
Who Are We? Needs, Longings, and the Image of God in Man

by Edward T. Welch

What do you need? It depends on who is asking and when they ask. If you were lost in the desert and dying of thirst, you would answer, "Water." If your pastor asked the question during a sermon, and especially if he said, "What do you *really* need?," then you would probably say, "Jesus." If, however, you ask this question in a counseling office, the answer is anybody's guess: respect, love, understanding, someone who listens, self-esteem, obedient kids, safety, control, excitement.... The list is limited only by human imagination and desires.

Welcome to the word "need," one of the more confusing terms in the English language. Everybody uses it. In fact, it might be one of the first words that children learn, being a direct descendant of "gimme." But the word has a broad and ambiguous field of meaning; it can express ideas that are completely unrelated. For example, "I need a vacation" is a cultural way of saying that you are getting tired of the day-to-day grind of your work. "I need my wife's respect" reveals a belief that you will experience a psychological deficit if you don't receive this perceived psychic necessity. "I need water" is a way of expressing a true biological need that, when denied, will actually lead to poor health or death. "I need sex" typically expresses a lustful heart, but the heart fools itself into thinking that it is asking only for a biological necessity. Some meanings are almost neutral: a wife says to her husband, "We need a gallon of milk and a loaf of bread." Other meanings are laden with complications: the husband retorts, "I need you to get off my case." What do we mean by "need"?

Clarity on how you and others use this popular word is the first step. Further examination and biblical reflection will lead us eventually to one of the most critical topics in all of counseling: the image of God in man. As Emil Brunner said, "The doctrine of the image of God determines the fate of every theology. The whole opposition of Catholicism and Protestantism originates here." To which we might add, the differences, profound or

nuanced, between various allegedly biblical counseling models also originate here. "What do people need?" can only ultimately be understood by answering, "What does it mean to be human?" In this article I will examine the language of needs as a way into the study of this most important doctrine.

The Popular Use of Needs

First, some definitions. A common use of the word need is as an exaggerated way to talk about *desire*. It expresses the fact that you really want something, but you know you can live without it. Within this category you will hear comments such as "I need a chocolate bar," "I need a vacation," or "I need sex." Interestingly, the prerequisite for these perceived needs is a previous acquaintance with the desired object or activity. For example, a person will only say "I need a chocolate bar" if he or she has already tasted one. If you talk about a need for chocolate with people who have never tasted chocolate, they will not have the felt need. In a similar way, people will say they need sex if they have had a previous sexual relationship or have had a vicarious sexual relationship by way of pornography. Those who have not had a sexual relationship or been exposed to a highly sexualized culture will not describe their sexual anticipation as a need. Such people may look forward to marital sexual relations, but they are less likely to talk about sexual intercourse as a necessity.

Need-as-hyperbole-for-desire is probably the most common definition of need, but there is a range of intended meaning even within this. At one end "need" is sometimes a humorous way to express a desire. At the other end the word overlaps with perceived biological needs, a second meaning of the word. Biological needs represent a more straightforward use of the word "need." The satisfaction of these needs is necessary for continued physical life. You need water and food. In most climates you also need shelter and clothing. If these needs are not met, you will die. Biological needs become confusing only when pushed closely to the need-as-desire category.¹ For example, "I need a beer" has been squeezed into this category for decades. That is, alcohol is no longer the satisfier of a desire that results from experience, practice, and lust; rather, the "need" is perceived as a biological drive that is nearly irresistible. Or

¹Or when they are absolutized and replace our relationship with God: Matthew 6:32-33, 10:28. We might call this category need-as-hyperbole-for-life-sustenance.

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consider the popular “I need sex.” When this moves from the desire category to the biological, the assumption is that sex is a biological need, nearly identical to food and water. The reasoning is that since it is a biological need, sexual self-control is unnatural; the only option is to practice “safe” sex. Abstinence is both old-fashioned and biologically untenable because of our “need.”

Exaggerated desires and biological necessities don’t exhaust the various ways need is defined. Psychological needs, a third definition, are a relatively recent innovation in the language of need. The notion of intra-psychic and psycho-social needs comes out of twentieth century psychology and has received, at least in the United States, an enthusiastic reception. It suggests that in the same way that we have certain biological needs that must be met or we will physically die, so we have psychological needs that must be met lest we become psychologically starved and weak, and begin to act badly. In other words, happiness, psychological stability, and socially constructive behavior hinge on satiating these needs. The list of presumed psychological needs can be a long one, but typically it contains desires connected to the way we evaluate ourselves or to what we get in our relationships with others: needs for significance, acceptance, respect, admiration, love, belonging, meaning, self-esteem, and so on. These probably best fit somewhere between need-as-hyperbole-for-desire and need-as-hyperbole-for-life-sustenance. But in popular use these are definitely an expanding category unto themselves: “need-as-hyperbole-for-a-sense-of-psychological-and-social-well-being.”

There is at least one other field of meaning to the word “need.” This fourth category has a long history: spiritual needs. We need righteousness and holiness. We need forgiveness and power to change. We need Jesus. We need His redemptive and sustaining grace if we are to live. We are desperate, needy people—whether we know it or not. We are completely unable to pay back God for our sins against Him, and in ourselves we are unable to follow His commands. In fact, the essence of faith is conscious neediness and dependence on God: “Blessed are the poor in spirit” (Matthew 5:3).

This distinct biblical category, “need-for-objective-blessings-from-God,” is the supreme need. It relativizes all lesser needs into hyperbole. But like biological needs, the category of spiritual needs has been greatly stretched in contemporary usage. At one end of the spectrum is the continued objective need for forgiveness of sins and other redemptive blessings. But at the other end, the category of spiritual need has overlapped into psychological needs, now redefined as spiritual needs. Secular psychologists had defined psychological needs as things

to be met by other people, by cognitive restructuring, by appropriate accomplishments, by self-actualizing experiences. But many Christians now believe that these intra-psychic and psycho-social needs must be met in relationship with Christ. The more traditional redemptive needs have been extended to include needs for a sense of self-esteem, love, significance, and meaning.

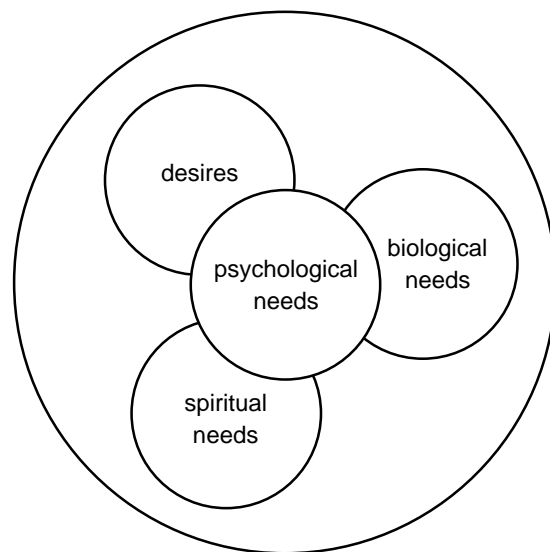


Figure 1. The popular uses of the word “need.”

