

# **Jesus and Theories of Personality**

**COU342**

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# **“Jesus and Theories of Personality”**

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## **Syllabus**

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5. Conscientiousness: Our Motivational Life
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# LESSON 1

## “Jesus and Counseling”

### How did Jesus do counseling?

If the ministry of Jesus is a model for the Christian counselor, we need to determine in what manner Jesus serves as the counselor’s model.

13. The first general approach has been to examine the emotional life of Jesus while he was here on earth.
  1. B. B. Warfield proposed three main emotions Jesus displayed during his earthly ministry.
    1. Sorrow.
    2. Compassion.
    3. Anger.
  2. Hansen (1997) looked at:
    1. Compassion.
    2. Anger.
    3. Grief.
    4. Joy.
    5. Love.
14. Second approach comes from the work of Albert Schweitzer (1948). Attempted to examine the mental health or lack thereof in Jesus. Work not in keeping with an evangelical understanding of the Bible.
15. Kelsey (1982) examined the Gospels through a heavily Jungian model to discover how the teachings of Jesus relate to individuation, archetypes and personality types.
16. Charles Solomon (1977) uses his model of handing problems over to the Holy Spirit and the indwelling Christ as a framework for understanding and discussing the counseling of Jesus.
17. Another approach has been to look in the Gospels for examples of various counseling techniques or strategies that Jesus used when he approached various people.
  1. Carlson was interested in determining whether Jesus represented modern counselors in a technical manner; that is, did Jesus use counseling approaches, interventions and methods that would inform the work of the modern Christian counselor?
18. Another approach is to examine the teachings of Jesus and to find in those teachings material that exemplifies the ways in which Jesus was the Wonderful Counselor.
  1. Cramer (1959) explored the Sermon on the Mount as a concise statement of the principles undergirding the counseling of Jesus.
  2. Cramer explored frozen rage, overconcern, the appeal of freedom and the

- transforming power of love, among other themes.
3. Thurman (1993) took various teachings of Jesus and extracted from them a set of principles that he felt reflected the counseling of Jesus. These principles include living like an heir, cleaning the inside of the cup, solving paradoxes and loving everyone.
  19. Still another approach comes from Alter (1994). She examined Gospel accounts to form a resurrection psychology, one that represents the ways in which the teachings of Jesus counsel us. Alter explores the centrality of forgiveness, the holiness of being human, the danger of certainty and the significance of scars.

Instead of understanding the teaching themes of Jesus through a pre-selected theory, and rather than exploring the counseling techniques or methods of Jesus, we will analyze ten major teaching themes of Jesus as illustrations of his counseling to us. These ten themes speak powerfully to the five major factors found in human personality.

## Jesus and the Big Five

The Big Five were identified almost two thousand years after Christ's birth as the basic trait structure of human personality. Over the last fifty years studies have shown that five different factors, often called the Big Five, undergird our personalities. The Big Five can be easily remembered by the acronym **OCEAN**:

20. **O**penness to Experience.
21. **C**onscientiousness.
22. **A**greeableness.
23. **N**euroticism.

## What is Personality?

Personality basically refers to those non-physical features of a person's existence that give identity to the person.

As Christians, we believe there is another feature of the immaterial part of us--the spirit. The term *personality* refers to those emotional and psychological features of our immaterial selves that influence and indeed govern how we relate to others (definition of soul).

- ◆ Spirit- how we relate to God.
- ◆ Soul- how we relate to others.
- ◆ Body- how we relate to the world.

The human person is a whole and cannot nor should be divided into discrete spheres. They are integrated. However, we can identify the approximate boundaries of the personality, and we can

study it to learn more about its mysteries.

**Some authors define personality by saying that it is composed of two parts:**

24. ***Those parts of the self that make a person similar to other people.***
  1. We all have emotions.
  2. We all are influenced by what is inside us as well as by what is external to us.
  3. We all have capacities to relate to other people.
25. ***Those parts of the self that make a person distinct from anyone else.***
  1. No two people are exactly alike in personality.
  2. We differ in intensity of emotions, in degree of characteristics, and in style of relating.
    1. Jacob was different from Esau
    2. David was distinct from Solomon, etc.
    3. All disciples of Jesus were not the same personality.

The field of personality theory within the discipline of psychology attempts to study these human similarities and differences.

26. One venture is directed toward the study of species-typical characteristics.
27. The other toward individual differences.

The general characterization of personality is the psychology of individual differences. In short, what makes us different from each other?

**Broad Biblical Themes of Personalities**

28. Each human personality was created by God.
29. Each personality is tainted throughout by the effects of sin.
30. Each personality is renewed by redemption.
31. Each personality can be used as an instrument for righteousness or unrighteousness.

**What We Do Not Find in the Bible**

32. Why some people are naturally gregarious and some painfully shy.
33. Why some people are prone to certain kinds of sins but not other kinds.
34. Why some people are capable leaders and others cannot lead.

Spiritual gifts could explain some of these differences for believers but could hardly help us account for differences in interpersonal effectiveness, preference for sins, or leadership style among those who do not believe.

## LESSON 2

### “Personality Theories”

**Some theories can be harmonized; others are contradictory and mutually exclusive.**

35. Personality theories began with **Freud**.
  1. He developed an assumption of unconscious mental determinism.
  2. He argued that conflict and untamed anxiety were at the heart of the human functioning and the mature behavior was actually a compromise of sorts made possible because of extensive use of defenses.
  3. Contribution to personality was that behavior observed may not be as it seems: kindness or love may not be expressions of intent but in fact compromised selfish needs.
36. **Carl Jung**.
  1. Further developed the unconscious and focused on character and temperament types.
37. **Adler, Fromm, Erikson** built on a psychoanalytic base but moved their emphasis to the ego and conscious behavior. Current descendants of Freudian psychology focus on ego psychology, self psychology, and object relations theory.
38. **Phenomenological**.
  1. Theories which seek to explain what can be seen and observed rather than what has to be inferred.
  2. **Allport, Lewin, Rogers** pursued this approach.
    1. Allport contributed to the field of personality theory by studying traits and exploring in great depth the problem of prejudice.
    2. Rogers’s unconditional positive regard.
    3. Lewin, Field Theory.
39. **Behavioralism**.
  1. Examined conditioning and reinforcement principles as a major explanation of why people do what they do.
  2. Behaviorists examine cues, drives, learning, response, classical conditioning, operant conditioning, shaping, patterning, punishment, modeling and a host of other features of human functioning.
40. Various **social learning and cognitive theories** add to the variety among personality theories.
  1. Social learning theory as developed by Albert Bandura expands on behavioral approaches by highlighting the role of modeling or social learning in shaping behavior.
  2. Cognitive theories focus on the inner world of cognition, how it affects our mood and how it contributes to psychopathology.
  3. Cognitive-behavioral personality theory attempts to take the best of the two

approaches and make them relevant to an understanding of personal functioning.

### **Why Various Theories Fail to Give Adequate Explanation of Individual Differences:**

Each one focuses on a specific feature of human functioning and so fails to be comprehensive.

4. Each emphasizes certain features while ignoring others.
5. As a result, fail to give adequate explanations for individual differences.

### **The Five-Factor Model (FFM) or Big Five**

Developed out of study of human traits. Trait theory has roots deep in American psychology. Recent theorists have demonstrated that five major trait factors explains a full range of individual differences far more completely than any of the classic theories. The finding is this:

- ◆ If a large number of rating scales is used and if the scope of the scales is very broad, the domain of personality descriptors is almost completely accounted for by five robust factors.

