

# The Great Self-Esteem Crisis

by Joy A. Veinot

"Low self-esteem" is taking the blame for practically all the ills of our society today. Everything from criminality to poor performance in school is blamed on low self-esteem. It is running rampantly throughout society and the church though battalions of therapists have written countless books on the subject. The problem seems immune to all efforts to eradicate it and, in fact, seems to be worsening.

Just why our collective self-image is getting worse as time goes by is a mystery to me. In times and ages past, children's psyches were not protected from emotional bumps and bruises as they are today. Yet today, they are considered so fragile. Maybe people need to face a little emotional hardship to grow. In fact, the Apostle James said:

*"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything"* (James 1:2-4, NIV).

Boy, was he out of touch! Imagine thinking life's trials and hardships are used to develop character! He must've been a nasty conservative.

Yet, we can see trials and hardships have built great people for centuries. Winston Churchill, arguably one of the great leaders of the Twentieth Century, had an incredibly difficult early life and was often told he wouldn't amount to anything. Abraham Lincoln was told he looked funny (one critic said Abe resembled a baboon), didn't speak well, and lost most of the elections he ran in. Yet somehow, this miserable failure went on to become one of the greatest presidents in the history of

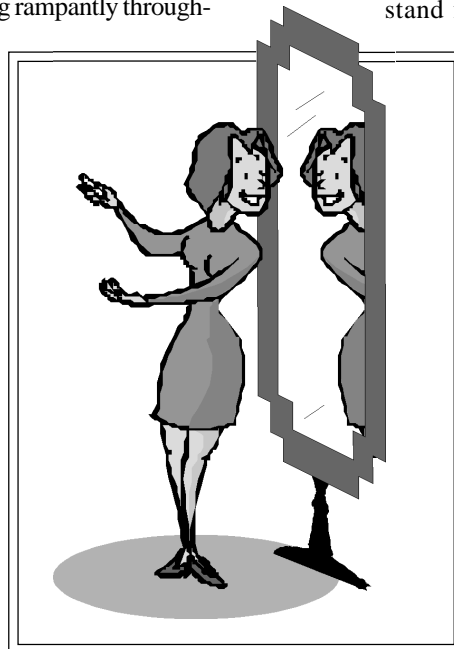
this country. The very things today's popular wisdom tells us leads inexorably to failure are what prepared Lincoln to stand firm against all the vicious attacks mounted

against him in the dark days of the Civil War. The Apostle Paul, likewise, had to deal with trials in his life; trials that required incredible perseverance — perseverance that was created by those trials that came before. Paul suffered beatings, shipwrecks, scourging, dangers, hardships, and if those "little" problems were not trouble enough, he was compared unfavorably to false teachers — so called *"super apostles."* What a put-down! Imagine the blow to Paul's ego! Here he was, appointed by God to be the *"apostle to the gentiles"* rejected in favor of a First-Century Benny Hinn! Yet, Paul did not turn to a life of crime, but steadfastly continued on in the work he had been called to do, and put his concern for the Corinthian ingrates ahead of his interests and pride (2 Cor. 11:16-27).

How different is the conventional wisdom that holds Klebold and Harris (the Columbine killers) suffered from "bad self-image" because they had allegedly been "put

down" by their classmates. Gang bangers who make our cities unlivable, likewise, are said to suffer from "low self-esteem." According to our culture, the answer to the great self-esteem crisis is for cheerleading teachers, parents, and counselors to inculcate ever-increasing self-love and pride into our young with no consequences for bad behavior or poor performance. As is the case with so many popular solutions to societal problems, these admittedly well-intentioned folks are hitting the wrong nail with the wrong hammer,

*(Continued on next page)*



**I am the fairest of them all!**

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**"Crisis" (Continued from page 1)**

and are guaranteed to exacerbate the problem, and create even more Klebold/Harris-types to plague society.

Actually, studies indicate criminals have very high — not low — self-esteem. Common sense tells us the same thing. Why do thieves steal? They want what you have—they love themselves—they don't love you—so they take what you have and generally feel completely justified in doing so. After all, isn't self-gratification our highest cultural ideal? Why do people kill? Let's take the example of Klebold and Harris; it is laughable to assume they hated themselves. They loved themselves so much that they were willing to murder innocent people to avenge their injured feelings and, while they were at it, make a big name for themselves. Unbridled self-love can be a dangerous thing.

**Looking Out For Number One**

A recent study by Rutgers University's National Marriage Project found today's young adults, unlike past generations, aren't seeking marriage or even romantic love, but are dating for sexual self-gratification more than to find a life partner. The study "Sex Without Strings, Relationships Without Rings" concluded that the young fear divorce and believe sex is just for fun. As a result, they reject the idea of lasting relationships in favor of focusing on themselves, their desires, and needs of the moment. Is this any wonder? We have taught them they are the center of the universe, and their "happiness" is paramount in all situations!

And why should "twenty-somethings" believe there is any value in raising children? No matter how much our politicians declare their fondness for "the children," they can see, by society's accounting, human offspring have no inherent value at all. Literally millions of their generation were murdered before they were even born.

It's an amazing thing to me that the same people who constantly focus on "the children" and their "self-esteem" are the same folks who are all for killing "inconvenient" pre-born children by the millions! And the same people who understand name-calling on the playground is abhorrent, hold that no killing method is too barbaric to use on the unborn. (We would not execute the worst criminals in the heinous fashion used to snuff out little lives.) What about the self-esteem of the child in the womb? What about their self-interest? The way our society sees it, I guess the other

person's self-esteem and welfare leave off where my self-interest begins. Do the "cry-baby boomers," who got this whole "no-fault, free-sex, me-first" ball rolling, realize they have set the table for *their own* destruction when they become old, inconvenient, and costly?

**Are You Proud Of Your Pride?**

Self-esteem used to be called PRIDE, and it was generally thought of as a bad thing. Now, however, Black Pride, White Pride, Gay Pride, "everyone-born-on-a-Monday" pride, PRIDE — of all kinds — is in vogue these days. But God doesn't like pride — He never did — and He still doesn't. Pride works against gratitude. Pride goes before a fall. Pride invariably causes folks to put other folks in an inferior position. Is pride an acceptable antidote to oppression? Is it okay to be prideful if we deem ourselves or our little group to have been ill-used by someone in the past? No, two wrongs do not make a right just as we were taught as children. And, even from a practical standpoint, is ethnic pride making our world a better place for all of us? NOT AT ALL! It is just setting every racial and ethnic group against the others. Pride divides. Christians ought to reject such thinking.

I'm not speaking against having pride in accomplishment, or gaining satisfaction from a job well done. The Apostle Paul said "*each one should test his own actions*" so that he or she can "*take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else*" (Galatians 6:4). That's the key — not to puff ourselves up with regard to others. Instead, we should enjoy our gifts — and those of others — given to us by God.

**A Lose/Lose Proposition**

What pride does to our culture in terms of disharmony and strife, it does to individuals on a smaller scale. One man's pride is often the cause of another man's belittlement. It is never a win/win situation when we are primarily looking out for number-one. The Bible though, does offer a win/win situation concerning these issues. It tells us to have the attitude of Christ, Who put our interests above His own.

*"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others"* (Philippians 2:3).

Humility then, is to treat others as if they were better than ourselves. Notice it does not say they ARE better, but we are to treat them as if they were. If everyone were to treat others as more valuable than themselves, everyone would win! If I'm concerned for your benefit, and you are concerned for mine, everyone's benefit is looked after.

## Sign Of The Times

The Bible states the time would come when self-love and pride would characterize the populace and dominate culture. 2 Timothy 3:1-4 states:

***"There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God ..."***

I think we are already there, friends. We have been so indoctrinated with the self-love issue, that it is practically a sacrilege for me even to write an article such as this (disagreeing with the premise). But I believe that out-of-control self-love and self-interest has delivered a mortal wound to society and is the cause of much division in the church. It bears repeating—pride divides.