A Brief History of Needs

Within the broad field of popular meanings for the word “need,” I want to narrow my discussion to psychological needs and their intersection with spiritual needs. Certainly, a discussion of the increasingly fuzzy boundary between needs-as-desires and needs-as-biological is a critical topic for the church. But this area is being addressed through biblical studies on alcohol abuse and homosexuality.² The area of psychological needs, however, has been neglected.

It is as if this category of needs has entered into contemporary Christian thought without any biblical consultation. This intrusion is understandable, considering the nearly universal experience of psychological need. After all, what does it feel like when a friend lets you down, or you are unfairly criticized, or someone manipulates you? The reactions these experiences evoke in you are seen to be manifestations of psychological needs. But no matter how commonplace such experi-

² For example, Greg Bahnsen, *Homosexuality: A Biblical View* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978); Edward Welch, *Addictive Behavior* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, forthcoming).

ences are, the needs they are said to reveal are hard to locate biblically. Page through the index of any standard theological text, and psychological needs will be absent. The only place they can be found is in the history of secular psychology, with occasional borrowing from medicine and biology.

Medicine has a long history with the idea of need. For example, we develop deficiency diseases when the body has certain needs. The body has a need for food, and it also has a need for certain *types* of food. Vitamin C deficiency led to scurvy for many sailors. Calcium deficiency can cause fragile, brittle bones. Good health depends on meeting bodily needs. Scripture assumes this kind of need and acknowledges it especially in Matthew 6:25-34. With regard to food and clothing, "your heavenly Father knows that you need them."

This need-deficit model, which has worked so well for medicine, was later applied to psychology. The best known borrower of this metaphor was Freud. His training as a medical doctor left him with a need theory of bodily function, and it took only a slight nudge for him to apply it to psychological processes. Although Freud did not specifically use these terms, in the United States he has been considered the father of "the need for sexual expression" and "the need for permissive parents." The basic contours of his model essentially reflect a need-deficit view of the person.

Borrowing from Freud were early behaviorists such as Dollard and Miller. These men took the simple stimulus-response model of the behaviorists and supplemented it with the notion that we have basic drives that motivate us. These drives are especially associated with food and sex, but these so-called "primary" drives could be coupled with many other internal experiences, leading to a complex series of psychological needs that clamor for a reduction in intensity.

But the true popularizer of psychological needs was Abraham Maslow. His self-actualization theory suggests that we have, at birth, a hierarchy of needs. According to Maslow the most basic needs are biological and safety needs. When these needs are met, we are then able to satisfy the basic psychological needs: the need for belonging and love, the need for esteem from other people, and the need for self-esteem.

What makes people neurotic? My answer... was, in brief, that neurosis seemed at its core, and in its beginning, to be a deficiency disease: that it was born out of being deprived of certain satisfactions which I called needs in the same sense that water and amino acids and calcium are needs, namely that their absence produces illness. Most neuroses involved... ungratified wishes for safety, for belongingness and identification, for close love

relationships and for respect and prestige.³

These three major schools of thought in secular psychology all address the experience of need. Although they each conceptualize needs (or drives) differently, they agree on three basic points: (1) psychological needs exist, (2) they are an essential part of being human, and (3) unmet needs will result in some kind of personal pathology. To these essentials can be added one further characteristic of psychological need-deficit theories: they are distinctly American. Need theories can thrive only in a context where the emphasis is on the individual rather than the community and where consumption is a way of life. If you ask Asians or Africans about their psychological needs, they will not even understand the question!

As these views of psychological needs moved into the fabric of Western culture, many Christians were immediately attracted to them. They seemed to map onto life experiences, and, especially with Freud and Maslow, they seemed to offer a deeper explanation for these experiences than did the Scripture itself. For example, the suffering wife who felt like she needed love now had her sense of need legitimized and explained. She felt the need for love because that was one of the deepest needs with which God created her. We are designed, she now understood, to need love. Furthermore, if we have not received it from significant persons, then we will be in a deficit and must get that love from somewhere else. Any reactive sin and misery result from living in a deficit state from unmet needs.

Popular writers in the Christian recovery movement have assumed these needs and helped establish them as an interpretive guide for many. For example, Sandra Wilson, in her book, *Released from Shame*, simply states what many people feel: past hurts reveal our psychological needs.

As a child, Sarah was emotionally abandoned by both parents, and she learned to disown her legitimate needs for companionship, encouragement, and comfort....The problem is that fearing and denying our natural human needs and feelings prevents us from being fully the way God created us. So how can we be more real, more fully human? We begin to own and experience those painful unmet needs and the emotions that accompany them.⁴

This vignette suggests—in more traditional biblical terms—that Sarah was sinned against by her family and that

³ Abraham Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* (New York: Van Nostrand, 2nd edition, 1968), page 21.

⁴ Sandra Wilson, *Released From Shame* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1990), page 110.

these hurts do not leave quickly. But did God create her with certain psychological needs for companionship, encouragement and comfort? It *feels* as if God created us this way. In fact, it feels that way so much, we might not even raise the question if it hadn't been that these critical needs were "discovered" by psychologists who knew nothing about God's Word. Why does it seem that Scripture is relatively silent on these presumably critical features of the human condition?

The Christian book, *Love Gone Wrong*, also assumes such needs.

The catastrophes that bring about emotional vulnerability usually shake our sense of security and significance. Psychologist Larry Crabb proposes that these are our two greatest emotional needs. They can be just as strong as our biological needs to eat and sleep.⁵

The influential Minirth and Meier Clinics agree that there are biblically-supportable, biologically-rooted psychological or relationship needs. *Love is a Choice* unequivocally states that we have a "God-given need to be loved that is born into every human infant. It is a legitimate need that must be met from cradle to grave. If children are deprived of love—if that primal need for love is not met—they carry the scars for life."⁶ They then offer a metaphor for the person. The person, the authors state, is actually a cup that is in various stages of fullness. Deep inside are love cups that need to be filled. We are cups that feel empty.

The Christian community walks right in step with the secular theorists up to this point, but then it adds a significant twist to the secular, Maslovian view of needs. The popular evangelical view, like the secular view, is that problems arise out of unmet relational needs. However, the way these needs are satisfied is uniquely evangelical. Instead of looking for relational needs to be met solely in another relationship or some type of autonomous self-love, Christian theorists suggest that we can have these needs met in Christ. Christ offers unconditional love and a sense of personal significance; Christ meets our need for companionship, encouragement, and comfort.

At first this has a plausible biblical ring to it. Christ *is* a friend; God *is* a loving Father; Christians *do* experience a sense of meaningfulness and trust in knowing God's love. It makes Christ the answer to our problems. Yet since these needs remain unsupported biblically, we should pause to consider whether there may be a differ-

ent biblical interpretation for the experience of emptiness. The experience is real, but embedding it in constitutional, psychological needs may be wrong.