### **What Is Trait Theory?**

#### **Traits are:**

41. “Dimensions of individual differences in tendencies to show consistent patterns of thoughts, feelings, and actions.”
42. Traits are components of our personality which enable us to be consistent over time in our behavior and reactions to life.
43. People change in a desired direction (result of counseling), but traits remain rather constant.
44. Traits are related to temperaments that emerge very early in life.
45. The five factors of the Big Five model emerge when studying how people rate themselves, how friends rate them, and how professionals rate them.
46. Research on the Big Five has crossed cultures.
  1. Research has consistently found five factors in work conducted in Spain, the Netherlands, Norway, China, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Portugal.
  2. Tests devised in Arabic, Croatian, Czech, Dutch, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Italian, Hebrew, Icelandic, Japanese, Korean, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Swedish.

### **Limitations of Five Factor Theory**

47. Principally helps us understand how personality is configured, how it is organized, what are its main themes.

48. Does not tell us how these traits developed, how they change over time, exactly how they affect behavior or how social roles interact with the factors

## **Development of the Big Five**

### *The Lexical Approach*

When people want to communicate with each other about some new observation, they invent words and grammatical structures through which they can communicate that material to others. A growing and developing language to describe all of these personality attributes facilitated this endeavor. The older and more developed the language, the more sophisticated was (and is) its capacity to describe with precision these subtleties of human functioning.

When personality theorists seek to learn about human personality through a thorough review of the language humans use to describe the personalities of themselves and of others, we can understand the logic and value of such approach. We can learn about the relative importance of human characteristics by doing a frequency analysis of words used to describe that function.

Allport amassed a list of 17,953 words, which was reduced to 4,504. These represented English words which characterized human behavior and personality.

British researcher Raymond Cattell further reduced this vast number of terms in the Allport study by identifying 35 bipolar scales (70 items). Administered to 373 male university students. Conducted a factor analysis on the results. Difficult to appreciate the clerical work performed in the 1940s without computers!

### *Factor Analysis*

Factor analysis is a statistical procedure that allows us to assess massive quantities of data as we seek to find relationships among the various findings we have gathered. It identifies clusters of variables that are related to each other and unrelated to other variables. For example, we might identify 25 different issues related to human functioning. Twenty-five topics represent a sizable task for the investigator, so we would conduct a factor analysis using powerful statistical techniques. Factors discovered are those items which highly correlate with each other. One factor would have a low correlation with another factor; otherwise, they would be of the same factor.

## **Is Personality Genetically Based?**

One of surprising findings in recent decades is that a significant influence on personality traits comes through a genetic influence as opposed to an environmental impact of our surroundings. Most of the classic personality theories have argued that much of our personality makeup is attributable to the learning that occurs relative to parenting styles, early experiences, bonding,

attachment and separation, individuation, trauma or other environmental effects.

First evidence that Big Five has genetical links is fact that these five factors are found in many cultures. Some studies indicate that as much as 41 percent of the variance among the factors is attributable to genetic influence. Estimates of the heritabilities of the Big Five factors are:

- 49. Extroversion .36
- 50. Agreeableness, .28
- 51. Conscientiousness, .28
- 52. Neuroticism, .31
- 53. Openness, .46

Each of these are higher than the corresponding effect of the environment.

Although there are not specific genes for such attitudes, a variety of biological mechanisms could ultimately affect these attitudes. Include senses, hormones, intelligence, temperament, and emotionality. Genetic effects reach deeply into our social behavior.

Genetic research, studying identical and fraternal twins reared together and apart, can help us understand the relative role of environment and heredity. We do know that at least three personality traits emerge very early in life: emotionality, sociability and activity. All three are heavily influenced by genetic factors.

### **Changeability and Comparability**

Do traits change over time or are they stable? Most research suggests that these five basic traits are very stable. They remain at approximately the same level during an entire lifetime. When a person begins adult life as a highly conscientious individual, the likelihood is that the person will remain that way during her or his entire life. Traits decline slightly over an entire lifetime but only at the same rate as intelligence declines.

### **Comparability to Classical Personality Theories of This Century**

- 54. Openness to Experience consistently correlated positively with intelligence.
- 55. Agreeableness compares favorably with Adler's concept of social interest, a motivation at the heart of Adlerian theory.
- 56. Compared to Myers Briggs Temperament Inventory (the most famous of all inventories designed to measure the theories of Carl Jung). When its scales are analyzed by factor analysis, four of the five factors clearly emerge from the MBTI.
  - 1. Extroversion is similar in both systems.
  - 2. Openness corresponds to Intuition (versus Sensation).
  - 3. Agreeableness is akin to Feeling (versus Thinking).
  - 4. Conscientiousness resembles Judging (versus Perceiving).

5. The fifth factor of the Big Five, Neuroticism, is conspicuously absent in the MBTI items.
  1. Gap of personality measurement is not due to Jung's naivete about whether humans possess undesirable characteristics but to Myers and Brigg's attempt to make results of the MBTI equally desirable.
  2. By including items that measure undesirable features of the human personality they could not have achieved their stated goal. As a result the Myers-Briggs inventory does not completely measure the full range of human traits.

## The Big Five and the Teachings of Jesus

We have always known that the teachings of Jesus are powerful and beyond wonder. One reason for the powerful nature of his teachings is that they speak so directly to the five basic features of human personality.

The following table lists these factors, the personality theme represented by each of the five, and two teaching themes of Jesus that address each of these five factors.

<b>Big Five Factor</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Teaching of Jesus</b>
<b>O</b> (Openness to experience)	The Experiential Life	Spread Joy Experience Hope
<b>C</b> (Conscientiousness)	The Motivational Life	Display Mercy Pursue Justice
<b>E</b> (Extroversion)	The Interpersonal Life	Show Love Be Trustworthy
<b>A</b> (Agreeableness)	The Attitudinal Life	Enjoy Peace Live in Acceptance
<b>N</b> (Neuroticism)	The Emotional Life	Offer and Accept Confession Seek and Grant Forgiveness

## LESSON 3

### “Openness to Experience”

#### Introduction

57. We can either open to experience or closed to it. We can learn from what happens to us and grow thereby, or we can resist change and remain relatively unaffected by experience.
58. We can learn from what happens to us and grow thereby, or we can resist change and remain relatively unaffected by experience.
59. One of the ways in which we can understand ourselves and others is to rank ourselves according to how open we are.
60. Openness to experience is one of the five basic ways in which we can characterize human personality.
61. Openness to experience is reflected in English and in other languages, by the fewest number of descriptive terms of all the Big Five.
62. Most of the terms that apply to openness refer to the cognitive aspects of human intelligence.
63. Some researchers have named this factor “intellect.”
64. We also know that this cluster of traits seems to be the one that is most affected by culture and has been the most difficult for researchers to name.
  1. Intelligence correlates very highly with the openness factor.
  2. Culture suggests a sophistication that is not central to the factor.

#### What Is Openness to Experience?

65. Openness could be described as “a proactive seeking and appreciation of experience for its own sake, based on characteristics such as openness to feelings, new ideas, flexibility of thought, and readiness to indulge in fantasy.
66. People who score high on the openness factor engage the world with a spirit that is eager and keenly interested.
67. Open individuals are characterized by a “broader and deeper scope of awareness and by a need to enlarge and examine experience. They are imaginative, aesthetically responsive, empathic, exploring, curious, and unconventional.
68. Persons who score low on this cluster of traits tend to be closed, prosaic and conventional.
  1. They prefer the familiar rather than the unknown.
  2. They have a rather narrow range of interests.
69. Both high and low scorers can be mentally healthy or unhealthy, authoritarian or nonauthoritarian, and extraverted or introverted.
70. A high score on openness to experience may seem very commendable to some groups of people and very undesirable to others.

1. Mental health personnel may view a very open person as a mature, healthy person.
    1. Many people in our contemporary world admire persons who can accept everything, can change any value at any time, and can tolerate any and every thing.
    2. This much openness may render people useless and ineffective when action is needed that is predicated upon principles of highly held values.
  2. Some evangelical Christians or other conservative types might automatically assume that openness is the equivalent of liberal attitudes. A low score on this factor might be the far preferred test outcome.
71. We can not assume that this factor that ranges from open to closed attitudes is the same as a liberal-to-conservative measure. The domains are not equivalent.