## Self-Love In The Church

Of course, I am swimming against the tide on this one since many very prominent and popular Christian leaders espouse the self-esteem/self-love concept. But, popular acceptance of an idea does not make it true or Biblical. Last year, I heard a Christian speaker say to a huge group of Christian women that Christ commanded us to love ourselves! Did Christ really think we needed to be encouraged to love ourselves? I don't think so. Those who wish to promote self-love/self-esteem interpret Mark 12:31, where Christ said to ***"Love your neighbor as yourself,"*** as teaching we cannot love others unless we first love ourselves. I don't get that interpretation from this Scripture. The passage *assumes* self-love — we do love ourselves — and uses that natural self-love as a standard of how much we are to love others. And love of God is to come before all.

## Insecurity's False Label: Low Self-Esteem

What about people who have a low view of themselves—who think they are fat, dumb, or unattractive? Aren't they suffering from low self-esteem? No. If they did not esteem themselves, such folks would not care if they were perceived by others or perceived themselves to be fat, dumb, or unattractive. We all struggle with such feelings at times, but it is because we love ourselves we react with such sadness when others reject us for our appearance, status, or what-have-you.

The feeling of not-measuring-up — popularly called "low self-esteem" — is really *insecurity*. Insecurity is defined as having doubts and fears, and as I have already said, we all have them. We doubt we will be able to succeed in our endeavors, and we fear failure and rejection. Neither one of these has one thing to do with true self-loathing. Again, we do not worry about the well being of those we loathe. We would be highly unconcerned by the rejection of an object of our hatred. No, we care for ourselves. As Scripture makes abundantly clear,

***"... no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it"*** (Ephesians 5:29).

## Moses' Self-Esteem Crisis

A good biblical example of insecurity is found in the story of Moses when God appeared to him in the burning bush. God informed Moses he was to go to Egypt where his brethren were enslaved and tell Pharaoh to let them go. Now, Pharaoh was the most powerful man in the world at the time; and Moses reacted, I think, like most of us would.

***"Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"*** (Exodus 3:11).

You're kidding me, right, LORD? Do you know who you are talking to? Look again. I'm just a guy, doin' the best I can. An old guy, at that — way past retirement age. I'm not up to a fight with a man like Pharaoh. And not to nit-pick, but you said YOU were going to rescue *your* people — remember when you said that three verses ago??? Of course, I believe with all my heart you can do it — cause you're doin' the bush thing there, but you don't need my help for that, do you? I'll wait here. Okay, LORD??? What *did* God answer to reassure Moses? He simply said,

***"I will be with you."*** (Exodus 3:12).

Now, when you read the text, you see (from Moses' point of view) that answer was not the one he wanted to hear. Ooooooaaaaa, let's see if I have this straight. You are going to be with me, but nobody even knows who YOU are — much less who I am. Besides, I really don't talk very well either, and I just know that NO ONE is going to believe I'm there on a mission from God. No, I really don't think this is a good idea. I like the bush, though. Keep my number — and if you ever need someone to take care of sheep for you, I'm your man.

God didn't buy it. He insisted Moses was just the man for the job, although He graciously granted Moses permission to take baby brother Aaron along with him to do the talking. But God told Moses he could trust Him to make it a successful venture! God uses ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things.

The first time Don and I were interviewed on a radio show, I was very insecure and had knots in my stomach. I informed my

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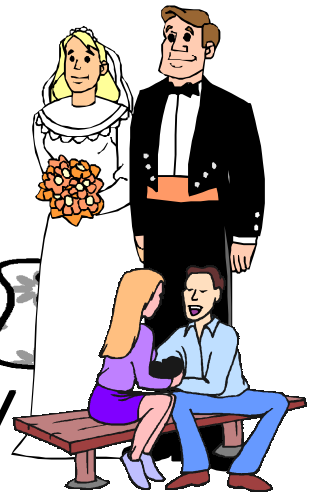
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# THE DATING GAME

*With Bill Gothard and Jonathan Lindvall*

by Robin Phillips



It all started when Bill Gothard\* began to get Christians excited about “courtship” rather than dating. This came at a time when numbers of Christian young people and their parents were ready for something completely new when it came to romantic relationships — something that would serve as an antidote to the trends of the world.

So courtship made a comeback. In reality, however, the movement that began was something very different from the one in the days when the custom of “courting” was regularly practiced. Subtlety, and sometimes imperceptibly, “courtship” began to be a tool for an authoritarian pattern of relationships. Young adults were beginning to be asked, not only to allow their parents a say in whom they married but, in some cases, to completely abdicate that decision into their parent’s hands. A myriad of teachers and an endless array of websites have been promoting such ideas in varying degrees of severity. This has led to the development of a subculture, made up largely out of the American home-schooling community, in which such practices are becoming accepted and normal.

In this article, I would like to examine one of the many teachers within this subculture, Jonathan Lindvall. Jonathan and I have known each other since I was a small boy, as he used to stay at my parents’ house whenever he gave seminars in our town. Nothing I have to say in this article is meant to be a personal attack on Lindvall. Rather, it is a heartfelt plea for him to re-examine his teachings in the light of Scripture and common sense.

Those who follow the teachings of Bill Gothard will be aware that in the beginning of Gothard’s booklet, *Establishing Biblical Foundations of Courtship*, there is a one page article by Jonathan Lindvall. Also, Gothard refers to Lindvall in his seminars, though not by name.

At first, Lindvall shared Gothard’s idea of courtship, which Lindvall defines as:

“... a relationship between a guy and a girl that both of them understand the purpose to be, to seriously look to a permanent relationship. That they are very serious about the expectation or hope of getting married.”<sup>1</sup>

Now, however, Lindvall has concluded courtship has unscriptural flaws because “it does not go far enough.”<sup>2</sup> This is because there is still the opportunity for either person to back out if they find they are not emotionally compatible. Lindvall suggests this sounds “vaguely similar to the rationale for a couple living

together for a time before marriage — to find out if they are compatible ...”<sup>3</sup>

Lindvall concludes the only answer is what he calls “betrothal,” where the decision of whom to marry is:

“... based entirely on God’s will confirmed by our authorities, with a confidence that God would bring romance to us as a blessing of our obedience ...

“... God wants young people to honor their parents ... by voluntarily submitting their choice of a marriage partner to them.”<sup>4</sup>

The betrothal period Lindvall advocates differs from the usual idea of engagement in that, while one may break an engagement, a betrothal is irrevocable. Although consummation has not occurred, Lindvall says it should still be just as binding as a regular marriage.

Lindvall believes that no romance should occur until this period of betrothal has started. When romance does occur, it is what Lindvall calls “authorized romance.” For, argues Lindvall:

“Just as we teach our young people to reserve themselves physically for marriage, I believe the scriptures call us to train them to reserve their romantic emotions for the betrothal period immediately preceding marriage, having enjoyed the benefit of God-ordained protectors (parents) in helping them seek and find His will for their lifelong companion.”<sup>5</sup>

“In the Biblical model of ‘betrothal,’ the decision to marry is made based on God’s will, confirmed by parents and other authorities, rather than emotional and hormonal impulses. The betrothal period is provided for the emotions to catch up to the irrevocable decision made prayerfully and rationally. Our emotions are not to lead us, but to follow us.”<sup>6</sup>

Notice here how Lindvall makes the alternative to betrothal one in which the marriage is based solely on “emotional and hormonal impulses.” The idea of marriage being based on love is not worthy for Lindvall to even mention as an option here! Elsewhere Lindvall does address this to say:

“God never intended for people to marry simply because they love each other. Love is not the basis for marriage. Love should proceed from the commitment to marriage. The Bible doesn’t say, ‘Marry the one you love.’ It says, ‘Love the one you marry.’ And there’s a vast difference between the two. Today people marry because they love each other.”<sup>7</sup>

The way Lindvall arrives at this conclusion is through a rather convoluted form of reasoning. He proposes an idea I have called

“retroactive matrimony” since it implies marriage works backwards. Behavior that currently would be inappropriate for Lindvall’s wife to exhibit toward other men (i.e., going out with them, having a romantic relationship, etc.), would be equally wrong before she ever married Lindvall. Lindvall maintains that whether a person is actually already married or actually single is irrelevant to the fact it is wrong to have romantic emotions toward them unless you know for sure (through specific Divine revelation) this person will one day be your spouse. Thus, to an imaginary young man going out on a date, Jonathan says:

“So tonight you’re taking out a girl that probably will not be your wife, and in fact, someday she’ll probably be someone else’s wife. So you’re taking out somebody else’s wife tonight ...”<sup>8</sup>

That is a very big leap! Just because a woman someday might be someone else’s wife does not mean to take her out is the same as taking out somebody else’s wife, for the very obvious reason the marriage has not yet occurred!