Notice, for example, some of the fruit of this psychological-evangelical model. It essentially creates two different gospels: one for spiritual needs and one for psychological needs. The good news for spiritual needs is that our sins are forgiven, we are adopted as children of God through faith, and we are given eternal life. The good news for psychological needs is that Christ fills us with identity, significance, personal respect, and self-worth. He makes us feel good about ourselves. But is that really the gospel? Doesn't the gospel, in a very real sense, obliterate our preoccupation with ourselves, equipping us to be preoccupied with loving God and others? Is it possible that looking for self-worth or significance is a fundamentally misguided goal? Should we be asking other questions such as, "Why am I so interested in *me*?"

Before developing this further, there is one more stage in the history of need theories that brings us to the present. Currently, this popular and widely assumed view of the person is being questioned seriously in *secular* circles. The concern is that an absorption with neediness and emptiness is "unhealthy" both individually and culturally. For example, the popular press has criticized need theories as the theoretical justification for our culture's rampant selfism and chronic victimhood. Many have observed that if we are truly in the shape of a cup, then we are passive recipients rather than active interpreters and responsible actors in our world. The blame never rests with ourselves because all pathology is a result of deficits forged in past relationships. At least, suggests the media, this creates chaos in the justice system. "It will not be long, at this rate, before the mandatory sentence for a crime of violence is a hug and a good cry."⁷

The academic press is also challenging the adoption of the empty cup as the definition for the modern person. In a significant article in the *American Psychologist*, Philip Cushman argued that the empty self is a dangerous product of a culture that wants to be filled, both psychically and materially.⁸ The culprits, suggest Cushman, are the psychological profession and the advertising industry. Both attempt to create a sense of need in order to sell products. Furthermore, the psychological selling of needs has led to a generation of empty, fragile, depressed individuals.

This brief historical overview of the development of

⁵Tom Whiteman and Randy Petersen, *Love Gone Wrong* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1994), page 90.

⁶Robert Hemfelt, Frank Minirth, and Paul Meier, *Love is a Choice* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989), page 34.

⁷*The Economist*, (February 26, 1994), page 15.

⁸Philip Cushman, "Why the Self is Empty," *American Psychologist* (May, 1990), page 599.

need theories suggests that these theories arise more out of an amenable culture than a God-given predisposition. They can comfortably exist only in a culture that is oriented to the individual more than the group, victimhood more than responsibility, and consuming more than producing. If this is true, the task still must be to biblically explain the experience of needs, but there is no urgency to locate them in God's creative act. They are not necessarily inherent to humanness.

The Emerging Theology of Needs: An Experience in Search of a Biblical Category

While there have been Christian critiques of the category of psychological needs,⁹ within the Christian community the psychological needs construct has been resilient. One reason for this persistence is that most people *feel* this sense of need, and it is hard to argue with what people feel. Another reason is that many Christians believe that a need theory has already been biblically established. It has not been established by finding "psychological needs" in a Bible concordance or theological text. But they believe that these needs can be inferred from prominent biblical categories: the person-as-body-soul-spirit and the person-as-created-in-the-image-of-God.

The Person as Three Substances. The tripartite view of the person was the first seemingly biblical category asked to carry the freight of psychological needs. In essence, this view states that the whole person consists of three parts or substances: the body, soul, and spirit. The popular thought is that the physical body has physical needs, the soul has psychological needs, and the spirit has spiritual needs. Accordingly, the person with physical needs goes to a physician, the person with psychological needs goes to a psychologist, and the person with spiritual needs goes to a pastor. These three categories offer a hand-in-glove fit with the popular definitions of "needs."

This basic formula, however, as simple and biblical as it appears, is actually full of problematic implications. It has essentially given secular psychology permission to give shape to one-third of the person. "Soul" becomes a blank category to be filled with psychological constructs. As medicine has contributed many details to the category of the body, so secular psychology can now contribute to (or completely flesh out) our understanding of the soul. Furthermore, there need be only cursory

biblical analysis of this data because it has already been done "up front" by naming the category as "soul." A question, however, is, Do we even *have* a soul that is distinct from the spirit?

The Image of God in Man. The other category used as the biblical background for psychological needs is the image of God in man. This is the core doctrine for understanding the person. If psychological needs cannot be found here, then they are not God-given, created needs.

The Christian theorist who has made the clearest and most explicit connection between our sense of psychological need and being created in the image of God is Larry Crabb. He is keenly aware that the experience of need, if it is to be considered as the essence of personhood, must be embedded in a biblical understanding of the image of God in man. Articulated most clearly in his books *Understanding People* and *Inside Out*,¹⁰ Crabb indicates that the image of God in man has to do with what is similar between God and man. What is similar, Crabb suggests, is that God is a person and we too are persons. To be a person means that we have deep longings for relationship: "We all long for what God designed us to enjoy: tension-free relationships filled with deep, loving acceptance and with opportunities to make a difference to someone else."¹¹

Deep longings, in Crabb's model, are the defining essence of both God and ourselves. These longings are defined as a subjective experience that is deeper than emotion. It is a passion for relationship. For God, this means that He exists in joyous relationship with himself—Father, Son, Holy Spirit. It also means that God has a "longing for restoration of relationship with His children."¹² For ourselves, this longing is more passive. It means that "each of us fervently wants someone to see us exactly as we are, warts and all, and still accept us."¹³

To this longing for love and acceptance Crabb adds a second basic need. We also long to make a difference in the world. We have, according to Larry Crabb, a "thirst for impact." This is defined as "a desire to be adequate for a meaningful task, a desire to know that we are capable of taking hold of our world and doing something valuable as well."¹⁴ It is unclear how this is similar to God, and Crabb does not attempt to offer biblical support for this. Lacking an exegetical referent, this particular aspect of the image of God in man tends

⁹ For example, Tony Walters offered an early, thoughtful critique in *Need: The New Religion* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1986). A challenging secular critique was offered by Wallach and Wallach in *Psychology's Sanction for Selfishness* (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman, 1983).

¹⁰ Larry Crabb, *Understanding People* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987); *Inside Out* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1988).

¹¹ *Inside Out*, pages 53ff.

¹² *Understanding People*, page 94.

¹³ *Ibid.*, page 112.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, page 114.

to be less apparent in Crabb's later theoretical work; longing for relationship is the sole survivor. Therefore, a summary of the image of God in man is that persons are made for relationship, therefore they long for it. Without this longing fulfilled we are empty cups.

These core longings are the ultimate explanation for human feelings and behavior. Everything comes out of this central essence. How I will deal with my longings becomes the fundamental question of human existence. According to Crabb we answer this question in one of two ways. People either act independently of God and look to fill themselves with other objects or people, or people look to Christ in dependence and find relationship longings met in Him (see Figure 2). This is the basic model of the image of God in man that *Understanding People* teaches, and it provides the theoretical structure for Crabb's counseling model. It is also the theology that undergirds much of what is happening in contemporary Christian counseling.