### Components of the Openness Factor

72. **Fantasy** (a vivid imagination that creates a rich inner life).
73. **Aesthetics** (a responsiveness to poetry, art and beauty).
74. **Feelings** (an awareness of intense emotion).
75. **Actions** (an interest in doing new and different things).
76. **Ideas** (intellectual curiosity).
77. **Values** (a readiness and willingness to reexamine values)

### Scores on Jesus and Paul that are the result of how scholars rate them on openness to experience:

Openness Facets	Jesus	Paul
Fantasy	AVERAGE	LOW
Aesthetics	AVERAGE	AVERAGE
Feelings	VERY HIGH	AVERAGE
Actions	AVERAGE	HIGH
Ideas	HIGH	HIGH
Values	VERY LOW	VERY LOW

### What Do We Know about Openness to Experience?

78. Of all the Big Five factors that undergird the human personality, openness to experience apparently has the highest level of genetic influence.

79. Major twin/adoption study in Sweden:
1. Study of identical twin pairs and fraternal twin pairs who had been reared apart and those who were reared together.
  2. Allows investigators to form estimates of the relative role of family environment and social learning on various facets of personality configuration as opposed to the influence of genes.
  3. Identical twins possess the exact same genetic inheritance whereas fraternal twins are genetically similar only to the degree that other siblings are alike.
  4. Could assume that openness to experience as we have described might be very much influenced by early childhood experiences and parental influence.
  5. Most personality theories have predicted such a heavy influence from the environment on openness.
  6. However, results of Swedish twin study indicate that openness of experience shows “moderately high heritability and little evidence of shared rearing environment effects.
  7. Still much genetic research to be done, yet the role of genetics on how open we are to experience is apparently quite high.
80. Openness to experience is an excellent predictor for vocational success in jobs that require exactly this type of attitude toward the world.
1. Individuals scoring high on the openness scales will likely influence how they respond to counseling.
  2. Will be much more responsive to innovative approaches.
  3. Persons scoring low on openness will likely need more directive, sensible therapies.
81. Openness is a major factor in predicting how pastors will respond to Christian counseling as a ministry to hurting people and how often they will refer to professionals.
1. Individuals with high openness scores experience emotions more intensely.
  2. Individuals with low openness scores report lower levels of both negative and positive emotions.
82. The characteristic of openness is a significant feature in the psychological maturity of many persons.
1. The interactions we have with experience and how we deal with life are central to the level of psychological maturity we possess.
  2. When we are relatively open to experience we can enjoy a richness and fullness that we otherwise would miss.
  3. The alternative to this openness is a closedness that may give us some freedom from distress but which will ensure that our lives are not as rich and varied.

### **Jesus and Openness**

How can we understand openness to experience from the vantage point of our Christian faith?

83. Gospel can not demand of the followers of Jesus a certain level of openness to

experience.

1. If genetic, we might be unable to change our personal degree of openness demanded of us by our faith.
  2. Should not strive toward a certain level of openness as an optimal level for the believer.
  3. Whatever our level of openness may be, God requires us not to change that level but to face life (experience) with two major experiential characteristics: joy and hope.
84. God does call us to be a people of closely held values, and he honors those who are deeply convinced of the core issues of the Christian faith.
1. May not be pleased with persons who are dogmatic about peripheral values.
  2. God honors some in his kingdom who are open to beauty (aesthetics) and use their gifts for the glory of God.
    1. Many of us may not have the same interest in aesthetics, so our trait scores on this facet might be very low.
    2. God can use people with different configurations on this openness cluster of traits if they are able to live life with the two distinctly Christian approaches to experience: joy and hope.

## LESSON 4

### “Joy and Hope”

#### Two responses to experiences:

3. We can welcome and embrace the experiences.
  4. We can shun them and retreat from them.
85. Responses we make to experience will vary somewhat from time to time and from situation to situation.
1. Overall, each of us respond in a characteristic pattern.
  2. Heavily influenced by genetics and hereditary factors that are beyond our immediate, personal control.
  3. Scripture is clear that regardless of our experience “score,” we are to include in our experiential lives two sets of Christlike behaviors.
    1. Spread joy wherever we go.
    2. Experience hope as we encounter life.
86. Experiencing joy concerns itself with the present.
87. Experiencing hope is oriented toward the future.

#### Joy

88. The English word *enjoy* means to experience something with joy. Joy is an inward response to some experience that we have.
1. Praise brings inward joy.
  2. Joy forms a giant parenthesis around the life of Christ.
    1. First parenthesis, joy at his birth.
    2. Closing parenthesis, joy at his resurrection.
    3. After ascension, disciples returned to Jerusalem with great joy.
89. Gospel of Luke called “the Gospel of joy.”
1. Luke might have scored high on the openness to experience scale, given his emphasis on conveying joy that Jesus brought to the world.
  2. Luke uses various words for joy a total of 53 times in his Gospel.
90. What is joy?
1. Some say God does not give joy; rather, joy is our response to what God does give us.
  2. Joy is a fruit of the spirit.
  3. Joy is a choice we make.
    1. We can choose to respond to life's experiences with joy or with despair.
  4. Joy is unlike happiness, which is determined by circumstances; joy is independent of circumstances.

## Six Different Aspects of Joy

91. **The Joy of Finding.** One of the facets of openness to experience is action. People who are open to experience are behaviorally willing to try new and different activities and enjoy change. Luke links joy with a type of action: that of finding.
1. Finding of the sheep.
  2. Finding of coin.
  3. Finding of son.

People who obtain high scores on the openness factor and especially on the actions facet of that factor will likely have the easiest time learning how to spread joy when finding new evidences of God's love and caring.

92. **The Joy of Worship.**
1. Early church worship.
  2. The joy of the Lord's Table.
  3. Joy, beauty and worship.
    1. Lower scorers on openness to experience are usually relatively uninterested in and insensitive to art and beauty.
    2. Worship in Scripture is associated with art and beauty.
93. **The Joy of Modeling.**
1. The joy of the crowd was modeled after the joy of the Savior (different of image of Jesus projected).
  2. Jesus began his ministry by facilitating the joy at a wedding.

One of the facets of the openness to experience scale is labeled fantasy. Fantasy may be defined as a vivid imagination and active fantasy life in which people daydream as a way of creating an "interesting inner world."

3. Christians associate fantasy with lust and other indulgences of the mind.
  4. We can visualize Christ so that we can become increasingly Christlike.
94. **The Joy of Obedience.** One facet of the openness personality factor deals with *values*.
1. People who score high are open to reconsidering basic values and exploring new ones.
  2. People who are committed to a belief system that is quite well defined will probably score much lower.
  3. Why Jesus and Paul scored low on Values: They were deeply committed to their convictions.
  4. Key value for the believer; one that does not allow much room for variance--the implicit promise to obey God.
  5. The secret of Jesus's joy: obedience.
95. **The Joy of Taking Courage.**
1. The obvious feature of the ministry of Jesus to hurting people was to lift their

- spirits, to bring them encouragement and a measure of hope.
2. One of the facets of the openness scale deals with feelings. We have different styles of incorporating feelings into our experience.
    1. Some are deeply and intensely aware of different emotions they experience; others are quite disconnected from them.
    2. Some people are threatened even by their own feelings; others actively seek to cultivate various emotions as a part of their sense of well-being.
  3. Counselors have a sacred privilege of speaking courage in the name of Jesus to hurting, discouraged, defeated and despairing clients.
96. **The Joy of Suffering.** The final facet of the openness factor has to do with ideas. Has led some to label openness factor as “intelligence” or the “intellectual” factor.
1. One of the greatest mysteries of Christianity is the teaching that we can learn to experience joy even though we are enduring suffering.
  2. Given the pain and agony of suffering, God can still produce in us joy based on larger realities that transcend the pain of the moment.