In the Old Testament, the sin of adultery was considered more serious than that of fornication and incurred a greater penalty (see Lev. 20:10, Ex. 22:16). The reason for this is adultery is a transgression against an existing marriage covenant — one that does not exist until it is ratified. Yet, Lindvall’s statements seem to imply the marriage covenant commitment extends not only into the future but retroactively into the past as well. Thus he argues, the same standards which apply to relationships between married people apply equally to relationships between unmarried young people. He asks:

“What kind of relationship is proper for me to have with your wife and for you to have with your wife and for my son to have with your daughter?”<sup>9</sup>

This idea of “retroactive matrimony” first originated with Lindvall’s mentor, Bill Gothard, who writes:

“Being a ‘one-woman man’ or a ‘one-man woman’ means that we have accepted the lifelong commitment of marriage. The wisdom of Proverbs praises the one who does the partner good all the days of his life (including before marriage). (See Proverbs 31:12.)

“We do this by remaining morally pure in our thoughts and actions for the one we will one day marry. Because this commitment to reserve ourselves for one individual, every person is like a ‘strange-man’ or a ‘strange woman’ to us except the one God directs to marry through the confirmation of parental authority and the love He places in our own hearts.”<sup>10</sup>

If consistently applied, this idea of “retroactive matrimony” would give rise to all sorts of absurd and unnatural situations. One of these is the suggestion by Lindvall that Paul’s words in 1 Timothy 3:12 and Titus 1:6 mean that a church leader literally should be a “one-woman man” might be referring to premarital emotions as well!<sup>11</sup>

Lindvall carries his theory to its consistent conclusion: no young person should have any romantic feelings for anyone until

they are engaged to their future spouse.

“I have concluded that God’s best for me is to teach my children not to allow themselves to cultivate romantic inclinations toward anyone until they know God has shown them this person is to be their lifelong mate ... Ideally, they don’t even allow themselves to dream about romantic relationships.”<sup>12</sup>

Lindvall sees this as the emotional corollary to physical purity.

Thus, he says:

“God wants us to guard our hearts. Not only are we to be physically pure, but we need to be emotionally pure in our hearts.”<sup>13</sup>

Lindvall appeals to the example of Adam on this point. When, through naming the various animals, Adam realized that he, alone among all the beasts, had no partner, God put him to sleep. Likewise, argues Lindvall, when we get to the age when our interest in the opposite sex is stirred up, God asks us to “go to sleep emotionally!”<sup>14</sup>

Lindvall explains his attempt to impose this system on his daughter:

“At age twelve, I took Bethany out to dinner one evening and presented her with a golden necklace with a heart-shaped pendant formed like a padlock. There was a small keyhole and an accompanying key. I presented the pendant and necklace to her and asked her to ‘Give me your heart’ (Prov.23:26). I explained that I wanted to keep the gold key as a symbol of her trusting me with her emotions. I specifically asked her to not entertain romantic thoughts toward any young man until she and her mother and I together conclude that he is God’s choice to be her husband. (There is scriptural precedent for the young people involved

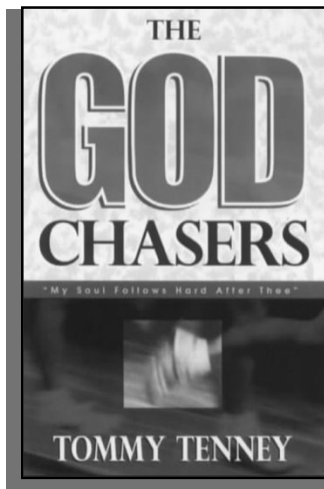
to be consulted and consent to a marriage arrangement.) I explained that at the beginning of her marital engagement I would give the gold key to her betrothed, and that although she might not yet love him, she would then be free to aim her heart toward him. Bethany unreservedly entrusted the symbolic gold key into my care, and with it, her heart.”<sup>15</sup>

“Some young man is going to come to me and say, ‘I believe God wants me to marry your daughter.’ And I’ll pray about it. And if God shows me the same thing, I’m going to give him that key, and I’m going to say, ‘You are authorized, and I’m going to help you woo my daughter, as she will be your help mate forever.’”<sup>16</sup>

Part of Lindvall’s motivation for doing this with his children is that he and his wife “bear deep regrets” from the fact that they each had romantic relationships with others before they married each other. Even now, though he is in his fifties, Jonathan says:

“I sometimes ponder wistfully what a wonderful thing it would be if I were the first man she had knitted her heart with. She wishes the same about me, but with pain I recognize that I didn’t save my heart for her.

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# Chasing What God?

## Examining *The God Chasers* by Tommy Tenney

by Pastor Bill Randles

**T**ommy Tenney is a third-generation United Pentecostal minister who bills himself (and any member of his growing following) as a “God Chaser.” He is the author of a best-selling book entitled *The God Chasers*. He has served as a pastor for ten years and has spent another 17 years as a “revivalist.” According to the blurb on the back cover of his recent book, he has been used to both “spark and fuel the fires of revival.” It also states that although “He has experienced the miraculous ... more importantly he knows the value of intimacy with and humility before God.”

*The God Chasers* is a call to those who consider themselves to be hungry for the “manifest presence of God.” It begins with a narrative, which should strike a chord with those radicalized by experience-based religion ala Toronto and Pensacola. In the chapter entitled “The Day I Almost Caught Him” (“Him” referring to God), Tenney describes a service he held in Houston, Texas. Upon the reading of 2 Chronicles 7:14 and an exhortation by the host pastor to “seek God’s face rather than just His hand,” a loud thunderclap sounded and split the pulpit into two pieces! From there, the usual “River” manifestations exploded across the sanctuary – slayings in the Spirit, profuse cryings, and even the bodies of businessmen stacked up like cordwood! (p.8)

“Businessmen tore their ties off, and they were literally stacked on top of one another, in the most horribly harmonious sound of repentance you ever heard.” (p.8)

By his own confession, Tenney merely had been a professional revivalist up to that point.

“We’ve talked preached and taught about revival until the church is sick of hearing about it. That’s what I did for a living, I preached revivals, or so I thought. Then God broke out of His box and ruined everything when He showed up.” (p.12)

Tenney echoes an earlier prophecy of the late John Wimber by saying, “God is coming back to repossess His church.” (p.12) But his premise is that the only thing that hinders God from “coming back to repossess His church” is the lack of spiritual hunger. Tenney (and others) seem to interpret this as a hunger for the “manifest presence of God.” Thus, *The God Chasers* aims at those who are:

“... tired of trying to pass out tracts, knock on doors, and make things happen ... we’ve been trying to make

things happen for a long time. Now he wants to make it happen!” (p.12)

Part of the problem, according to Tenney, comes down to his predictable assertion that too many of us have been “camped out on some dusty Truth known to everyone.” (p.12)

There’s the problem — “dusty Truth!” So of course, Tenney would teach us and guide us into his alternative to “dusty Truth” — what he calls “revelation.”

“The difference between the Truth of God and revelation is very simple. Truth is where God has been. Revelation is where God is. Truth is God’s tracks. It is His trail, His path, but it leads to what? It leads to Him. Perhaps the masses of people are happy to know where God’s been, but true God Chasers are not content to study God’s trail, His truths, they want to know Him. They want to know where He is and what He is doing right now ... There is a vast difference between present Truth and past Truth. I am afraid that most of what the church has studied is past Truth, and very little of what we know is present Truth.” (Introduction)

Tenney’s call for an abandonment of “past Truth” in favor of his more relevant “present Truth” is far from original. This is the same claim made by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (a.k.a. Jehovah’s Witnesses) and other cults and false religious movements. He is only the latest in a long line of teachers who have tapped into the discontentment many have in this entertainment age. By subtly denigrating the sound teaching of the Word of God, they promote the latest expression of experience-based religion and capitalize on false teaching. Just like the children of Israel who tired of manna in their day, the modern children of God “... **will not endure sound doctrine** ...” (2 Tim. 4:3) either. Tenney, like many others these days, is adept at ridiculing Bible study and teaching as though they were as irrelevant as a game of *Trivial Pursuit*.