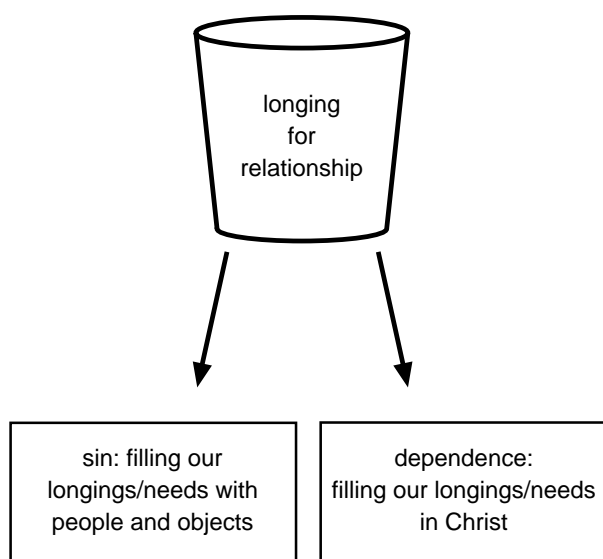


Figure 2. The model for the image-as-relationship.

When this model is evaluated by our experience, it can seem to fit perfectly. Like other influential models, this model tends to "work." However, it has a number of implications that are not obvious at first glance. For example, this model has made a dramatic statement about our deepest problem: it is longings, not sin. Followed consistently, the model would then suggest that the gospel is, most deeply, intended to meet psychological needs more than cleanse from sin. The "hollow core" of longings becomes our basic problem. Taken to its logical conclusion, Christ becomes first a need meeter (for our deepest need) then, secondarily, a redeemer (for the wrong ways we react to our deepest need).

Human relationships are also affected by this theoretical foundation. For example, marriage and relationships become mutual need-meeting. Of course, Crabb indicates that people are not capable in themselves of filling what only God can fill, so the sole responsibility of filling others' longings does not reside with ourselves. Yet the basic structure for marriage is that it consists of two psychologically needy people whose mutual need-meeting is an expression of God's more perfect need-meeting. This seems to fit the experience of marriage, and it also seems to square with Scripture's view of love. People are commanded to love because others need love.

Is it possible, however, that we are called to love not so much because the other person is empty and needs love but because love is the way in which we imitate Christ, by which we reveal Him in the way we live our lives, and so bring glory to God? Is it also possible that the center of gravity for need-based relationships is myself, and not God, as it should be if we take seriously our identity as bearers of God's image? Beneath the commitment to love the other person, and beneath the thankfulness that God is meeting needs in Christ, is a core of desperate longings that focus primarily on me. The natural resting point of need theories is *my need*, not the perfections of God, whose image I was created to reflect. The difference may seem subtle, but need theories rest on the individual person rather than God. This certainly does not mean that Crabb and other Christian need theorists are not interested in the glory of God. But it does mean that these theories, because of weaknesses in their understanding of the image of God in man, make it uncertain whether the Christian should focus on God in His own right, not simply as an adjunct to "my needs."

The theory of image-as-relationship has very little exegetical support. Neither *Understanding People* nor any other evangelical discussion of this version of the image of God in man can establish a clear biblical foundation. Instead, as even Crabb himself admits, this most critical theological category is developed from inferences in Scripture. On the topic of creational longings, Crabb states, "The Scriptures, however, seem quiet on the subject."¹⁵ It is because of this lack of exegetical support that it is essential to reexamine the biblical theme of the image of God in man.

A Biblical Examination of Needs

In contrast to a trisected view of the person¹⁶ and a

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, page 109.

¹⁶ Not all trichotomists push for such precise, technical distinctions between soul and spirit.

need-based understanding of the image of God in man, there are alternatives that rest on a firmer exegetical foundation.

The Person as a Duality. The tripartite view arises because there are different shades of meaning for spirit and soul. Like most words, these two have fuzzy boundaries. They are not technical words such as “electron,” but they are more like the word “need,” deriving much of their meaning from their context. The question, however, is whether these shades of meaning are sufficient to suggest that they are two distinct created substances. Or, are spirit and soul (like “heart,” “mind,” “conscience”) slightly different perspectives on the immaterial inner person (2 Corinthians 4:16)?

A number of passages suggest that the person is best understood as two substances—material and immaterial—“which belong together although they possess the capability of separation.”¹⁷ From this vantage point spirit and soul have different emphases, but they are essentially interchangeable as different perspectives on the immaterial person. For example, Matthew 10:28 suggests that the person is two substances, material body and immaterial soul: “Don’t be afraid of him who can kill the body [material substance] but cannot kill the soul [immaterial substance].” First Corinthians 7:34 also suggests that we are two substances—material and immaterial—but they are referred to as body and spirit rather than body and soul. James 2:26 is consistent with this duality and refers to it using body and spirit: “the body without the spirit is dead.”

The two passages most frequently cited for the trichotomist view are Hebrews 4:12 and 1 Thessalonians 5:23. Hebrews 4:12 states, “For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any two-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Some take this as referring to a dissection of the parts of the person. That is, the Word of God can separate soul from spirit; therefore, they are two separate substances that are part of the whole person. However, if the intent of the passage is to speak technically about the parts of the person, then there are at least four substances that comprise the whole person: the soul, spirit, body, and heart; and the heart would be further divided into thoughts and intents. It is more likely that the passage suggests that God’s Word penetrates the indivisible aspect of the person. It goes to the very depths of the person’s being. It goes *within* the substance of the person, not *between*, slicing it up into neat pieces. The fact that the inner person is referred to as soul, spirit, and

heart is a common poetic means of emphasizing that the whole person is involved. For example, Mark 12:30 indicates that we are to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” The accumulation of terms is used to express completeness. It is a dramatic way of emphasizing that loving God is a response of the entire person.

Perhaps the most the Bible can say about the distinction between soul and spirit is that “soul” emphasizes the person in a weak, earthly existence, and “spirit” highlights that our life is derived from God. Neither term suggests that we have morally neutral, psychological needs. Instead, they are overlapping words that refer to the inner person, the immaterial aspect of humanness, or the person-who-lives-before-the Holy God.

The Image of God in Man. A biblical understanding of the doctrine of the image of God in man similarly leads away from a need-based understanding. We will see instead that properly comprehending the image of God teaches us to see people, at their very root, as people-who-live-before-God and as people-who-are-to-live-for-God. Human beings are not fundamentally defined as people-who-long-for-relationship.

To establish this on a firmer exegetical basis, we will consider the critical questions Crabb poses: “Who is God?” and “How is man similar to God?” Image had to do with likeness, offspring, or similarity (e.g., Genesis 5:3), so any doctrine of the image of God must travel easily and frequently between the knowledge of God and the knowledge of man. Only after a right understanding of God can we begin to ask, “Who is the person?” As John Calvin has said, “No man can take a survey of himself, but he must immediately turn to the contemplation of God in whom he lives and moves.” We will look first at who God is, and then at how man is like God.

Who is God and What is His Passion?

God and His kingdom are, simply put, about God. The Father is ravished with the Son. The Son is ecstatic about the Father and wants nothing but the Father’s will. God’s greatest pleasure is Himself.¹⁸ This may sound strange at first, but how could we expect God to be consumed with anything less than His own perfect, holy being? God’s goal is His own glory, and God’s glory is God Himself. He wants and intends to magnify His great name. “For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever” (Romans

¹⁷ Robert Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

¹⁸ A helpful discussion of this theme can be found in John Piper’s *The Pleasures of God* (Multnomah: Multnomah Press, 1991).