## Hope

### Hope and Openness

Paul and Jesus scored in the average range for openness to experience--wide range of scores they obtained on the component scales of openness.

97. Jesus ranged from very high on openness to feelings to very low on openness to values.
98. Paul scored high on openness to actions and ideas but very low on openness to values.

### How does hope affect the experiential life?

99. Believer views experience as only one segment of reality.
100. Experience is only one component of what of what is real and true.
  1. God exists beyond the experiences of life.
  2. God is active in the world both in and above the laws of nature.
101. It is not enough merely to have Christian hope; it is also vitally important that we allow that hope to shape our responses to experience.

### Hope in the Bible

102. Hope is central theme of the Bible.
103. Hope before the First Advent.
  1. God was faithful to give prophetic utterances through his prophets about the future.
  2. Israel's hope was the coming Messiah and Kingdom of God.

104. Hope after the First Advent.

### **Varieties of Hope**

105. **Hope Floundering: The Experience of Ambivalence**

1. Man at pool.
  1. Does this work or doesn't it?
  2. Were the friends who bring me here every day right or were they wrong?
  3. Why do I feel encouraged some days and discouraged other days?
  4. Have I done the right thing by coming here to the pool for healing?
2. Several major pathologies are inner responses to ambivalent stimuli in the environment.
  1. Anxiety.
    - (1) Inconsistent stimuli coming from the environment all affect the anxious person.
    - (2) We can view anxious people as individuals with floundering hope triggered by ambivalent stimuli from life's experiences.
  2. Schizophrenia.
    - (1) Hope flounders for those caught in the grip of an acute schizophrenic episode.
    - (2) Recovery often includes the reordering of life so that its experiences will not be so overwhelming in the future.

106. **Hope Waning: The Experience of Loss.**

1. Hope wanes for all of us at times.
2. Hope frequently wanes for us in the face of repeated experience of loss.
3. Antidote is cultivated hope--not just believed hope but enacted hope.
4. Only when we can think, decide and act on the basis of our believed hope will we be able to face well the losses that come our way.

107. **Hope Absent: The Experience of Despair.**

1. If we could somehow extract from a person's current functioning all hope in the future, the person would be left in despair.
2. Hopelessness is a state of mind and attitude that sees nothing positive in the future, only things negative.
3. Often such persons are suicidal or will become suicidal in the future.
4. Research has consistently shown over the years that depression, hopelessness and suicide are all correlated with each other.
5. Hopelessness--the sense that there is no future or, if there is, it is all bleak and negative--is a better predictor of successful suicide than is depression.

108. **Hope Realized: The Experience of Encountering God's Power.**

1. The man at the Pool entered into hope experienced.
2. No human experience is quite as powerful as the wonder of being able to see with our own eyes the fulfillment of a burning hope that wells up from deep inside our souls.

109. **Hope Anticipated: The Experience of Waiting.**

1. One encounter with the power of God does not complete our need for hope.
2. We not only hope that God will meet our personal needs, but hope that God will fulfill his master plan of the ages.
  1. Hope that Jesus will return.
  2. Hope of the resurrection.
3. This sure hope
  1. Energizes us.
  2. Helps us keep the present in divine perspective.
  3. Gives us reason to rejoice even in the midst of suffering.
  4. Equips us to see the future as a time frame in which God will be active and victorious.

## **Conclusion**

We have seen how experience comes in all forms to each of us on a daily basis. Our basic personality configuration equips us to respond to those experiences with differing degrees of openness and closedness. We are all different in this regard.

As our belief in hope, our practice of hope and our conscious awareness of the surety of our hope anchor themselves into our experiential lives, we can encounter the experiences of life in a richer, fuller way.

When we deal with those who struggle with floundering, waning or absent hope, one significant way in which we can help is to reacquaint them with the hope of their Christian faith and what it can do for them. When they are able to experience a fresh touch of God's power in response to their hopes, their lives can be transformed and energized in new ways.

## LESSON 5

### “Conscientiousness: Our Motivational Life”

#### The Second of the Big Five Personality Factors is Conscientiousness.

Deals with motivational side of personality.

Major part of this conscientiousness factor consists of what is often called character.

110. High scorers are reliable; low scorers lackadaisical.
111. High scorers are disciplined about working toward goals; low scorers are less concerned about accomplishing goals.
112. High scorers are thought to be more mature psychologically because they display greater degrees of self-control and have the ability to plan, organize and execute the tasks of life.
113. Determination and drive can result in accomplishing some admirable goals, but high levels of conscientiousness can also have a downside.
  1. When high scorers overdo their conscientiousness and become a workaholic.
  2. When excessive sense of responsibility becomes a handicap.

#### Human Motivation

Not all individuals in the same situation will behave in the same fashion. We explain this difference by looking for different motivational factors that may move people in different directions.

114. People are sometimes motivated by greed, or selfishness, or hunger, or aggression, or desire for approval, or desire for achievement, or desire to work out some internal psychological conflict.
115. Disagreements come when theorists attempt to determine which are the most basic of all these possibilities and which are merely caused by other, more foundational factors.
  1. Biological determinants.
  2. Psychological determinants.
  3. Christians must add the Spiritual
116. The Big Five theory suggests that in the arena of motivation, humans differ along a continuum from high conscientiousness to a very irresponsible set of motivations toward life.
  1. Does not suggest why people are where they are on this continuum.
  2. Does not explain how these various degrees of conscientiousness help determine what a given behavior will be in any certain circumstance.
  3. Merely descriptive of the varieties of motivational factors among humans.

## Subfacets of Conscientiousness

117. **Competence.** The degree to which individuals see themselves as capable and effective, wise and realistic.
1. Will score high on this feature when they feel fairly well-equipped to live life and face its challenges.
  2. Low scorers will be individuals who feel inadequate and ill-prepared for life.
  3. Highly correlated with measures of self-esteem.
  4. High scorers will also score high on internal locus of control scales. They will feel in charge of and in control of how they behave rather than that external forces or circumstances are governing their lives.
118. **Order.**
1. High scorers are able to organize things and keep them available for use.
  2. Opposite is the proverbial slob who never seems quite able to find the things that need to be in place.
  3. Extremes on either end of this subfacet scale can be devastating to the desire to live life efficiently.
119. **Dutifulness.** The tendency to behave on the basis of one's moral and ethical convictions.
120. **Achievement Striving** (diligence and purposefulness in working toward goals as opposed to aimless satisfaction with very low levels of achievement).
121. **Self-discipline** (the ability to apply oneself to tasks in spite of obstacles such as tedium or distractions).
122. **Deliberation** (the ability to think carefully before acting so as to proceed in life with caution as opposed to reckless haste).

## Subfacets Intuitively Connected to the Idea of Conscientiousness

123. Having confidence in yourself coupled with a capacity to be orderly will help you execute duty and obligation.
124. Seeking to achieve and having the discipline to do it and the wisdom to think carefully before acting all will help you be a conscientious person.
125. High scores on conscientiousness have been positively correlated with physical fitness, good health and length of life.
126. High scores are excellent predictors of success in the work world.

The following table shows a conjectured score for Jesus as “very high” on component of conscientiousness.

Conscientiousness Facets	Jesus	Paul
Competence	HIGH	AVERAGE

Order	HIGH	AVERAGE
Dutifulness	VERY HIGH	HIGH
Achievement Striving	HIGH	VERY HIGH
Self-Discipline	HIGH	AVERAGE
Deliberation	VERY HIGH	AVERAGE

## **Jesus and Conscientiousness**

### **Questions and Statements**

127. Must we strive to develop the exact same score as Jesus had on this personality dimension?
128. Does the high scorer please God more than the low scorer?
129. Is there more sin involved in obtaining a low score than there would be for obtaining a high score?
130. Being a reliable person, especially in our relationship with God, is clearly a commendable trait.
131. Regarding the spiritual implications of conscientiousness, we must exercise some caution lest we glorify traits that we admire and cast more aspersions on those who lack them than the Bible does.
132. Conscientiousness is a trait that likely pleases God but about which we must be cautious in our attribution of spirituality to it.