“It is simply not enough to know about God. We have churches filled with people who can win Bible trivia contests but who don’t know Him.” (p.3)

So much for those Christians who are into “dusty Truth” and are enamored by “God’s tracks.” What about the New Agers and

occultists? Tenney is sure they have the purest of motives:

“You can’t tell me they’re not hungry for God when they wear crystals around their necks, lay down hundreds of dollars a day to listen to Guru’s, and call psychics to the tune of billions of dollars a year.” (p.2)

Of course, these pure-hearted seekers are hindered by only one obstacle in their search for God: the church! I was under the impression that it is the fact “... *there is none that seeketh after God*” (Rom. 3:11). Rather than seeking God, witches, occultists, and those who seek fortune tellers are in *rebellion* to God (1 Sam. 15:23); but then again, that is “dusty Truth.”

“They’re hungry to hear from something that’s beyond themselves, something they are not hearing in the church of today. The bottom line is that people are sick of the church because the church has been somewhat less than the book has advertised.” (p.3)

“Naomi and her family have something in common with the people who leave or totally avoid churches today—they left ‘that’ place and went somewhere else to find bread. I can tell you why people are flocking to the bars, the clubs, and the Psychics by the millions. They are just trying to get by, they are just trying to survive because the church has failed them. They looked, or their parents and friends looked and reported, and the spiritual cupboard was bare.” (pp.19-20)

The church is the one forcing those who are earnestly searching for God out into the bars and clubs? What ever happened to “... *they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; ...*” (Rom. 1:20-21)? Not so according to Tenney. These good-hearted witches and occultists actually went to church but found nothing they wanted; therefore, they had no choice but to delve into the occult! This kind of accusation will always find a ready audience in our modern “seeker sensitive” world. Discontented and casting about for any scapegoat for their sense of restlessness, they claim the church is at fault!

Between the various personal experiences recounted by Tenney and his attempts at whetting the spiritual appetites for which his book calls, glimpses of the author’s theology can be seen. As we have already pointed out, Tenney holds to a curious view of the Word of God as being “God’s Tracks,” “where God’s been,” and “past Truth.” This may be interesting, but it’s not enough for *The God Chasers*. Tenney further denigrates the Word of God (and those who would insist on measuring all things by it) in a very unusual and creative way. He calls the Scriptures “old love letters” — paying some homage to them; yet at the same time, he renders a present application of Scripture as being irrelevant.

“I’m afraid we have satiated our hunger for Him by reading old love letters from him to the churches in the epistles of the New Testament. These are good, holy and necessary, but we never have intimacy with Him ...” (p.15)

Tenney generously concedes the Scriptures are “good, holy and necessary, but ...” (and there is a world of meaning in that “but”). By assigning Scripture the status of “old love letters,” he renders them inadequate for present intimacy with God! Picture the Apostle Paul relegating Scripture to the status of “old love letters!” Jesus never *contrasted* “intimacy and power” with God as opposed to Scripture; He equated them! “...*ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God*” (Matt. 22:29). Knowing and loving Scripture is the only way to begin to have intimacy with God, not the obstacle to it! Of course, there could be a problem with people

being “... *hearers only* ...” and not “... *doers of the word,*” (James 1:22). But, the answer is not to compare Scripture to “old love letters” or, worse yet, to relegate knowledge of Scripture to being able to “win Bible trivia contests.”

What is Tenney promoting? Perhaps, the answer to this can be found in the oft-cited nugget of Charismatic wisdom:

“... A man with experience is never at the mercy of a man with only an argument ... If we can lead people into the manifest presence of God, all false theological houses of cards will tumble down.” (p.20)

This saying (or some variation of it) is the underlying assumption of the entire “River” revival — experience supersedes “doctrine” and the Word alone is insufficient for a relationship with God!

Did the Apostles believe this way? Did they ever “split pulpits?” Did they constantly *contrast* truth and intimacy? The Apostle Peter had the ultimate sensual religious encounter — He *saw* the transfigured Jesus! Rather than contrast his experience on the Holy Mountain with those who were still “stuck in some dusty Truth,” Peter commended the “... *more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, ...*” (2 Pet. 1:19). Peter never held a laughing revival, nor did the Apostle Paul ever refer to Himself as God’s bartender. The Apostle James never wrote about the need to put loaves of bread on the altar so that they could soak up the anointing.

Nor did the Apostles *ever* conduct the kind of “spiritual warfare” Tenney and others proclaim in the name of “taking their cities for God.”

“I am after cities ... Once while preaching at a conference ... in Portland, Oregon, I heard him [Frank Dimazio] mention something that caught my attention. He said that a number of pastors in the Portland area had united together to drive some stakes in the ground at strategic places around the parameter [sic] of their region and the city and at every major intersection. The process took them hours because they also prayed over those stakes, as they were physical symbols marking a spiritual declaration and demarcation line. I felt the stirring of the Holy Spirit so I said, ‘Frank, if you’ll provide the stakes, then I’ll go to the cities I feel called to and help the pastors stake out that territory for God.’” (pp.102-103)

Is this another Toronto or Pensacola? I think Tenney and I would probably disagree. I would say this “intimacy” being sought is of the same nature as the “presence” that pilgrims to Toronto and Pensacola have sought — supernatural encounters with something, but not based upon the revealed Word of God in the “dusty Truth.” Tenney seems to allude to these earlier revivals as being somewhat less than what he is promoting:

“People don’t sense God’s presence at our gatherings because it is just not there sufficiently to register on our gauges ... when people get just a little touch of God mixed with a lot of something that is not God, it inoculates them against the real thing. Once they’ve been inoculated by a crumb of God’s presence then when they say, ‘God is really here,’ they say, ‘No, I’ve been there, done that. I bought the T-shirt, and I didn’t find Him, it really didn’t work for me.’ The problem was that God was there alright [sic], but not enough of Him. There was no experience of meeting Him at the Damascus road. There was no undeniable, over-

(Continued on page 15)



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### "Crisis" (Continued from page 3)

husband he was going to have to do all the talking; but I needed to learn the same lesson Moses learned — that God would be with me. At the studio, after we prayed, I just took a deep breath and jumped in and, lo and behold, He was there to help me. Don teased me afterwards that I never let him get a word in edgewise!

### Trust In God, Not Self

Like Moses, we will have times of self-doubt and insecurities. And like Moses, God is the one we must learn to trust, not ourselves. The fact God is with us carries more weight than whatever it is that we bring along. The Apostle Paul's perspective was that he was:

*"well content with weakness, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong"*  
(2 Cor. 12:10, NASB).

### Humility vs. False Humility

I'm not advocating that people go and join convents or monasteries in order to adequately deny themselves or show proper humility. It is quite possible to go off-the-track in the other direction and seek to humble oneself artificially through extreme self-denial or self-condemnation. But, self-flagellation is no more righteous than unseemly self-promotion. Paul comments on false humility in Colossians 2:23. Apparently, people then, as now, thought God would be pleased with their "humility" if they were self-abusive. Self-abuse doesn't have to be physical, either. Many people

abuse themselves emotionally and think they are being quite humble, but it is actually false humility. God doesn't want us to wallow in feelings of worthlessness in order to convince Him of our worthiness to join the "Humility Hall of Fame." It is unnecessary, a waste of time, and certainly does not make Christianity attractive to outsiders.

Have you ever read *David Copperfield* by Charles Dickens? Uriah Heep was a memorable and nasty character who was outwardly a very lowly man — chock full of humility. He was always putting himself down to others, but all the while Heep harbored terrible resentments against people he felt treated him with disrespect. So all the disrespect he showed for himself was merely a ruse. Try this on yourself the next time you get disgusted with yourself and are tempted to wallow in your supposed worthlessness. Imagine someone agreeing with your self-deprecating comments. Would you defend yourself and, perhaps, get angry at the jerk who would say such a thing to you? I think most of us would.

### What is Biblical Humility?

Biblical humility is to see yourself as God sees you. It is not thinking more of yourself than you ought to think.

*"For by the grace given to me, I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us ... honor one another above yourselves ... do not be proud ... do not be conceited"* (Romans 12:3-6,10,16).

