigor.

PART I

Three
Ingredients
of
Growth

CHAPTER 1

Grace and Truth

Once upon a time in a faraway galaxy, there was a highly advanced people. They had everything they could ever desire: technology to solve every problem, and more leisure than we get in a lifetime. But they were bored. Bored to tears. They needed something new—something exciting—to liven up their planet.

A committee was established to look into the matter. They discussed coming up with a new sport. Or developing a new amusement park. Finally, an alien named Beezy proposed the winning idea.

“How about creating a god?” he suggested.

Everyone agreed it was a wonderful idea. “It will give our people something to do on Sunday,” one said. “And it will be great for conversations,” said another.

So they tried to invent a god. But to no avail. Beezy, who had been placed in charge of the research and development of a new god, called all the committee members together.

“Look, this just isn’t working,” he said. “What good is a god we can invent ourselves? We’re smart enough to know *that’s* not a real god. Why don’t we *find* us a god instead—like that God the earthlings worship?”

The committee agreed, and soon afterward Beezy took a business

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trip to the Planet Earth. Under his invisible cloak, he visited dozens and dozens of churches and religious institutions. He took copious notes and spent hours writing up his report.

When he returned, the committee gathered, eager to hear of his findings. “Fellow aliens,” he greeted them. “I have returned not with one god, but with two.”

A gasp of astonishment rippled through the room.

“The name of the first god, or should I say goddess, is Grace. A very attractive goddess she is. She talked about love often. ‘Get along, be friends, be nice,’ she’d say. ‘And if you can’t be good, I’ll forgive you anyway.’” Beezy looked perplexed. “The only thing is, I’m not sure what she would forgive, since they didn’t seem to have any rules to break.”

Beezy went on. “I especially liked the things the followers of Grace did, like feeding poor people and visiting prisoners in jail. However”—he shook his head—“these followers of Grace seemed so *lost*. They kept doing the same bad things over and over, and they never seemed to know where they were going.

“Then there’s the other god.” Beezy took a deep breath. “This god is a man, and his name is Truth. Truth is just as mean as Grace is nice. He kept telling the people all sorts of things about them that made them feel very bad, and his followers did the same thing. But there’s a good side to Truth,” Beezy reassured the committee. “He campaigns against some very nasty enemies, such as lying, cheating, adultery, abortion, and drunkenness. He’s like a big religious street sweeper, sweeping away all his enemies. The only trouble is, he not only sweeps away bad things, he also sweeps away the people who do the bad things. As for the smiles you see on the followers of Grace—forget it. All Truth’s followers do is scowl and scream.”

Needless to say, after hearing Beezy’s report, the committee members were ready to opt for the new amusement park because they didn’t like either god. But Beezy had one last suggestion.

“We have all this wonderful technology for mixing repelling elements, like oil and water,” he said. “How about if we try mixing Grace and Truth?”

Grace and Truth Divided

Our God is a God “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). We often hear the phrase “full of grace and truth,” but we rarely stop and realize its implications for our struggles here on earth. What *are* grace and truth? Why are they so important?

Let’s take grace first. *Grace is the unmerited favor of God toward people.* Grace is something we have not earned and do not deserve. As author and pastor Frederick Buechner says, “Grace is something you can never get but only be given. There’s no way to earn it or deserve it or bring it about any more than you can deserve the taste of raspberries and cream or earn good looks or bring about your own birth.”¹

To put it another way, grace is unconditional love and acceptance. Such love is the foundation upon which all healing of the human spirit rests. It is also the essence of God. “God is love,” writes the apostle John (1 John 4:8). And God loves us freely, without condition.

The Bible itself does not clearly distinguish between grace and love. As the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* comments, “Love stresses God’s personal disposition toward unworthy creatures, while grace stresses his freedom from obligation in saving them. But the distinction is not clearly nor consistently made. Both love and grace come to us through Christ (Rom. 5:8; Gal. 1:6). And both are unique in that they are undeserved.”

Grace is the *first* ingredient necessary for growing up in the image of God. Grace is unbroken, uninterrupted, unearned, accepting *relationship*. It is the kind of relationship humanity had with God in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were loved and provided for. They knew God’s truth, and they had perfect freedom to do God’s will. In short, they were secure; they had no shame and anxiety. They could be who they truly were.