11:36).

Notice already a difference between this and image-as-longing psychology. In need psychology the natural way to praise God is for what He has done for *me*. However, in God's self-revelation, though God deserves humble thankfulness because of what He has done for me, God deserves praise *simply because He is God*. The natural, "deepest" resting point for our thoughts is not our own deep longings but the immeasurably great "God of glory" (Acts 7:2). Rightly seen and understood, this glory is all-consuming. The Israelites did not break out into song because of met longings; they exalted God simply because He is exalted (Exodus 15:11): "Who among gods is like you, O Lord? Who is like you—majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?"

Look for a moment at this glory. It is overwhelming. See it in His greatness over all the greatest and most powerful kings of the earth, in His wondrous signs to Pharaoh and His control over even the sanity of Nebuchadnezzar. God's throne is above them. Isaiah fell down dismayed before this great glory (Isaiah 6). And the visions of His glory recorded by Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1) and the Apostle John (Revelation 4) are astonishing almost beyond description. Whenever God appears to His people, He is glorious. In fact, His glory, His divine splendor, fills the whole earth (Numbers 14:21). Even creation echoes the heavenly cry of "glory" (Psalm 8, 148, 150). When the Lord appeared to the grumbling Israelites, "there was the glory of the Lord appearing in the cloud" (Exodus 16:10), a brilliance that was fierce like fire, yet life-giving like the sun. When the tabernacle was completed, "Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." Now, as this tabernacle has taken a human form in the person of Christ, and as we reflect that glory, God's greatest desire is that His glory be known throughout the entire world.

A number of words are used almost interchangeably with glory: holiness, honor, radiance, His great name, beauty, splendor, and majesty. Chief among these is holiness. God's glory-holiness is the summary of Himself. The Most Holy Place was the place of His presence. The book of Leviticus is a book of holiness, and it summarizes man's covenant-keeping task as "Be holy as I am holy" (Leviticus 11:44f). Glimpses into the throne room are inevitably accompanied by resounding choruses of "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory" (Isaiah 6:3).

This awesome glory-holiness certainly expresses the transcendent nature of God. It makes obvious that He is unique and without peer, and it emphasizes that He is untouchable and separate from His creatures. His

transcendent "otherness" does not completely capture His glory-holiness, however. Although it is true that God is the matchless one who is to be feared, His glory-holiness is manifested in mighty acts of intimate involvement with His people. Concretely, the two dominant expressions of this close day-to-day involvement of God with His people are His love and justice.¹⁹ God is the compassionate and gracious one who is slow to anger and abounding in love, but He also does not leave the guilty unpunished (Exodus 34:6f). The New Testament is the story of incarnational love, but Jesus also claimed to have a ministry of justice and judgment. As such, we are implored to "consider the kindness and sternness of God" (Romans 11:22).

Can one of God's core attributes be construed as His "longing for relationship," as if God had a lack or deficit needing to be filled? This idea is very far from the biblical picture of the God of glory. Hence orthodoxy has always been concerned to defend the truth of God's independent self-existence. Instead of a longing to enter into a relationship, a longing to get something, God actively works within extant relationships that have been ruined by human sin. God's activity of love reconciles and restores these relationships, teaching selfish people to love Him and others. God's activity of judgment magnifies and finalizes the estrangement of sinners from both Himself and others.

Now look again at God's glory-holiness. Not only is it expressed by awesome throne scenes, it is also communicated by more familiar pictures. For example, He is the loving bridegroom who expects a spotless bride. He is the feast-giver who invites everyone to the feast but expects that attendees will wear the garment given to them. He is a redeemer who redeems Zion with justice (Isaiah 1:27). He is the judge over all the earth, yet His own Son becomes the advocate for His inglorious people. He is the father, mother, submissive son, suffering servant, friend, shepherd, potter, and so on. Indeed, images or pictures of God are everywhere in the Bible, and each picture is an expression of His glory-holiness.

These "snap shots" that God gives us of Himself are much more than God accommodating Himself to human language. God isn't using our understanding of servants to suggest that He is like a servant. No, God is *the servant, the husband, the father, the brother, and the friend*. Any resemblance in the created world is simply God's glory spilling into creation and creatures. Whenever you see these albeit distorted images in other people, they are a faint reflection of the original. I am a

¹⁹ Richard Lovelace, in his book, *Renewal* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1985), uses love and justice as summaries of the attributes of God.

father because God is a father. I am a worker because God is the original worker (Figure 3).

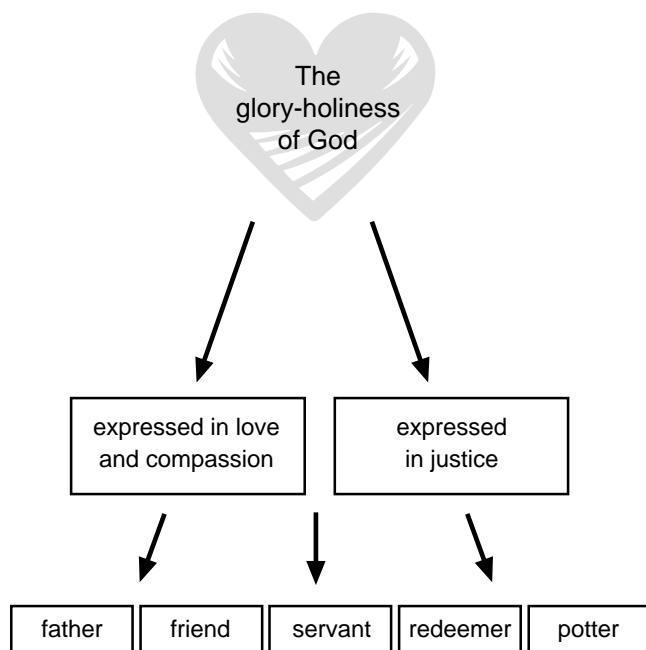


Figure 3. A summary of the attributes of God.

All these pictures merge into one when you witness the glory-holiness in Jesus Christ, *the* image of God's glory (Hebrews 1:3). "We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). He is called "the Holy One of God" (Mark 1:24, John 6:69). His passion, as you would expect, was the glory of the Father. It was not an abstract "longing for relationship." For example, before His crucifixion His prayer was, "Father, glorify your name" (John 12:28). In His prayer immediately before His arrest, Jesus prays to His "Holy Father" (John 17:11) and "Righteous Father" (John 17:25) that the Father would glorify Jesus so that Jesus in turn may glorify the Father. The deepest desire on the heart of Jesus was the glory of His Holy Father, and this desire was expressed in Jesus' love and justice. This is the One you are to fix your eyes on as you seek to be an image-bearer of the Most High God.

Who is the Person?