## LESSON 6

### “Mercy and Justice”

#### Display Mercy

133. Mercy is a central feature of God's character and is a powerful motivation in his interactions with the human race that he created. Thus mercy is also to characterize the motivational life of the believer.
134. Mercy is the compassionate treatment of others.
135. Showing mercy is a cardinal feature of the conscientiousness that the followers of Jesus must display.
136. The desire to show mercy is also a key component of the attitudes that must flow between a therapist and a client if psychotherapeutic change is to occur.
137. Must show mercy to receive mercy.
138. Once we have received mercy from the good hand of God, we should be motivationally compelled to render it more to others who, like us, stand in great need of mercy.

#### Mercy as Motivation

139. The motivational domain of personality ranges from high levels of conscientiousness to irresponsibility.
140. When persons are conscientious, they are motivated to face their responsibilities and opportunities with an appropriate sense of duty and commitment.
141. The Bible teaches that we fulfill our created intent when we align our motivations with the desires of God and focus these motivations on our relationships with God and others.
  1. Showing mercy becomes a marvelous motivation for the Christian.
  2. It prompts us to action because of the boundless mercy God has displayed toward us, thus giving us constant reminders of our relationship with him.

#### Mercy in Scripture

142. The Christian psychotherapist is a recipient of God's mercy and is thus constrained to be involved in the second phase of mercy's implications for us.
  1. We are to demonstrate mercy to others as a fair and obligatory response to mercy received from God.
  2. Jesus is not only the mediator of God's mercy toward us but he is also the model for how we should in turn display mercy toward others.
143. Mercy is an inner feeling displayed in outward acts.
  1. Never just an idea or an intent.

2. Mercy is a motivation expressed in behavior.

### **The Mercy Ministry of Jesus**

144. Healing the man with withered hand on Sabbath.
145. Plucking the corn on the Sabbath. "If you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is lord of the sabbath." (Mt. 12:7-8).

### **The Mercy Ministry of the Christian Counselor**

The following set of suggestions is but one approach to linking mercy to the work of the therapist:

146. The counselor acknowledges and is aware of personal benefit obtained from the boundless mercy of God.
147. In response to this blessed state, the counselor determines to obey the injunctions of Scripture and to show mercy to others by following the example of Jesus.
148. This process of displaying mercy to others begins with compassion for and attention to the misery of others.
149. Empathy forms out of this wellspring of compassion since the counselor is well aware of her or his own misery that has been the object of God's mercy.
150. The client experiences the expression of mercy, now cast in the framework of compassionate empathy, and benefits from it.
151. The Christian counselor explicitly or implicitly give God the glory for this expression of mercy by making its expression a clear component of Christian witness.

### **Specific Applications**

152. Showing mercy versus giving empathy.
  1. Every therapist should be empathic.
  2. Christian therapist should express these qualities to show mercy.
153. Resistance and non-compliance.
  1. Burned out therapist and careless counselor can easily respond to these difficulties in treatment with behavior in kind.
  2. True mercy does not condemn, coddle, hamper, or patronize clients. It does offer second chances, additional understanding and compassion.
154. Apathy and chronicity.
  1. When clients are not making progress or when the therapy is no longer beneficial to them, we must take steps to refer them to others or in other ways take action to

- facilitate their progress and improvement.
  - 2. Apathy of a client who continues to need care and treatment but who does not seem energized enough to pursue it effectively can trigger any number of reactions on the part of the therapist.
  - 3. Therapist can react to a client's indifference as if it were an assault on the competence and self-worth of the therapist.
155. Fee for service and the granting of mercy.
- 1. Not just showing mercy, but offering professional care.
  - 2. Committed to devoting our total energy to this cause and thus do not have the opportunity to support ourselves via other means of income.
  - 3. Issue of client motivation is involved in sorting out this issue. Clients are more motivated for change when they pay.
  - 4. Christian therapists strive to make their service available to those who cannot afford them or who are in dire financial straits.

## **Pursue Justice**

The human personality contains a motivational domain that is central to our functioning.

- 156. Totally unmotivated persons are essentially vegetable-like in that they accomplish nothing; they are inert, completely inactive.
- 157. Activity and accomplishment are predicated upon some type of underlying motivational system that prompts and fuels the person to act.
- 158. The Big Five factor theory of personality suggests that this motivational domain varies in it qualities; some people's motivational lives are characterized by intense levels of conscientiousness and some by minimal levels of responsibility.
- 159. Pursuing justice controversial in evangelical circles.
- 160. Why are we afraid of the topic of justice?
  - 1. Earlier battles between fundamentalists and theological liberals centered around social issues and social justice. Social justice had to take a back seat in that struggle, and evangelicals have been distrustful of the pursuit of justice ever since.
  - 2. Pursuing justice can be a very unsettling and disruptive process.
    - 1. Pursuing justice occurs in arenas where injustice reigns and where change must occur.
    - 2. Pursuit of justice requires change and reform, both of which can be threatening to the comfortable status quo.
  - 3. If I benefit consistently from just treatment that is fair, and that gives me freedom and opportunity, I may assume it's the same for everyone. Basking in the benefits of justice makes it difficult for us to realize that such is not the experience of all people.
  - 4. Evangelicals have consistently spiritualized justice, righteousness and the just to refer only to personal, internal conditions of one's relationship to God.

1. This spiritualizing by evangelicals is surprising since they don't spiritualize hermeneutics.
2. Spiritualizing only concepts of justice or righteousness results in a dismissal of other features of the concept of justice.

### **What Is Justice?**

161. Justice is a normative principle “for evaluating and harmonizing conflicting claims of rights, duties, and responsibilities.”
162. Justice is obviously far simpler for God to execute than it is for humans to administer.
163. If it were not for the presence of sin in the world, there would be no need for justice
164. Two main types of justice: universal and particular.
  1. Universal. Personal righteousness that the gospel bestows on those who believe in it.
  2. Particular justice.
    1. Commercial justice (fairness with regard to economic exchanges, just weights and so on).
    2. Remedial justice (fairness in the legal sense, equal application of the law to all persons).
      - (1) Retribution.
      - (2) Justice (fairness to victims and perpetrators alike).
      - (3) Therapy (rehabilitation, retraining).
    3. Distributive justice (sometimes called social justice, equal opportunities afforded to all persons).
165. Justice is related to mercy. In a legal sense, if God applied absolute justice to us without any of the amelioration that mercy brings, we would sustain the wrath of God in our lives and experience.

### **Jesus and Justice**

A major feature of the work of Jesus the Messiah is the proclamation of justice.

God the Father, Jesus the Messiah, the Holy Spirit, and the prince of this world all come together in a massive struggle with a clear and decisive outcome: God's justice reigns supreme.

166. Justice and his mission.
  1. Luke 4:18. The Messiah would address his ministry to those who were the victims of injustice: the poor, the prisoners, the blind and the oppressed.
  2. Justice would finally arrive among God's people.
167. Justice and his teaching.

### **Obstacles to the Pursuit of Justice**

168. Overwhelming need.
  1. We are surrounded by needs of great magnitude.
  2. Great numbers of people suffer injustice of every kind.
169. Complexity of issues.
  1. Misinformation from Christian groups concerning apartheid in South Africa.
  2. Difficult for Christian public to ferret out the truth.
  3. Complexity does not give us permission to indulge in passivity.
170. Why not just wait?
  1. We know the outcome of human history. God will intervene to right all wrongs, to end all suffering, to execute justice on all those who have defied God's love, and to bring an end to all injustice.
  2. Its main weakness is that it overlooks the central place that justice and its pursuit took in the life and ministry of Jesus.

## LESSON 7

### “Extroversion: Our Interpersonal Life”

#### Jesus and Our Interpersonal Life

*Extroversion* and its counterpart, *introversion*, are two of the most well-known personality descriptors.