Perhaps you have experienced this kind of love and grace with someone. You can be exactly who you are. You do not need to hide your thoughts or feelings; you do not need to perform; you do not need

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to do anything to be loved. Someone knows the real you, and loves you anyway.

Grace, then, is the relational aspect of God's character. It shows itself in his unconditional connection to us. The first "god" Beezy discovered had this characteristic: Grace was a goddess of compassion and relationship. Her followers did all sorts of loving things for one another; they gave of themselves freely. They tried to connect with people who were in pain and to help them out of their pain. They lived in togetherness.

Those who worshiped Grace had only one problem: they heard little truth spoken. As a result, they continued to fall into bad situations that required more and more grace. It's not that the goddess Grace minded giving more. Grace's grace had no limit. However, Grace's followers needed direction to keep them from falling into the same old patterns over and over again. They needed guidance to steer them away from trouble.

This is where Truth comes in. The second god that Beezy found was very good at setting limits on bad behavior. He gave his followers lots of direction; he told them exactly what they could do and what they could not do. They knew clearly the difference between what was right and what was wrong, what was good and what was not good. They had firm boundaries about where they could play and where they could not.

Truth is the *second* ingredient necessary for growing up in the image of God. Truth is what is real; it describes how things really are. Just as grace is the *relational* aspect of God's character, truth is the *structural* aspect of his character. Truth is the skeleton life hangs upon; it adds shape to everything in the universe. God's truth leads us to what is real, to what is accurate. Just as our DNA contains the form that our physical life will take, God's truth contains the form that our soul and spirit should take.

All of this sounds wonderful, but as was the case with Grace, Truth had his own problems. He was mean. He didn't seem to care about the people who were violating his standards. All he cared about

was wiping out the bad. He had none of the compassion Grace demonstrated; at times he seemed downright uncaring. In short, he had no relational aspects; he lacked forgiveness, favor, mercy, compassion—all of the attributes that flowed freely from Grace. If people failed, he just threw them out, or yelled at them.

As Grace left Beezy wanting structure, Truth left Beezy wanting love.



All of us, to some degree, have experienced these two gods—the loving one for whom anything goes and the hard one who lets nothing slide. As you have probably already realized, these two gods are aspects of the one true God’s nature, aspects that different churches emphasize. What you may not realize is that these different “gods” are really symbols of the human condition after the fall, when sin ripped grace and truth apart.

Truth without Grace

When Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden, they had both grace and truth united in one God. When they sinned, they drove a wedge between themselves and God; they lost their grace-filled and truthful relationship with God.

Without grace, Adam and Eve felt shame: when they heard God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, they hid from him. When God called out, “Where are you?” Adam explained that he was hiding because he was afraid (Gen. 3:8–10). Shame and guilt had entered the world; human beings were no longer safe.

After Adam and Eve cut themselves off from a relationship with God, they also severed their connection to grace and truth, for those come through relationship with God. However, God did not let them stay isolated for long. Seeing Adam and Eve in their lost state, he decided to give them direction; he gave them truth in the form of the

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law. The law is a blueprint, or a structure, for people to live by. It offers them guidance, and it sets limits for them.

There was only one problem: God gave them truth without grace. Adam and Eve had to try to live up to God's standards. They soon learned that they could never measure up. No matter how hard they tried to perform, they would always come up short. *Truth without grace is judgment.* It sends you straight to hell, literally and experientially.

Paul writes to the Romans about truth without grace—the law—and the things it does to us:

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin. (3:19–20)

Law brings wrath. (4:15)

The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. (5:20)

For when we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death. (7:5)

Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. (7:9–10)

And to the Galatians Paul writes:

For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." (3:10)

We were held in custody under the law. (3:23)

You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. (5:4)

And James gives us this discouraging bit of news:

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. (2:10)

When we look at what the Scripture says about the law, about truth without grace, we see that the law silences us, brings anger, increases sin, arouses sinful passions, brings death, puts us under a curse, holds us prisoner, alienates us from Christ, and judges us harshly. No wonder Bezy did not like Truth!