Armed with an understanding of God, the question, "Who is the person?" becomes fairly straightforward. How are people similar to the Creator-God? The object of God's greatest affections is God Himself: the Father, Son, and Spirit. As a result of this great love for His glory, God wants nothing more than for His glory to fill the earth. People are similar to God in that the object of

our affection is Himself. People should delight in God, as He does in Himself. This is expressed in a passion to proclaim His glory. We are to make His name famous or hallowed throughout the world; we are to declare the coming of His glorious kingdom. As the Westminster Catechism says, the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him (or delight in Him) forever.

Instead of a love cup or a hollow core of longings, the image is more accurately that of Moses literally reflecting the glory of God (Exodus 34:29-32). Moses was radiant because he was invited into the presence of the Lord and both witnessed God's glory-holiness and was protected from it. As marvelous as this seems, God has made His renewed image-bearers even more glorious than Moses. Indeed, God's people still must have His presence to be His image-bearers. However, His presence is no longer given by way of occasional theophanies nor is it dependent on the functioning tabernacle. The way God's people come into His presence is by faith. By faith we have the indwelling glory of the Spirit; and, as a result, we can grow to be even more radiant rather than fade. "And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

This means that the essence of the image of God in man is that we rejoice in God's presence, love Him above all else, and live for God's glory, not our own. As we learn by grace to love God and love our neighbor, we express the glory-image of God. The center of gravity in the universe is God and His glory-holiness—not our longings. And the most basic question of human existence becomes "How can I bring glory to God?," not "How will I meet my longings?" These differences yield very different tugs on our hearts: one constantly pulls us outward to God as servants of His will; the other pulls God inward as servant of our longings.

An obvious difference between the image-as-needs-for-relationship and the image-as-reflecting-glory is where you find this actual image. The needs view suggests that the image is a place inside you. It is a location—a hollow core—that is passive and easily damaged. But the image-as-actively-bringing-glory defines man as active, either bringing glory to God or to self. In this sense, the image of God in man is a verb. Faith, the means by which we image, is expressed in the way we live, as are its many synonyms: imitating God (Ephesians 5:1), representing God (2 Corinthians 5:20), mirroring or reflecting the glory of God (Exodus 34:29-35), loving God, and living according to His will. Whenever these action words are found in Scripture, the doctrine of the image of God in man is behind it.

Should one of man's core attributes be construed as

a “longing for relationship,” as if we had a lack or deficit needing to be filled? Just as we saw that this is not true of God, it is not true of man in the image of God. Instead, all people exist already in relationships to God and neighbors: bad relationships. These relationships are bad for a specific reason: sin, falling short of the image of God. The Bible focuses our attention on the reason, not on the result and our wishes that the result were different. We may long to enjoy tension-free relationships filled with deep, loving acceptance. But preoccupation with that longing evades the chief issue: do we ourselves love, accept, make peace? Jesus summarized the core issue of human life not by a statement about our longings but by the Two Great Commandments. These expose exactly how we fall short of the image. But Jesus, the perfect image-bearer, incarnated love for God and neighbor. He did this specifically while he endured terrible relationships, betrayal and atrocity at the hands of others, and finally the cup of the wrath of God. Jesus demonstrated the renewed image of God, but not by looking to God to fulfill an instinctive longing for relationship where He would be accepted. Rather, He imaged God in man by pioneering and perfecting faith and obedience, fulfilling the conditions of acceptability. Now by grace we are accepted because He was acceptable, and by grace we are progressively remade to be like Him in faith and obedience.

When image-bearing is seen as the way we live rather than what we want to get, it leads directly and naturally to the heart of the Scriptures: “faith expressing itself in love” (Galatians 5:6). Image-bearing is expressed in simple acts of obedience, seemingly small obediences that have eternal implications. Imaging is loving God and loving your neighbor. And this is exactly what you should expect. God’s glory is manifested in concrete acts of love and justice, and we are to mimic God in love and justice.

How is this love and justice expressed? By imitating, in the name of Christ, the various images of God provided for us in Scripture. Therefore, a father who, because of Christ, plays soccer with his children is imaging the God who spends time with His people. A child who sets the table or cleans the dinner dishes out of obedience to Christ is imaging the servant-God and thus glorifying God. Or a worker who does mundane work with the desire to serve Christ is imaging the Son who has worked on our behalf (Figure 4).

With this biblical understanding of what it means to image God, the image of God in man now appears *everywhere* in Scripture. The Bible becomes a story of the image of God defaced and then renewed. In Genesis 1 man is called to bring glory to God, or represent Him, by imaging Him in caring for the subhuman kingdom and

reproducing. His chief need was to delight in the presence of God and love or glorify Him. This love was expressed in care for His creation, reproducing, and obedience to Him by not eating from the forbidden tree. But imaging could not be done alone. The image of God is corporate in that we all share in it. The image of God is not complete in any one non-divine person. In a very practical sense, God’s command to reproduce, as a way to bring Him glory, is impossible by an individual. Therefore, God created male and female as His image-bearers.

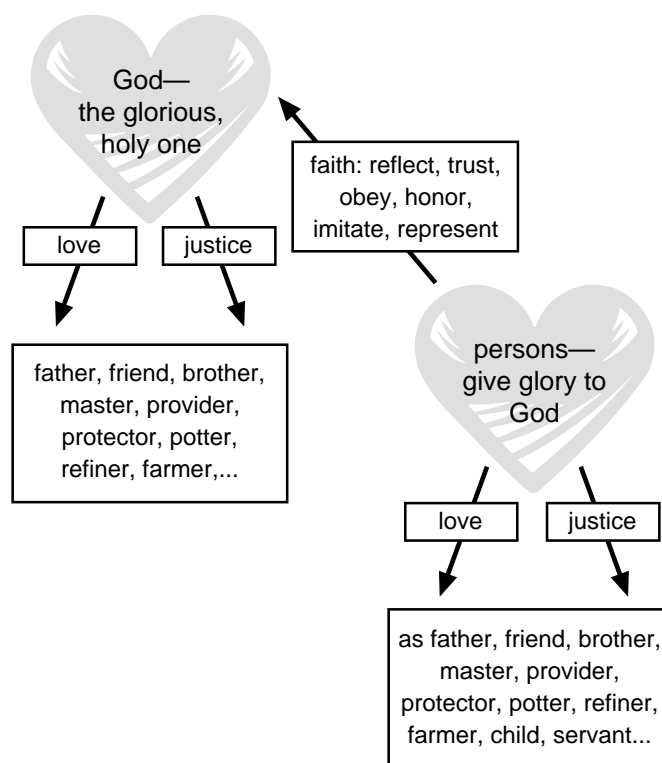


Figure 4. The relationship and similarities between God and man.

This means that we *do* need each other but not to fill our psychological deficits. We need others because the command to reproduce and subdue, and its New Testament companion, the Great Commission, cannot be carried out by any one person. We need others in all the ways that we help “one another” grow in the image of God. God’s glory is displayed in a corporate body more fully than it is in individuals. You need missionaries, mothers, fathers, pastors, Sunday School teachers, and janitors if the church is to function as God intended (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). Image-bearers are not lone rangers.