171. Research has found that the degree to which an individual is outgoing, sociable, friendly, adventuresome and fun-loving is known to those around that individual.
172. Most people fall in middle range.
173. Of the five factors in the Big Five, extroversion is the most easily understood and the most familiar to the general public.
174. People who score high on the extroversion factor are friendly and sociable.
  1. They like people and groups, even big groups.
  2. They are assertive, talkative and active.
  3. Most often they are optimistic.
  4. They like adventure and excitement.
  5. The fact that extraverts are friendly, outgoing and optimistic does not mean that introverts are hostile, shy and pessimistic. Introverts are reserved rather than unfriendly; they are less outgoing; they are not necessarily unhappy.

#### Subfacets of Extroversion

175. **Warmth.**
  1. Extroverts are warm, affectionate, and friendly.
  2. They like people, and it is easy for them to build relationships with others.
  3. Low scorers on this subfacet tend to be reserved, formal and somewhat distant.
176. **Gregariousness.** High scorers genuinely enjoy the company of others, as opposed to low scorers, who may be less comfortable in groups or at least do not seek out social encounters.
177. **Assertiveness.**
  1. Low scorers prefer to stay in the background and let others take leadership.
  2. High scorers quickly become leaders in a group and can be dominant and forceful.
178. **Activity.**
  1. High scorers move quickly through life and exude a sense of energy and busyness.
  2. Low scorers are more leisurely about life, although they are not lazy.
179. **Excitement-seeking.**
  1. High scorers, stimulation, excitement, noise, bright colors--all enjoyable for them.
  2. Low scorers enjoy quiet and calm, the very things that to the high scorer seem

boring.

180. **Positive emotions.**

1. High scorers laugh easily and frequently and report many positive emotions such as joy, happiness, love, excitement.
2. Optimism normally accompanies these features.
3. Low scorers are less exuberant and less emotionally animated.

**Correlates of Extraverts**

181. Positively correlated with happiness.

1. Feel better about themselves and about life.
2. This correlation is stable and persists over time so that we know it is not related to mood or to passing circumstance.
3. Report higher levels of satisfaction with life.

182. Extroverts experience more positive life events, and persons scoring high on neuroticism experience more negative life events.

1. Examples of positive life events are promotions, raises, marriage, engagement, the receipt of an award.
2. Examples of negative life events are weight gain, personal injury or illness, divorce, loss of job, suicide attempt.

183. Extroversion is heavily influenced by genetic factors.

1. Mothers will report differences in this trait among their children very early in life.
2. If we reach out to others we are likely extraverts.
3. If we are more reserved and cautious in our interpersonal relationships, we are likely introverts.
4. Both can serve God well; both can be used mightily of God.

<b>Extroversion Facets</b>	<b>Jesus</b>	<b>Paul</b>
Warmth	AVERAGE	AVERAGE
Gregariousness	AVERAGE	HIGH
Assertiveness	HIGH	AVERAGE
Activity	AVERAGE	HIGH
Excitement Seeking	LOW	AVERAGE
Positive Emotions	HIGH	AVERAGE

## LESSON 8

### “Love and Trustworthiness”

Jesus calls all of us to two major interpersonal tasks: to love others and to be trustworthy. This divine calling for our interpersonal lives applies to extravert and introvert alike. The commandment to love people could be harder for the introvert, just as the command to be trustworthy and reliable might be more difficult for the extravert. Yet we all are called to pursue these two interpersonal virtues with all our strength and might.

#### **Show Love**

##### **The Many Splendors of Love**

God has created us as individuals who must participate in relationships. It is nearly impossible to be a human and to be totally detached and unconnected to other human beings. The most introverted of persons will have the obligation to show love and to be trustworthy in relationships.

##### **Definitions of Love.**

The word *love* in the English language spreads across many domains and is used to describe and denote a large variety of very different entities.

The following quotations are representative of three major world religions:

184. When all the people in the world love each other, then the strong will not overpower the weak. (Confucianism).
185. When he (Bodhisattva) exerts himself for the good of others, he should be filled with love and love alone without any admixture of self-interest (Buddhism).
186. Those who desire to transcend all limitations and bondages must accept supreme love as the highest goal. (Hinduism).

If love is to be the defining characteristic of Christians, we have before us a major challenge to restore the reputation of the church to its earlier state when believers were known for their love for each other.

##### **Hierarchies of Love**

A contemporary attempt to rate the characteristics and qualities of love on five dimensions:

187. Intensity of love, from its absence to its maximal levels.

- 188. Extensity, from love of self only to love of all creatures on the planet.
- 189. Duration, from the briefest encounter to lifelong relationships.
- 190. Purity, from love extensively contaminated with mixed motives to the most genuine and unadulterated love.
- 191. Adequacy.
  - 1. Inadequate love is either an objective love expressed through acts but without any accompanying emotion or a highly subjective and affectional love that has no counterpart in behavior or action.
  - 2. Adequate love. Composed of both subjective feelings and objective acts.

### **Agape Love**

- 192. Agape love is not contingent on the character or the worthwhileness of the object of that love.
  - 1. It is a seeking love, a love that reaches out toward others.
  - 2. Rather than being pulled by eros love toward someone who can fill a lack we have, agape love enables us to reach out to replenish the emptiness that the other person may have.
- 193. “A love that does not seek to fill my own soul, but to fill you; to replenish your emptiness and not my own.”
  - 1. The motivation for loving with this type of selflessness cannot come from within the human spirit.
  - 2. It's origin is from God himself.
- 194. The second greatest love--to love your neighbor as yourself.

### **The Practice of Enemy Love**

- 195. Do good to your enemies.
  - 1. Stop all bad behaviors toward them: plotting revenge in our imagination, withholding normal interactions with them, avoiding them, retreating from opportunities to have relationships with them.
  - 2. Stop the powerful impulse we have to gossip about those with whom we have some type of grudge.
  - 3. Passing along information that does not belong to others, that unfairly puts people in a bad light or that exaggerates or falsifies the truth is often the most damaging behavior we can display regarding our enemies.
- 196. Bless your enemies.
  - 1. When we react with hurt and anger as a result of an interpersonal conflict, the conflict may reveal more about ourselves than it does about the other party.
  - 2. The best way to learn about these inner flaws in ourselves that continually get provoked by other people is to spend time in a relationship with a trusted friend who can help us identify these personal weaknesses.
  - 3. We bless our enemies when we conduct an attitude check.

197. Pray for your enemies.
1. Praying for enemies is surely the hardest to obey.
  2. Requires great spiritual discipline and strength.
  3. Pray that God's divine purpose will be accomplished in them.

## **Conclusion**

The interpersonal factor in human personality equips us with an approach to others that is extraverted or introverted, warm or cool, gregarious or isolating, assertive or retreating, active or inactive, excitement-seeking or excitement-avoiding, and positive or negative.

## **Be Trustworthy**

**The second interpersonal requirement of Jesus' followers is that they be trustworthy.**

Integrity, trustworthiness, honesty are all familiar themes that challenge and stretch all of us.

We can attain a standard of trustworthiness and a deserved reputation for integrity by consistently following the precepts of Jesus. We can establish trustworthiness as a habit of holiness, especially when we begin that pattern early in life. Parenting is crucial to building this trait into our lives.

Loving persons of integrity become winsome witnesses to the character and care of God-- something the world desperately needs to see and know about. It would be difficult to live in a world where integrity and trustworthiness were totally absent.

## **What Is Honesty?**

Honesty is telling the truth and nothing but the truth. An important part of the definition of a lie resides at the level of intention. When someone intends to mislead and deliberately does so, the nature of the statement is clear; it is a lie. When someone deceives or misleads another person without the intention to do so, the statement is still a lie but with different import.

Integrity is discerning what is right and wrong, acting in accordance with the discernment even if at great personal cost, and affirming openly that you are acting on what you think is right and wrong.