The law without grace destroys us. No one ever grows when they are under the law, for the law puts us into a strictly legal relationship with God: *"I'll love you only if you do what is true or right."* Getting truth before grace, or truth before relationship, brings guilt, anxiety, anger, and a host of other painful emotions, as this story of Ruth shows.

Ruth's missionary father had insisted that his twenty-two-year-old daughter come to see me so she could be admitted to our inpatient treatment program. Ruth, a college student, was suffering from depression. She had no appetite and had trouble sleeping and studying. Her father accompanied her to the appointment.

"What's the problem?" I asked Ruth, after we had chatted for a few minutes. But it was her father who responded.

"Well, it's pretty obvious," he said, folding his arms across his chest. "She's not living like she should."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"She's doing drugs and sleeping around," he said with disgust. "Plus she's flunking out of college, and she has no idea what she wants to do with her life." Before I could ask another question, he continued, "If she read her Bible and went to church, she wouldn't be so

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depressed. But all she wants to do is hang around those reprobate friends of hers.”

“What would happen if she began to do all of the things you think she should?” I asked.

“Well, then she would be happy like her mother and me, and the Lord would bless her.”

I could see that I was not going to get very far with Ruth’s father, so I thanked him for his information and asked if I could talk with Ruth alone.

When her father had left, Ruth was still hesitant to talk. She refused to answer any of my questions with more than a yes or no. Finally I said, “Ruth, I think if I had to live with your father, I’d take drugs too. Does his attitude have anything to do with your discouragement?”

Ruth nodded. Her eyes filled with tears.

“You are an adult and this is an adults’ hospital,” I said. “I don’t see that you are in any danger to yourself or anyone else, so you are free to go. But before you leave, let me tell you what I think is going on.

“I don’t know all of the story, but I can tell that you’re very depressed, and I *don’t* think it is because you aren’t doing the things your father thinks you should do. I think there are other reasons, very good, logical reasons, that he doesn’t understand. If you would like to stay, I think we can help you feel better. If you do stay, though, it will have to be your choice, not his. If he’s upset about something, he can get help for himself.”

Ruth sat stiffly in her chair, staring at me through her tears. “I’ll leave you alone a few minutes to think about it,” I said.

Ruth did decide to check in, and what I had suspected was true. Ruth had had many years of “truth without grace.” As a result, she was experiencing the things the Bible says the law produces: bad feelings and failure. Everywhere she turned, she ran into some “should,” and very little acceptance. The law of sin and death had taken its toll on her, and it was a painful struggle for her to break free of its grip.

As I watched her struggle, I could not help thinking back to what the Bible says about truth without grace: it silences us, brings anger,

Changes That Heal

Four Practical Steps to a Happier, Healthier You

By Dr. Henry Cloud

Many of us struggle with anxiety, loneliness, and feelings of inadequacy. We know that God created us in his image, but how can we be loving when we feel burned out? How can we be free when we struggle with addiction? Will we ever enjoy the complete healing God promises?

Changes That Heal by renowned psychologist and New York Times bestselling author Dr. Henry Cloud offers a down-to-earth plan to help you recover from the wounds of the past and grow more and more into the image of God. Combining his professional expertise and personal experience, Dr. Cloud guides you through four basic ways to become joy-filled, mature followers of Christ: connect more deeply with others, separate from others in healthy ways, understand the good and the bad in yourself and others, and grow into greater emotional and spiritual maturity.

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The Amazon logo, featuring the word "amazon" in a lowercase, sans-serif font with a curved arrow underneath it pointing from the letter 'a' to the letter 'z'.The Barnes & Noble Booksellers logo, with "BARNES & NOBLE" in a bold, serif font and "BOOKSELLERS" in a smaller, sans-serif font below it.The BAM! Books-A-Million logo, with "BAM!" in a large, bold, blue sans-serif font and "BOOKS-A-MILLION" in a smaller, blue sans-serif font below it.The Christianbook.com logo, featuring a blue icon of an open book with rays of light above it, followed by the text "Christianbook.com" in a blue sans-serif font.The faithgateway logo, with a colorful, multi-pointed star icon to the left of the text "faithgateway" in a lowercase, sans-serif font.The Parable Christian Stores logo, with the word "PARABLE" in a large, stylized, red serif font and "CHRISTIAN STORES" in a smaller, red sans-serif font below it.