The story of Scripture moves quickly from the im-

age-as-corporate to the image-as-fallen. Although people remained image-bearers, Adam's disobedience brought fundamental changes. The direction of the human heart became oriented not toward God but toward self. In the garden man began repeating a mantra that will persist until Jesus returns. Adam said, "I WANT." "I want glory for myself rather than to give all glory to God." "I will love my own desires rather than love God." This came to be known as idolatry, and it was defined as an insane transaction: we give up our image-bearing status and exchange it for images from creation such as animals or other people (Jeremiah 2:11, Hosea 4:7, Romans 1:21-25).

Up to this point in the discussion, the Bible has been relatively silent on the experience of psychological needs. It indicates that we are dependent on God for all things, but it is silent on yearnings for love and significance. Is it possible that the "I WANT" of Adam is the first expression of psychological needs? Is it possible that psychological yearnings come when we refuse to love God and receive His love? Wasn't it with Adam that the momentum of human life started moving inward, toward the desires of the self, rather than outward, toward a desire to know and do the will of God? This is not to say that taking delight in being loved was the original sin. Certainly not. And it does not mean that deep hurt from rejection by others is somehow wrong. It is not. Enjoying the love of another and having satisfaction when a job is done are good gifts, and being hurt when we are sinned against by others is one way we *should* react. But, like all idolatry, the question is not so much what we desire but how much we desire it and why.

Longings have much in common with lust. To elevate our desire for love, impact, and other pleasures to the point where they are "needs" is to yell out, "I WANT. I must have. My desires are the basic building blocks of my world." These longings would not exist if we had been willing to love God and not ourselves. A biblical response to these lusts is to repent rather than to look for satisfaction, even if a temporary sense of satisfaction seems to be found in Christ. I say "temporary" because lusts can never be fully sated, and because the real Christ is in the business of destroying cravings, not fulfilling them. The cup of psychological needs should be broken rather than filled.

When a Christian movie once said that a teenager could be wooed to Christ by holding out the carrot of better grades upon conversion, wasn't that just appealing to lusts rather than offering forgiveness for those lusts? Israelite evangelism never suggested that neighboring idolaters start worshipping the true God because Yahweh would give better crops than their idols. Instead, people were, and are, called to turn from their

idols because idolatry is against God.

Yet even though people since Adam have sought to find satisfaction for their own desires rather than to obey God, God still intends to bring glory to Himself, and that is exactly what He did in the Old Testament. Man's attempt to cast off his image-bearing status would actually result in greater glory to God. God reestablished the ruins as He called people to Himself, people who called on His name, such as Seth, Noah, and Abraham. From these men came a nation that was called to represent God. Their task was to be the heart of image-bearing: "Be holy as I am holy" (Leviticus 19:2).

As a taste of what was to come, God called out priests from among the people who were to represent Him in a unique way as they served before God's tabernacle. The problem, however, was that, like Adam and Eve, the priests were naked and ashamed before God. They needed His covering to minister in His presence. Therefore, God made them garments that were nothing short of royal robes. These garments gave the wearer "dignity and honor" (Exodus 28:2), and they included, among other items that imaged God, seals that were worn on the turban that said, "HOLY TO THE LORD" (Exodus 28:36).

In the New Testament, because of Christ, these garments are available to everyone. They are given freely but must be worn. They are essential for giving glory to God. Wrapping every person of faith, they constitute God's people as "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God" (1 Peter 2:9). They even double as the beautiful wedding garment that God's people wear at the consummation when God completes the image renewal process.

In the New Testament the books that rely heavily on the doctrine of the image of God are Romans and Ephesians. Romans 1:18-23 is the classic New Testament text that summarizes the defacing of the image. It indicates that, at our core, all people—believers and nonbelievers—know God (1:21). We know God's divine nature and righteous decrees, but we follow idols rather than live for God's glory. The result is that all image-bearers fall short of the glory that we have when we trust in God alone (3:23). Against this backdrop the Apostle Paul goes on to place the life-giving grace of God in bold relief. The result is that we are once again similar to God. We become, as we were intended to be, His offspring (8:16).

The book of Ephesians is also filled with this rich doctrine. It indicates that we are adopted "to the praise of His glorious grace" (1:5). We are "God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works" (2:10). We mirror Christ most clearly when there is unity among God's people (2:19-22). We are God's offspring

(3:14). We can walk either in darkness, where we live for ourselves and there is no glory, or we can walk in the light (4:17ff.). God is creating in us a “new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” How does this happen? God makes us alive in Christ and then we imitate Christ (5:1) by steps of faithful, daily obedience, such as speaking truthfully, working diligently at our jobs, speaking edifying words, loving wives, submitting to husbands, and obeying parents.

Needs Revisited

So what do we really need? Does the Scripture say *anywhere* that we need relationship in order to be filled? Does it say that we have a *God-given* longing for significance and worth in a meaningless world? No. The Scripture indicates that we need God, but we need Him as the image we are to reflect, we need Him because we have spiritual needs, and we need Him for life itself. The Scripture also indicates that we need each other, but we don't need each other to fill a created emptiness. Instead, we need each other in order to reflect God's glory. His commission to His people must be carried out corporately.

Then why is it that many people feel so empty? From where do these felt needs come? There are a number of biblical possibilities. The most obvious biblical restructuring of the popular view of needs is that longings or needs, especially psychological needs, can be a euphemism for lusts or idolatry. Longings may reveal an excessive preoccupation with the self and its desires.

It is also possible that emptiness and a sense of psychological neediness are the distant rumblings of the knowledge of God. That is, we truly are empty before God, but since that truth is so horrifying, it can be suppressed and experienced as a need in our relationship with people (psychological need) rather than our relationship with God (spiritual need). After all, Romans 1 indicates that everyone knows God and His holiness, and this knowledge will inevitably seep out into the fabric of life. From this perspective concerns for low self-worth are most accurately a distant echo of the law of God that says that, in ourselves, we cannot measure up to the law of God.

There are other explanations for emptiness that arise out of the fact that we are living in a sinful world where we are sinned against, and we are living in a world that is under the curse. For example, when a spouse dies, emptiness is an appropriate, biblical reaction. Something beautiful has been removed from life (need-as-desire). There is a great sense of loss. This emptiness, however, is the result of the curse and death etching themselves on our psyche and not the result of being created with psychological longings.

What about the common belief that we have a God-shaped heart that can be filled by God alone? This is indeed true. But this emptiness is an expression of the fact that we need God's righteousness to replace our spiritually destitute condition. Even more, the emptiness reminds us that we are without any ability to atone for our own sins. We can find nothing in ourselves that measures up to God's righteousness. When we turn away from sin and turn to Christ, however, there is a sense of divine filling that leaves us overflowing—more than filled—with the love of Christ. What do we really need? We need to be smitten with the glory of God, ravished by His love, and faithful as we walk in obedience to Him, even in our suffering.