**We can be dishonest by:**

198. Not representing the full and complete truth with a statement we make.

199. By communicating material that is slanderous.
200. By misrepresenting or compromising standards.
201. By cheating.
202. By remaining silent.

***Our interpersonal dealings are to be characterized by honesty and integrity.***

“Interpersonal functioning is extensive and embraces a multitude of relationships: how we conduct ourselves in friendship, in intimacy, in commerce, in politics, in civic life, and in church life. Perhaps the most challenging arena of all is in the church. Conflict, misrepresentation, gossip, and false pride chip away at the church. Congregations split. Friendships collapse. Effectiveness sinks. The church's testimony in the community suffers. And it all happens because we have not learned to apply basic principles of honesty in the body of Christ.” (White, 1979, p. 145).

## **Jesus and Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness involves the reliability of a person's word. When someone makes a promise, does the person intend to keep the promise and have the ability to keep the promise, and can others count on the fulfillment of the promise?

**The reason these issues are so important for interpersonal functioning is obvious:**

203. If agreements between people are so uncertain as to be essentially worthless, how can people live together in the necessary relationships of life?
204. Humans share a basic propensity to deal with interpersonal matters with either a great deal of extraversion, a great deal of introversion, or some gradation of the two.

We are to be known by those around us as people of integrity. Our interpersonal relationships must be trustworthy. Integrity can only come from the discipline of consistent application of the intent to be truthful and to keep our word.

Keeping mind and mouth in harmony is the path to interpersonal integrity. Anyone who has been deceived by a person who reneges on a promise or who simply does not carry through on responsibilities knows how devastating that disappointment can be. We want to trust others, but sometimes that trust is violated. And when it is, the hurt, harm and long-term consequences are many and extensive.

Internal character is the best and most important determiner of integrity. If all is well on the inside of a person, trustworthiness should be the result.

The environment does have a role to play in promoting untrustworthiness or shoring up

trustworthiness. In every case, however, the person is responsible for all behaviors that have to do with a lack of integrity, and the person's inner character is likely the more powerful influence on what behaviors are displayed. Whether one's lack of integrity is wholly caused by inner forces or partially caused by the environment, the devil is involved.

The call of Jesus upon our lives is that we pursue our interpersonal relationships with high levels of trustworthiness and integrity, levels of character supported by inner strength and outer community support.

## LESSON 9

### “Agreeableness: Our Attitudinal Life”

#### Jesus and Our Attitudinal Life

Agreeableness is a personality factor that meets with almost universal approval. We tend to like agreeable people and think that they are pleasant to be around. High scorers on this personality factor are sympathetic toward others and willing to reach out to help them. The agreeable person tends to feel that others will be equally helpful in return. Low scorers on agreeableness are antagonistic, far less trusting of the motives of other people, and competitive rather than cooperative.

*However, disagreeableness can have its advantages:*

- 205. Would be best to be represented by a disagreeable lawyer in a court of law.
- 206. An agreeable police officer might have difficult time making arrest.
- 207. Military officers must carry out orders that call for fairly high levels of disagreeableness.

#### Characteristics of Agreeableness

Researchers have attached to this personality factor names such as: Conformity, likability, friendliness and friendly compliance.

Research shows less amount of genetic influence on this factor than the other four factors. It remains possible that parenting has a significant impact on how a child develops regarding agreeableness versus disagreeableness.

Agreeableness is apparently an important component of the personality configuration of physically healthy people. Recent results in this field of health research suggest that two personality qualities are important in maintaining personal health:

- 208. Optimism, hope, a sense of internal control and the capacity to find meaning in life, a factor sometimes called *optimistic control*.
- 209. Rational rather than emotional expression of anger, a factor called *anger expression*.

Both of these factors seem to have significant relationship to agreeableness. Persons with high scores in the area of optimistic control are also likely to be high scorers on agreeableness, and persons who display large amounts of anger are likely to be low scorers on agreeableness.

## The Facets of Agreeableness

210. Trust.
1. The tendency to believe that other people are honest and well-intentioned versus believing in a cynical or skeptical manner that they are dishonest or dangerous.
  2. High scorers believe in people; low scorers are not so sure.
211. **Straightforwardness.**
1. The characteristic of frank and sincere interactions with people as opposed to indirect, crafty or manipulative techniques.
  2. Straightforwardness is valued in some societies more than in others.
212. **Altruism.**
1. Has to do with concern for the welfare of others, showing itself in generosity and willingness to assist.
  2. Low scorers are more detached from the problems of others.
213. **Compliance.**
1. The high scorer tends to defer to others, to inhibit aggression, and to forgive and forget.
  2. Low scorers prefer to compete rather than to cooperate and will express anger freely when needed.
214. **Modesty.** (Humble and self-effacing rather than arrogant and conceited).
215. **Tendermindedness** (high levels of concern for others, unlike “realists” who use only cold logic to make their decisions).

## Jesus and Paul on Agreeableness

Agreeableness Facets	Jesus	Paul
Trust	VERY LOW	VERY LOW
Straightforwardness	VERY HIGH	AVERAGE
Altruism	AVERAGE	LOW
Compliance	LOW	LOW
Modesty	LOW	AVERAGE
Tender-Mindedness	VERY HIGH	HIGH

Jesus scores as average, Paul as low on the factor as a whole. These results are colored by the fact that they both experienced strong opposition to their ministries. Much of what we know about the personality of Jesus comes from accounts of his interactions with Pharisees, and we learn of Paul mainly from his exchanges with those who opposed his leadership, especially in

Corinth. Thus both Jesus and Paul score very low on trust, the tendency to take people at face value and to believe that their intentions and motivations were pure. Both routinely had to question the motives of their opponents in order to continue defending their work against strong resistance. Paul and Jesus both were high on tendermindedness.

The agreeableness factor contains a strong component of sympathy, empathy and care for others. These features are true especially in the facets of altruism and tendermindedness. High scorers are quite simply compassionate people. In spite of the “average” score for Jesus on this factor, he was known for his compassion.

Humans have as an important component of their personality makeup a range of possibilities in attitude from very agreeable to very disagreeable.

## LESSON 10

### “Peace and Acceptance”

God has created us with a personality dimension on which our attitudes range from highly agreeable to highly disagreeable. These attitudes toward life in general and specific events in particular will differ from individual to individual. To this common, human attitudinal factor Jesus calls his followers to two additional attitudes. We as believers will bear the distinctive marks of peace of mind and calm self-acceptance.

The promise of material prosperity, the lure of personal fulfillment through psychotherapy, and the easy demands of secularism have all failed to deliver on their pledge to provide people today with personal peace. Peace of mind is an attitude that equips us to reflect on past events, to react to present events and to anticipate future events with a confidence that God is sovereign and that we can rely on his care for us.

#### Greetings of Peace

*God's design for the peace of those who follow him falls into three main divisions.*

216. In the Old Testament, we learn of the shalom of God.
  1. Shalom peace is rich and wonderful, and it forms the basis what we later learn regarding peace in the New Testament.
  2. Shalom is both interpersonal and attitudinal.
  3. Both situational and eschatological.
  4. Both individual and corporate.
217. Arrival of Messiah.
  1. First, Jesus teaches his disciples a great deal about peace in the upper room discourse.
  2. Jesus teaches us about peace in the stylized commands and greetings that dot the Gospels.
218. Peace in the epistles of the New Testament, particularly the book of Phillipians.

#### Peace as Bestowed by Jesus

Enemy of Peace	Corresponding Role of Jesus	Passage
Satan, demons	Jesus the Omnipotent	Luke 4
Sin	Jesus the Savior of the World	Luke 7

Danger	Jesus the Lord of Creation	Luke 8
Fear	Jesus the Resurrected Lord	Luke 24

The words of Jesus in each of the above events attack the main enemies of peace in our lives, and they give us instruction as to how our relationship with Jesus gives us peace of mind.