It is a balance — you're not a bug nor are you the best thing to come down the pike. You have strengths and weaknesses, and you should have a good grasp of both. If you do not evaluate your strengths, you will waste the gifts God has given you; and if you do not recognize your weaknesses, you will be derailed by them. At the same time, you evaluate, appreciate, and honor the strengths and gifts of others without jealousy. We were all given our gifts to share them with the group, not for the sake of our pride!

Please note that in this passage, Paul tells us not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought, and he doesn't seem to worry that we will think too little of ourselves. It is natural to think of ourselves first; it is spiritual to put others above ourselves.

### Does It Work?

On the practical side, does self-esteem chasing work? Does it make people happy? That is, after all, what all of us supposedly need high self-esteem for? Oprah Winfrey, arguably one of the primo self-esteem moguls of our time, tells us she looks in the mirror every day and says, "You are a beautiful woman!" This is a self-esteem exercise she recommends to her groupies.

What, though, about the person who is not beautiful by the world's current exacting standards? Will the mirror trick work for them? Mirror, mirror on the wall — I'm the fairest of them all? It didn't work for Snow White's evil stepmother, and it won't work for the vast majority of us, for the same reason. Mirrors are notoriously honest and can be quite unkind. And doesn't it just reinforce



society's shallow standards when we tie our worth to our looks, talents, and/or possessions? A "bad self-image" is often a realistic appraisal of the fact we do not measure up to the fickle societal ideal we are measured against, and indeed, one we often unfairly measure others against.

Take a typical childhood self-esteem problem. An 11-year-old, sixth-grade girl is dying to be accepted by the clique of "popular girls" but has as much of a chance of being accepted by them as I have of being the new king of Syria. Now understand, there is nothing quite so torturous as being rejected by your peers in sixth grade; and there are no more exquisite tormentors on the planet than the "popular girls" in sixth grade. Vlad, the impaler, was kinder to his victims than these sharks are to some poor girl they have decided to disdain.

Can we pump up her self-esteem to the point where she can cope with the situation? I don't really think we can. We can tell her she's beautiful until we are blue-in-the-face, but we'll be unable to convince her that THEY (the "in-crowd") find her acceptable, and their approval is what she thinks she needs. Our job, as I see it, is to convince her, over time and with kind patience, to reject the worldly standard by which she is being judged! We must endeavor to teach her we are NOT the sum total of what we own, what we look like and how popular we are.

One thing I know for sure, though, the problem is not the "low self-esteem" of the tormented child, but rather the extraordinarily *inflated* self-esteem of her tormentors!

## Is Oprah Happy?

Oprah constantly preaches the gospel of self-love and self-esteem, and she has also chased self-esteem relentlessly. But is she happy? Oprah appears on the cover of *US Weekly*, (June 12, 2000, issue 278) with the question, "Is Oprah Happy?" By golly, she should be! If the self-esteem gospel is true, Oprah has every reason for extreme happiness and "personal fulfillment" even without talking back to her mirror. She is extremely rich, quite beautiful, powerfully influential, and beloved of millions. Yet, the article points out:


"She (Oprah) tends to talk about self-esteem issues as having been a thing of the past; at other times, the past seems awfully recent. 'Oprah is still struggling with the same things as her viewers,' says one of her ex-producers. 'She's not perfect, but she wants to be.'"

Do I begrudge Oprah her pursuit for happiness? No, not at all. In our land, the pursuit of happiness is an absolute right and a favorite pastime! But I can say with certainty, if she hasn't found it yet, she needs to look for it in a different place. And maybe "happiness" isn't the best thing to look for, since it is so elusive. Security, love, and acceptance are what we need, but they can only be found in God — specifically, the God of the Bible. Sadly, Oprah's god is in her mind. She seeks god within, and like looking for a catfish in a closet, she's bound to be disappointed.

Now, for the million-dollar question: If Oprah is still struggling with "low self-esteem" considering all she has going for her, what hope for the rest of us? The whole self-esteem venture is a cracked pot — by the time you carry your fragile image across the room in it, all the "good feelings about yourself" you have carefully hoarded will have leaked out all over the floor! Where there is physical beauty, it will fade; where there are possessions, they will not satisfy. The old adage, "you can never be too rich or too thin" implies a constant struggle to achieve what is ultimately unattainable. It's a recipe for despair.

What's more important, by convincing people the issue of first importance is to measure up to the world's standard of success, we set them up for failure in God's Kingdom. God's standard of greatness is pretty much the opposite of the world's standard. God is not going to judge us by our skin color, our ethnicity, our gender, our money, or looks. We will be judged by our character, not our demographic.

A person who is busily chasing the illusory targets of worldly beauty and achievement will not be able to succeed in the race that matters for eternity. That race cannot be run by looking in the mirror. It can only be won by keeping our eyes on God.

The message of the Christian faith is that we are born sinners, and none of us has any real reason for arrogance. Jesus is the only person who has good reason to be proud and haughty — being God Almighty. Nonetheless, out of love He humbled Himself to be born as a man so He could die for us, and pay the price for our sins, including our pride and selfishness. Yet, many people suffer from an inflated self-image that will not allow them to admit their need for salvation. They are too proud to accept the gift of forgiveness and eternal life that Jesus offers to those who know they cannot save themselves and call upon Him. Friends, that's the real self-esteem crisis. 

Love to all,

*Joy*

All Bible quotes are from the Holy Bible, New International Version (NIV) unless otherwise noted.

## Don't Let Your Next Issue Be Your Last!

The Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc. Journal is now in its sixth year. During these six years, it has been the heartfelt desire of our staff to provide this publication free of charge to anyone who requested it.

Unfortunately, we have had to re-evaluate this policy as the financial burden of printing and mailing the Journal has been too great. Therefore, beginning with the Winter, 2001 issue of the Journal, subscriptions will be given as a "thank you" gift to financial supporters of the ministry. If you are already a regular financial supporter of Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc., we thank you, and you will continue to receive quarterly issues of the Journal. If you wish to continue receiving the Journal, but have not supported the ministry financially, please consider sending a tax-deductible donation in **ANY** amount to ensure that you do not miss out on a single issue of the Journal. We realize not everyone will be able to do this, and we apologize. Please remember we are working on getting most of our articles up on our website ([www.midwestoutreach.org](http://www.midwestoutreach.org)), and these will be available for download free of charge. Thank you for your understanding in this matter.

**The Editor**

## **"Game" (Continued from page 5)**

It is my intention to spare my own children the regrets I bear."<sup>17</sup>

In his taped lecture titled, "Youthful Romance: The Dangers of Dating," Lindvall suggests no young man would want the woman he one day will marry to date or to have romantic feelings for anyone other than himself. Building on that, Lindvall suggests that, in keeping to the Golden Rule of doing to others as we would have them do to us (Matt. 7:12), we ought to restrain any romantic feelings until we know for certain whom we will marry. A woman, he says, is the property of her future husband, and therefore, we should think in terms of property and ownership when it comes to romantic relationships. When a woman is "given in marriage" by the father to the groom, this symbolizes a transfer of ownership. But to have a romance with a woman before her ownership has been formally transferred is for that man to "defraud his brother" (1 Thess. 4:6) since he is stealing something that properly belongs only to the woman's future husband.

"God intends for them to marry," says Lindvall, "but God wants them to experience authorized romance. Authorization, not only for the physical but for the emotional ownership of one another."<sup>18</sup>

What seems most unbelievable is that Lindvall extends these ideas to situations where the parents are ungodly. Indeed, in his seminar Lindvall suggests that no matter how wicked one or both sets of parents may be, you must not marry without their consent. This is a direct violation to the very first Psalm in which we are instructed to "*walk not in the counsel of the ungodly.*"

I would like to consider this teaching in light of a number of different aspects. I believe these ideas do not merely affect how one views relationships before marriage, but how one understands the very essence of the marriage relationship itself. To start with, however, it is necessary to see where Lindvall goes wrong in his interpretation of the Bible.

### **Faulty Interpretation of the Bible**

Lindvall's frequent use of the phrase "the Biblical model of betrothal" is misleading. Lindvall has taken this term from Scripture and given to it a meaning that corresponds with his views on marriage. He then reads certain verses where the word is used in light of this nuance at the expense of historic and linguistic accuracy.