Counseling Image-Bearers

How does this doctrine of the image-as-actively-bringing-glory-to-God make a difference? In child-rearing it will mean that you address the child's conscience (the innate knowledge of God and knowledge of right and wrong) more than his or her sense of felt longings. When you call your children to obedience, you will want to speak to the depths of the heart and remind them that they are serving Christ, not themselves. With teenagers, you evangelize by pointing them to the greatness of God and their spiritual need more than how Jesus will satisfy their lust for significance. In counseling, you take people on a path of needing less and loving more. Instead of getting in touch with longings and hoping that Christ will satisfy them all, some of those longings will have to be put to death.

Consider Nancy, a 25-year-old wife and mother of two. Having grown up with a father who was often drunk and a mother who ignored Nancy's pleas for help when her father was cruel, Nancy grew up feeling worthless and empty. She came for counseling because she felt that her husband wasn't meeting her needs; as a result, she alternated between anger and depression.

Without question, it is tragic to have a history of cruelty and neglect in your family, and Nancy may need to understand what God says to people who have been hurt by others. But if Nancy's sense of worthlessness and emptiness are revealing an internal shape of a leaky love cup, then she also will need to be reforged into a different kind of vessel. This approach will be faithful to Scripture, and it will also relieve much of her internal desperation.

One reason Christians respond positively to a need psychology is because it takes people's pain seriously. However, this new view of the person actually makes pain worse. It compounds pain by suggesting that not only did the sins of others hurt deeply, but the sins of others also deprived you of a need—a right, something

you were owed—that is necessary for life. Being deeply hurt by others is hard enough, but when we believe that their sin was a near-lethal blow that damaged the core of our being, the hurt is intensified. For example, if someone robs us of precious jewels, it is very troubling; but if these jewels were the only financial resource for upcoming retirement, then the felt loss is much greater. Therefore, one task in counseling is to begin to separate the real hurt from the pain that is amplified by our own lusts and longings. The result will be simple, godly grief.²⁰

While considering with Nancy what God says to those who suffer, a question or homework assignment could be, “What do you need?” In the context of Nancy’s life, the answer will most likely be, “I need my husband to listen to me and meet my emotional needs.” This can be followed by a related question and observation: “Nancy, have you ever noticed that we tend to be controlled by the things we need? Maybe we could ask the question, ‘What do you need?’ a different way. We could say, ‘What controls you?’ or even, ‘Where do you put your trust?’”

Gradually, as Nancy sees that the question is one of whom she will trust, her “need for her husband” can be reconfigured into what the Bible calls “fear of man.” Like so many Christians, *people* have become the controlling point of Nancy’s life. She holds others in awe. She puts her hope in them. Furthermore, like all fear of man, there is ultimately a *self*-concern that drives it. She relies on others because they are perceived as having the power to give her what she wants. Here again is the subtlety of need psychology. It takes you back to yourself. You need people because of what you want. You fear man because you have hoped that others would fill you.

Fear of man does not come out of a response to created, in-born needs. Fear of man comes out of our own sin. It is worshiping others for our own purposes. Given this core, the answer is more than simply turning to Christ to meet this need. That would be to make Jesus our personal idol who serves our purposes. The answer is to first allow God to break our selfish desires and to teach us what it means to fear Him alone. So the question is not, “Where can I find my worth?” but “Why am I so concerned about myself?” The question is not, “How can God fill my needs?”; it is “How can Christ be seen as so glorious that I forget about my perceived needs?”

At this point a passage such as Jeremiah 17:5-10 may capture Nancy’s experience. It indicates that fear of man is a curse that leaves us feeling destitute or empty. The alternative, trust in God, is a blessing that leads to life

and fullness. The cause of this emptiness, however, is that “the heart is deceitful above all things” (17:9) rather than “the heart is needy and must be filled.”

The task then becomes learning the fear of the Lord. Reveal to Nancy that her husband, although he may have truly hurt her, is also one of her gods. He has been so designated to meet her desires. The answer is to turn away from these selfish desires and know that God is so much bigger than any god we could make. The answer is to look for images of God in the Bible until we are nearly overwhelmed with His majesty. And Nancy must refocus on learning how to love her husband, how to image God, as she responds to the glory of His grace.

Do you have any favorite passages that just talk about God? Consider using passages such as Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 1, or the book of Revelation. You could ask Nancy to begin reading Scripture with one question in mind: “How have you seen the great glory of God in the Bible?” Perhaps good devotional books would be helpful. Even books such as C. S. Lewis’s *The Chronicles of Narnia* could refresh Nancy with a clearer knowledge of God. Sometimes finding our deepest needs by studying and praying the prayers of Scripture can also exalt Christ and extinguish a sense of psychological need. For example, the Lord’s prayer begins by asking that God’s name would be glorious and hallowed. It indicates that our deepest need is to be consumed with God’s kingdom. Perhaps Nancy could make a habit of simply praying this and other prayers from Scripture.

Along with developing a more brilliant “scrapbook” with pictures of God, Nancy also needs to understand *her* true shape. The leaky love cup is on its way out, even though cravings for love will probably emerge many more times, and it must be replaced with God-given pictures of image-bearers. There are dozens of these in the Scripture including friend, wise man, prophet, priest, king, and spouse. Some might fit better than others, but there are a handful of images repeated throughout Scripture that immediately tell us something about ourselves, our task, and our God. Foremost might be “Christian.” This is shorthand for “child of God.” A Christian has given up his or her own name and has taken the name of Christ. Now your identity and purpose are intimately tied to those of Jesus Himself. Your purpose is to make His name famous. (This was the purpose of Roman adoption.) As His adopted offspring who bear His name, there is no reason to take pride in yourself, but there is every reason to take pride in and find great joy in the initiating love of the One who gave you the name.

A less popular picture, though equally prevalent in Scripture, is “servant” or “slave.” Though free in Christ, God’s people are His bond servants. Our freedom is that we are no longer in bondage to Satan and our out-of-

²⁰ See my article on suffering in the last issue of *The Journal of Biblical Counseling*.

control desires; now we are free to serve God. The helpful feature of this picture is that it can simplify a life that has been complicated by being need-driven. The question is, "What is my duty before the God who has loved me?" For Nancy, her duty may mean a number of things. Under the heading of love, she might seek to do him good; she might speak out to her husband if she is being hurt, she might look for the log in her own eye for a few weeks before she talks to her husband about his specks, or she might simply obey God by enjoying the companionship of her husband. Whatever expression her loving service may take, Nancy will do it with one eye on the One who served her (John 13:1-17).

Finally, one of the great privileges of counseling Nancy is that you can bless her in the name of Christ by telling her that "God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us"

(Romans 5:5). This may sound strange considering the rejection of a need-based, love cup view. Is Scripture saying that we are love cups after all? It is inaccurate to impose psychological needs on Romans 5:5. Instead, although the metaphor of a cup is in plain view, it is a cup that is spiritually, not psychologically, needy. The context clarifies the exact nature of this love: "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). When we recognize that people come to God in the shape of desperately needy sinners in need of God's grace, we as counselors should seek to deluge the counselee with the love of Christ. As a counselor, this should be your greatest joy: to pour and pour God's love over those who are spiritually parched. This, after all, will bring great glory to the name of Christ. "Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:31).