"*Betrothal*" in the Jewish culture simply meant a halfway house between engagement and marriage. It was just as binding as marriage, even though the marriage hadn't been consummated. It had nothing to do with Lindvall's idea of a father receiving direct revelation as to whom his child would marry, and it certainly had nothing to do with denying all romantic feelings until this period! On the contrary, *Hasting's Bible Dictionary* tells us:

"... in ancient Israel the association of the sexes was comparatively unrestrained, and naturally led to personal attachments which sought satisfaction in

marriage (Gen. 24:15, 29:10; cf. 1 Sam. 18:20)."<sup>19</sup>

It is true that, in the Jewish culture, marriage mates were often selected by the father or a representative of the father. This custom wasn't unique to the Jews, however, but was practiced by the surrounding cultures at large and is still practiced in many parts of the East today. The bride had to be "bought," if you will, by the bridegroom's father (either by money or service offered) in exchange for the bride's father being willing to part with her. The bride received no dowry. It was not uncommon for the bride and bridegroom to be unconsulted regarding a match while sometimes being expected to marry someone they had never even met! In such cultures, marriage could be treated more like a contract than a relationship, and a husband could have many wives just as he would have many heads of cattle. If a husband grew tired of his wife, he could write her a certificate of divorce for an offense as trivial as cooking a meal in the wrong way!

While much more could be said about these cultural traditions, the point is it is futile for people like Lindvall to pick just one aspect out of this entire cultural context! He then argues for its application today, without appreciating the over-all mindset by which these people operated, which involved far more than that to which Lindvall would have us return.

While the entire framework by which that culture understood certain things left much to be desired, the Lord gave commands to show His people how to operate within that context.

It is against this cultural backdrop that we must understand verses such as Exodus 22:16-17 where the Lord commands that if a man has premarital relations with a virgin, the father may refuse to give his daughter to him in marriage even though the young man must still pay the bride price. Some have argued from this Scripture, and Lindvall would no doubt agree with such an interpretation:

"If the father has the authority to say no when there is an existing sexual rela-

tionship, then how much more does the father have the authority to say no when there is nothing more than mild emotional or sexual interest?"<sup>20</sup>

Although I understand the line of reasoning, one might question whether it is logical. To say that if a father has the authority to exercise veto power when it comes to his daughter marrying a man who enticed her — and who is, therefore, probably a man of doubtful intention — then how much more should he have veto power in an ordinary situation. If we look closely at Exodus 22:17, we see it merely says if her father utterly refuses to give her to him, then the man must pay the bride price. It does not necessarily imply it is God's will for this contingent condition to exist. Similarly, the fact Deut. 21:15-17 gives laws to govern situations where a husband has two wives in no way gives God's stamp of approval on men taking multiple wives. The whole point of the Exodus passage is not what to do in marriage at all, but the fact there is a *responsibility* a man acquires when he sleeps with a virgin — he must pay the bride price even if they do not marry.

**. . . Lindvall suggests no young man would want the woman he one day will marry to date or to have romantic feelings for anyone other than himself. Building on that, Lindvall suggests that . . . we ought to restrain any romantic feelings until we know for certain whom we will marry. . .**

Ancient historic sources, such as The Code of Hammurabi from Babylon, will confirm the cultural practices in Israel, at the time God gave Moses the laws, were more or less universal. The fact God gave Moses laws to show people how to behave in an already existing culture with its own traditions and practices does not, thereby, mean those traditions and practices acquire a Divine precedent. Those who argue otherwise are bound to do so only selectively and refrain from strictly applying laws or customs that would be absurd in our culture — such customs as polygamy, slavery, etc., and laws such as the Year of Jubilee.

To properly understand marriage, we must look to the New Testament. The principles laid down by Paul are clearly relevant for today's culture. In this regard it is noteworthy, while Paul goes to great lengths to discuss the subject, he nowhere mentions anything even bordering on practices such as betrothal, arranged marriages, etc.. While the Apostle does not specifically repudiate such practices, the entire spirit of his words are clearly in opposition to the ethos behind the recent advocacy of courtship and betrothal.

Lindvall would be quick to disagree, however, based on his interpretation of 1 Tim. 5:2. In this verse, Paul instructed Timothy to treat the young women as if they were sisters and the older women as if they were mothers. If Lindvall is prepared to apply Paul's parallel between young women and sisters so literally that one must not have romance with a woman before engagement (because one does not have romance with one's sister), then why just stop there. Why not exclude engagement itself on the same principle? Indeed, if Paul's words exclude the possibility of two people moving into a romantic relationship before engagement (since no man would be romantic toward his sister), then no man ever should actually get married at all (since no man would marry his sister)! Any analogy can be pressed to a degree (either pro or con) which can become absurd.

Surely what Paul was saying to Timothy was for him to show appropriate respect toward these women as one would toward one's sister or mother. He was saying not to mess around or flirt because the bottom line in all relationships must be *agapé* love. If Paul had somehow been trying to say romance was wrong and most of the entire human race had been deceived by the romantic inclination, then why didn't he simply come right out and say so?

## The Meaning of Love

Lindvall assumes romantic love is all feelings and, therefore, may leave just as easily as it arrives. You fall into it, and you fall out of it. Therefore, asks Lindvall:

"If a couple marries based on love, what happens when the passion of romance settles down and they get used to each other — less distracted by their emotions?"<sup>21</sup>

Lindvall's answer is that marriage should be based entirely on *agapé*\*\* love. He completely overlooks the sort of love that is not a feeling or a choice but a state or condition of two people who are

right for each other. The sort that produces feelings but is more than feelings; and which is maintained by the will, but is more than an act of the will. C. S. Lewis compares natural loves to a garden full of flowers which would soon go to weeds if left alone. What is needed for its maintenance is *agapé* love. A man who falls in love with a woman quite effortlessly will find the love destroyed if he constantly acts selfishly and does not choose to act charitably towards her. Thus, in marriage, although the special kind of love that makes intimacy possible is not caused by an act of the will, it is either maintained or destroyed by the choices made in the arena of life (*agapé* love). This special kind of intimacy is not the sort of thing two people can simply decide to experience toward one another as soon as it has been "authorized." Neither does Lindvall explain how it is possible for two people (who would otherwise be in love with each other) to push a button to not be in love until it has been "authorized." Human beings are not robots.

Any Christian husband and wife, if they are mature enough, can choose to practice *agapé* love towards one another. But is this all that is needed for an intimate and happy marriage? If so, then it

does not matter whom you marry as long as the person practices *agapé* love. Marriage thus conceived more resembles a business partnership than the joyful and intimate union God designed it to be.

Lindvall continually portrays scenarios where recreational dating is practiced in a way most mature Christians would find objectionable, and then juxtaposes this with his method of betrothal. Likewise, he describes a "love" based merely on emotion and passion and then juxtaposes this with his idea of marriage. Thus, he reaches his conclusion using false dilemmas. When he portrays these as the only options from which we must choose, we are hardly left with much of a choice!

By employing these false dilemmas,

along with an emotional appeal to high standards, Lindvall is able to target that segment of young Christians who most sincerely desire God's will but are unable to recognize the logical fallacies inherent in his reasoning.

## Impossibility

By "emotional purity" Lindvall does not merely mean young people should reserve the *expression* of romantic feelings until after betrothal, but also those romantic *emotions* and *thoughts* must be stifled prior to parental authorization. When lamenting his inner-experiences with a girlfriend before meeting his wife, Lindvall constructs it as a case of "allowing" his emotions to focus on her as if an act of volition preceeds all emotional affection. What Lindvall apparently fails to realize is that the romantic feelings, crushes, and infatuations young people experience are things that, to a large extent, cannot be controlled by the will. What can be controlled is how the person *responds* to these feelings which can come and go like the wind. To try to tamper with the emotions themselves, however, is bound to be unproductive. The only way

(Continued on next page)

### **"Game" (Continued from page 11)**

to prevent such "unauthorized" emotions from happening would surely be to build monasteries and nunneries to house our youth. When it's time for the wedding vows — the vows can directly follow the introductions!

Let us consider what happens when a child reaches puberty. As the whole person struggles to adjust to the hormonal changes that are happening, it is natural for the child to be bombarded with an array of feelings, thoughts, and sensations connected with their sexuality. The body's emotions and sexuality typically experience an influx of random sensations, the inhibition of which is not subject to the same volitional control we acquire later in life. As the body develops, things gradually settle down. In the case of our sexuality, this may not occur for many years.

If a child's first awakenings to the world of sexuality are accompanied by an atmosphere of guilt and negativity, this may affect how that child responds to his or her sexuality later in life. If, however, the child can be helped to view their sexual awakening and intense inner experiences objectively and in an atmosphere of understanding, it may help not only to prevent the child from developing an unnecessary guilt complex but also to deter him or her from thinking these sensations demand an outlet for gratification and expression. Although children should be helped to see it is not wise to voluntarily entertain unhealthy sexual fantasies, this needs to be done in such a way that this does not become more serious in the child's mind than it really is.

Of course, Lindvall would totally disagree. I suspect he would say the sexual thoughts and feelings I (and others) believe are natural and largely uncontrollable for a child past puberty are on the same level of seriousness as a married person having adulterous thoughts (because the child is allegedly sinning against his or her future spouse). This would seem to be the logical consequence of a strict application of the principle of "retroactive matrimony."

### **Deep-Regrets in Marriage**

One of Lindvall's central arguments is based on the need he

feels to spare his own children the deep regrets he and his wife bare as a result of each other's former boyfriends and girlfriends. I get the impression Lindvall's entire teaching on this subject springs out of this personal aspect.

Obviously, I cannot argue against Lindvall's personal experience (nor would I want to), though I cannot relate to it personally. Throughout my adolescence, I had numerous crushes on all sorts of girls; and yet, my wife does not feel jealous because she knows she is the fulfillment of all my earlier romantic dreams and aspirations. I feel the same way about her. If, however, I had truly and intimately loved another woman before marrying my wife (a "knitting of heart" as Lindvall describes his regrettable experience with a former girlfriend), then it would be understandable if my wife might feel jealous. But where love is true, unconditional, strong, and exclusive in marriage, it would eventually swallow up any feelings of jealousy over past relationships through the solid reassurance it provides.

Where it is possible to have past relationships permanently harm a present marriage, the problem is probably not in the past relationships but within the marriage itself. While it is only natural for a husband to want to be the only man with whom his wife has ever fallen in love, and visa versa, we live in the real world and this usually will not be the case. Does this mean the marriage will automatically suffer — that the husband and wife will not be able to love each other as much as they otherwise might have been able, that they will be less able to discover God's best, that their relationship will be less enriching, less fulfilling? Absolutely not! Now there are certainly going to be insecurities in just about every marriage and each partner will need to have their spouse's love reassured. Such insecurities may result in anything from the thought of past relationships (which especially can be a problem when one or both have been married before) to one's inability to believe oneself lovable because of abuse as a child. In each case, these are things a husband and wife can work through and be drawn closer together as a result. This is not accomplished by having a fatalistic attitude that says, "this has happened in my past, therefore, my marriage is going to be less good than it otherwise could have been." It is accomplished by saying instead, "we love each other so dearly that our love is strong enough to cover over and heal whatever has happened in the past."

Could it be the reason Lindvall and his wife are still so jealous of each other's past girlfriends and boyfriends is because, as Lindvall has freely admitted:

"... my marriage to Connie ... is not based on love"?<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps, if Lindvall came to understand the true meaning of marriage, he would be able to understand better what should happen before marriage.

### **Individual Responsibility vs. Ungodly Control**

Lindvall says we must achieve certainty someone will be our future spouse before we allow ourselves to fall in love. Such a statement fails to recognize it may be precisely falling in love that gives us this certainty (although final, absolute certainty can never be achieved for fallen humans). Lindvall assumes this certainty can be achieved through God's direct revelation to the parents before there is a significant relationship established. Now, of course, God could choose to do this, but my contention is with Lindvall's assumption this has to be God's only way. Lindvall has put God in a box and is dictating how God must always work — leaving no room for deviation.

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It all sounds very good saying the father will pray about it and then God will reveal to him whether this or that person is the one for his child to marry. Nonetheless, it is difficult to disengage one's own desires and preferences from what one believes the Lord is revealing — no matter how honest and upright the father may be. Furthermore, when a father assumes a “God-told-me-so” stance, it very likely will make the young person feel that to disagree with the parent is tantamount to disagreeing with God. When this happens, one moves out of the arena of counsel and communication and into the arena of control and manipulation.

Even in situations where the parents are very wise and discerning, it would still be counterproductive for a marriage to be based on a parent's decision. When a young man, thus married, grows out of the dependent relationship with his parents, he may find himself dissatisfied. If a marriage gets rough and troubles arise, a couple must always be able to look back on the fact the decision to marry was based on their own desire to be married (not someone else's desire). This includes their love for one another, and the mutual belief it was God's will for them to marry — a belief that was not taken on the authority of someone else but reached directly by the two people as they individually sought the Lord's will.

This idea of each individual being personally responsible before the Lord for his or her own actions is the antithesis of Lindvall's more general teaching on the subject of authority. In order to understand anything about Lindvall, we must realize his basic misunderstanding of authority (together with the twin tendency of legalism). This permeates his thought like a continuous thread and forms a foundation from which all his other ideas have root. In his teaching on authority, Lindvall goes to the extreme — even beyond that of Gothard. One example of this is in his “Bold Parenting Seminar.”

Lindvall stresses the need for children to pass on the tenets of their father's teachings to future generations even when they believe such tenets to be lacking in scriptural precedent! This is regarding not only the decision whom to marry but regarding any decision. Lindvall argues that a man or woman is required to abdicate their conscience, reason, personal responsibility, and in some cases, even their interpretation of Scripture over to their father's control.<sup>23</sup>

### **Broken Heart Syndrome**

Finally, I would like to consider what Lindvall calls the “Broken Heart Syndrome.” Without quoting Lindvall directly, I simply shall summarize his argument.

1. It is wrong and unnecessary for young people to experience broken hearts and, therefore, it should be prevented if possible.
2. It is possible to prevent broken hearts by not allowing young people to have any private (individual) relationship with members of the opposite sex before betrothal.
3. Therefore, no young person should have any private (individual) relationship with members of the opposite sex before betrothal.

Those who advocate “courtship” reason similarly. Let us consider this whole issue of “Broken Heart Syndrome.”

For every young person, the intensity of emotions is, perhaps, the hardest thing through which to work. The spectrum and intensity of emotions young people experience can seem unbearable as feelings create the sensation that life is unbearably happy one minute and unbearably sad the next. In retrospect, we may condescendingly smile on youth from our stable emotional vantage point of adulthood. Or, as is so often the case, we may have forgotten how real and meaningful our feelings were to us back then. That leaves us with little or no understanding and sympathy to offer our children.

Jonathan Lindvall and the courtship pioneers have taken it one stage further by questioning whether this stage of passion and intensity is really necessary. Is it a sort of appendage to which, due to lack of true perception together with cultural pressures, it makes us subject?

It must be realized this sort of broken heart (that has a teenager sobbing into his or her pillow one day and healing into hope the next) is a basic part of life. As adolescents, we need help to learn how to cope with this. We do not need the censor and subsequent guilt of being told we have done wrong or have been too weak. It is in getting through and learning to cope that we grow and not in becoming so emotionally contrived that we become hard and cold.

Crushes, fantasies, dreams, and feelings, which were very real to us at the time, eventually fade as we grow to see things more objectively. But, if at the time, scorn or ridicule had been met out to us during our period of vulnerability, we may have felt such pain and hurt that we, in fact, had closed up to everyone and kept closed our heart,

thoughts, and feelings. If we had been brought up to feel there was something wrong with these experiences — something our parents disapproved of — then we might have hardened ourselves emotionally and formed a crust around our heart out of a desperation to be “correct.” Others, unable to do this, may live in a perpetual guilt-ridden state — too ashamed to share their “sinful feelings” with anyone.

If a young person's feelings are not seen in proper perspective by the parents/adults who should be helping them through the most difficult years, then this normal emotional intensity has added to them the parent's unrealistic notion of life. Things which, in time, would die a natural death are given an extended life of prolonged guilt. It is all very counterproductive.

Parents who have this mentality will not only prevent guilt-prone youths from falling into the “sin” of having a crush on someone (or of admitting it if they do), but they will prevent that child from the natural healing of that broken heart. The parent who is trying to tie up their youth's emotions is not at the same time able to

*(Continued on Next Page)*

**. . . Lindvall goes to the extreme — even beyond that of Gothard. One example of this is in his “Bold Parenting Seminar.” Lindvall stresses the need for children to pass on the tenets of their father's teachings to future generations even when they believe such tenets to be lacking in scriptural precedent!**




## "Game" (Continued from page 13)

help that youth come to terms with those feelings — to face them, accept them, grow from them, and grow out of them.

A broken heart, indeed, may be part of the Lord's plan in a person's life to help mature that person, to teach them valuable lessons about themselves and others, and to draw that person closer to His heart. If, however, parents simply assume broken hearts must be prevented at all costs, and that it is always contrary to God's will when a person goes through a tragic relationship, then they are in danger of standing in the way of God's plan for that young person's life.

I am not saying having a broken heart is an inherently good thing because we can grow from it, or that we should try to get our hearts broken in order to learn lessons. I am simply saying what is true of any kind of suffering. Although it is not something we should go out of our way to try to experience, neither does God want us going out of our way to try to prevent suffering. Trying to experience pain or trying to avoid it never helped anyone to grow. Creating a plan for life that will safeguard us from pain, from our emotions, and those of others, likewise, does not help us grow. Nobody likes pain, nobody wants a relationship to end in tears; but if that does happen, does that mean we were sinning? Does that mean we should make sure we protect our children from such an experience by attempting to exercise tight control over their emotions?

It is the job of a parent to help growth and not to dictate it, to help young people grow from their suffering and broken hearts and not to try to artificially create situations to prevent any possibility of broken hearts. The only way to prevent the potential of a young person getting a broken heart is to prevent that child from ever feeling love. That is the most tragic thing a parent could do to a child. It is not sensitive and caring when Lindvall talks about wanting to spare his children the suffering of a broken heart. If you want a heart that cannot be broken, what you need is a heart that cannot love. CS. Lewis puts this well, with words that make a fitting conclusion to this article:

"I believe that the most lawless and inordinate loves are less contrary to God's will than a self-invited and self-protective lovelessness ... We shall draw nearer to God, not by trying to avoid the sufferings inherent in all loves, but by accepting them and offering them to Him; throwing away all defensive armor. If our hearts need to be broken, and if He chooses this as the way in which they should break, so be it."<sup>24</sup> 

\*See *MCO Journals* vol. 3, no. 4; vol. 3, no. 5; vol. 4, no. 1; vol. 4, no. 4 (Sept./Oct.); vol. 6, no. 1 for more on Bill Gothard and his teachings.

\*\*Agapé (Gr.) love is the kind of unconditional love God exhibits toward us — an entirely unselfish love that seeks what is best for the other person.

Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc. would like to thank Robin Phillips for this article for the *Journal*. Robin is 25-years old and lives in a country cottage in Lincolnshire, England, with his wife, Esther, and their three children — Joseph, Miriam and Matthew. He is a self-employed author of various biblical, theological, and philosophical topics. He has an interest in cults and has written a testimony (which can be read at <http://www.fwselijah.com/phillips.htm>) about his experience in a denomination that used to be a cult. He performs locally on the classical accordion and is part of a local music trio. His wife home-schools their children. His hobbies include taking walks with his family, reading and listening to music with his family, and composing and arranging music.

### END NOTES

1. Jonathan Lindvall, *Youthful Romance: The Dangers of Dating*, from the taped lecture (Springville, CA: Bold Christian Living, 1996).
2. Jonathan Lindvall, "The Dangers of Dating: Scriptural Romance" *Home School Digest*, vol.8, no.2.
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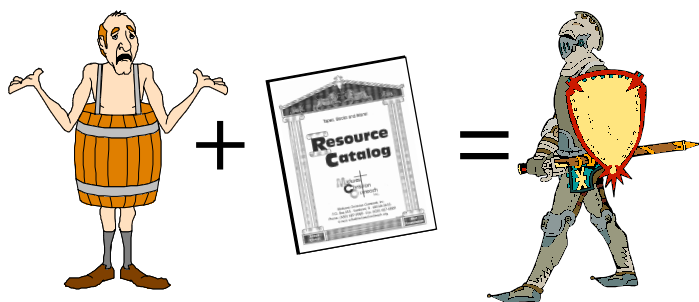
4. Jonathan Lindvall, "The Dangers of Dating: Scriptural Romance" *Home School Digest*, vol.8, no.2 and "The Broken Heart Syndrome" in *Establishing Biblical Standards of Courtship* (Oak Brook, IL: Advanced Training Institute of America, 1993) p.3.
5. Jonathan Lindvall, from a tract entitled *Youthful Romance: Scriptural Patterns*, (Springville, CA: Bold Parenting, 1992).
6. Lindvall, "Do Teen Dating Practices Prepare Young People For Marriage or Divorce?" article in *Bold Christian Living Tape & Video Catalog and Seminar Schedule* (Springville, CA: Bold Christian Living, received in 1998).
7. Lindvall, tape *Youthful Romance: The Dangers of Dating*.
8. Ibid.
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10. Bill Gothard, *Establishing Biblical Foundations for Courtship*, (Oak Brook, IL: Institute in Basic Youth Conflicts, 1993) p.13.
11. Lindvall, "Dating? Courtship? Betrothal?: Scriptural Romance" (Part 2) *Home School Digest*, vol.8, no.2.
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14. Jonathan Lindvall, "The Dangers of Dating: Scriptural Romance" *Home School Digest*, vol.8, no.2.
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17. Lindvall, tract *Youthful Romance: Scriptural Patterns*.
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19. *A Dictionary of the Bible*, (5 volumes) edited by James Hastings, M.A., D.D. (T. & T. Clark, 1900) p.270.
20. Douglas Wilson, *Her Hand in Marriage* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 1997) pp.29-30.
21. Jonathan Lindvall, "The Dangers of Dating: Scriptural Romance" *Home School Digest*, vol.8, no.2.
22. Ibid.
23. In his *Bold Parenting Seminar*, Lindvall shares how he and his father had always disagreed over whether it was permissible for a Christian to drink a little wine. When Lindvall became an adult, he began taking a little wine, to his father's extreme horror. One day Lindvall began to wonder if his actions in this area failed to honor his father. Then Jonathan imagined himself in a similar position with his own children. He realized it was inconsistent to expect his children to obey and pass on his teachings when they were grown if he did not exemplify the same toward his father's. Eventually, Jonathan concluded he should accept his father's position and teach his children to be teetotalers, and teach them to teach their children to be teetotalers, etc. *ad infinitum*. Only in this way could Jonathan realistically expect his children to do the same with his teachings.

Now what does this story tell you about the kind of father the senior Mr. Lindvall was? Should the father have been upset when his grown son began drinking wine? To answer this we must first understand the issue here is not who was right in the disagreement. For the sake of argument, let's assume the father's belief was the correct one. If the father knew his son was being honest about what he believed was true, and he had a heart that was right before the Lord, should it matter if Jonathan was sincerely mistaken? On the contrary, there should be no sense in which young adults are pressured to conform to their parents' conclusions. Instead, there should be an underlying understanding they are free and, indeed, individually *required* to test everything by God's Word.

When Jonathan came to his father saying he would accept his father's view even though he did not agree with it, the father should have said, "Certainly not! God doesn't want you to be dishonest, to deny what you honestly believe to be the Bible's teaching. It would be a lot worse for you to live a lie, teaching your children something you don't really believe, than to be sincerely mistaken." Likewise, what kind of father is Jonathan if he expects his children to exercise the same sort of mindlessness? Can he really believe God is pleased to have him acting like a pope — telling his grown children not only exactly what they can and cannot believe, but what they must pass down to every generation to come without encouraging them to inquire and investigate the Bible for themselves? A father who acts like this is attempting to wear God's shoes — which is nothing short of spiritual idolatry.

24. C. S. Lewis, "The Four Loves" in *The Inspirational Writings of C. S. Lewis*, (New York, NY: Inspirational Press, 1960) p.279.

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*"Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?"*  
- Galatians 4:16 -

Don't Let  
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