### **Jesus the Omnipotent God**

(Luke 4:31 KJV) And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days. (Luke 4:32 KJV) And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power. (Luke 4:33 KJV) And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, (Luke 4:34 KJV) Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God. (Luke 4:35 KJV) And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not. (Luke 4:36 KJV) And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out.

The connection between peace and quiet is familiar to everyone.. Peace is not noisy or raucous. It is quiet. A major disturber of our peace is Satan himself. Knowing and encountering Jesus as the omnipotent God is the first step toward entering the peace that God wishes us to have. Fellowship with the God who has conquered the great enemy of peace is a wonderful privilege of those who seek the peace of God in their lives.

### **Jesus the Savior of the World**

In the face of the second great enemy of a peaceful attitude toward life, sin, Jesus grants forgiveness, which opens the door to peace of mind. When we encounter Jesus as the Savior of the world, we too can revel in the forgiveness he has granted us that allows us to enter fully into an attitude of peace.

### **Jesus the Lord of Creation**

The third great enemy of personal peace and of the attitude that Jesus bestowed on the repentant woman of Luke 7 is danger. Danger that is real is always a threat to calmness of heart and soul. Danger is traumatizing and can be psychologically harmful. The victory that Jesus offers over danger is not always to remove the danger but always to be with us during the danger.

In speaking to winds and waves on Sea of Galilee, Jesus reveals himself as the Lord of Creation, who brings peace to his own in the face of danger. “Peace be still!” Jesus was asleep in the storm because he knew he was just as close to God on the sea as he was on the land.

In Judaism only God had authority over the waves and the sea. Clearly, Jesus was God, the Lord of creation who could bring peace even in the face of grave danger.

### **Jesus the Great Physician**

Illness is a great disturber of the peace. Injury, accident, disease, illness, poor health and disability breed worry and concern. Peace can give way to panic when we do not know what is happening to us, when we fear chronic or disabling consequences, or when we anticipate a dreaded diagnosis that our condition is terminal. The peaceful attitude of mind that we might wish to foster is difficult to maintain when our health is in jeopardy and when outcomes are hidden from us. The biblical attitude of peace of mind comes to those who cower in the face of illness when we encounter Jesus as the Great Physician.

To Jairus' daughter: "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."

A twelve-year old girl, who suddenly became sick was healed.

A woman who had been chronically ill for twelve years was also healed.'

### **Jesus the Resurrected Lord**

The final enemy of a peaceful attitude is fear. Anxiety, worry and fear are all attitudes that keep the human psyche in turmoil. They are noisy, not peaceful. They are upsetting, not settling. They are tumultuous, not calm. Fear does not quickly vanish even in the face of the peace of Jesus. Peace of mind takes time to establish itself in fearful hearts.

We too serve and worship the resurrected Lord. To us he bestows this same peace, the perfect antidote to our fears. Encountering Jesus as the resurrected Lord will bring to our attitudinal lives the transforming peace of Jesus.

### **Live in Acceptance**

The second basic attitude to which Jesus calls us related to agreeableness is living in acceptance. A major goal for the disciple of Jesus is to cultivate both peace and acceptance as ways of enriching our personality attitudes.

Some scholars continue to feel that the self can never be known by unipolar means (one cannot know oneself), but only in relationship or by bipolar means.

The self can and should be known. Jesus desired that his disciples live in acceptance, to accept themselves because Jesus first accepted them.

### **Jesus and the Self**

In the midst of Jesus' teaching about the love for others, we also find material regarding how Jesus expects us to accept ourselves. Jesus first assumes that we will love ourselves, and then he animates this normal human attitude toward the self by giving us his friendship.

## **Acceptance Assumed**

Nine times the scriptures speaks of loving others as ourselves. The command to love others counters the natural and sinful predisposition of humans to love only themselves. God calls us out of ourselves and toward others.

Jesus expects this love of others to extend as far as does our love of ourselves. How we love ourselves becomes the standard that we must meet when we love others. We can love them no less than we love ourselves. The emphasis is not on loving ourselves--Jesus probably assumed we did. The emphasis is on loving others.

### ***What is the exact nature of this assumed love of self?***

- 219. It is not selfishness.
- 220. This assumed love of the self is a non-sinful love that is an expected part of human functioning. It should come naturally.
- 221. This assumed love of self is a feature of one's life that can be known and that can be used as a standard or measure against which one can love other people.

In the biblical sense, the self-love of which Jesus speaks refers to the natural protection we give ourselves. We feed, defend, shelter, preserve, support, and care for ourselves. This type of self-esteem is not sinful; in fact, it is necessary if we are to fulfill our love obligations to God and others.

- 222. A husband ought to love his wife as his own body.
- 223. Do unto others, as you would have them do to you (assuming you would have them do good toward you because you are significant).
- 224. By way of contrast, egotism is "the crass and crude attempt of self-esteem impoverished persons to 'prove that they're somebody!'"
- 225. Sober, accurate judgment about the self prevents the insecurity displayed by selfish persons.
- 226. Only excessive love of the self is sinful.
- 227. Jesus does not call us to self-rejection, self-loathing or self-derogation. We are to simply and accurately accept ourselves.

## **The Great Self-Esteem Debate**

### **Proponents**

- 228. A positive self-esteem is different from conceit or egotism.
- 229. A healthy self-concept is mandated by plain common sense: God loves us and values us;

so should we.

### **Opponents**

- 230. An emphasis on self-esteem is in direct conflict with the Bible's clear teaching regarding self-denial.
- 231. We are not to think well of ourselves because we are worthy only as we are related to Jesus and that we have no worthiness in and of ourselves.
- 232. Instead of working to help people think well of themselves, we need to be calling them to take up their cross, follow Jesus and deny themselves.
- 233. We don't need self-esteem; we need God-esteem.

### **The Psychological Role of Esteem**

- 234. We have known capable individuals who hesitate to use their talents and skills because of lack of confidence.
- 235. In extreme cases an entire life can be squandered by a person who cannot forward to the self a realistic and appropriate amount of self-esteem.
- 236. People can fail to take reasonable risks in life because of the mistaken idea that they are not good enough--fear of failure.
- 237. A much healthier approach to life is to work at developing within ourselves a realistic and accurate self-evaluation.
- 238. Life without a realistic self-appraisal and with a dependence on the opinions of others is difficult to live.
- 239. In the absence of a healthy level of self-esteem some people develop patterns of self-hatred or self-delusion.
  - 1. Self hatred is a pathological condition in which people can pursue self-destructive behavior patterns.
  - 2. Self-deception causes people to skew their perceptions.

### **Excesses of Opponents**

Believers who display symptoms of severe mood disorders or various anxiety syndromes often sustain a deeply ambivalent attitude toward the self.

Essentially the approach to the “deeper” Christian life has created a generation of believers who did not know how to handle four different tasks:

- 240. They did not know how to incorporate biblical confidence into this scheme of dying to self.
- 241. Believers seemed handicapped in knowing how to handle their own achievements.
  - 1. How do I handle the promotion I just received?

2. How do you handle compliments?
242. Believers seemed unable to distinguish among pride, humility, false humility and false pride.
243. Finally, this evangelical approach to pietism bred considerable discontinuity between public presentation and private experience.

A one-sided approach to sanctification, emphasizing only its self-denial components, is incomplete and will lead to practical difficulties.

### **What It Means to Deny Self**

244. To deny oneself means to reorder our priorities so that the priorities God wishes for us become our own.
245. Denying self means loving Christ more than we love ourselves.
246. Denying self does not mean that we are to punish ourselves or reject ourselves.

Archibald Hart has summarized other mistaken notions as to the meaning of self-denial.

You must deny yourself because it is sinful to do anything that gives you pleasure. Others must be allowed to take advantage of you, because being a Christian means you must let other people walk all over you. You must never think of yourself, because this is selfish. You must always take care of others first and put yourself last. You are not allowed to think for yourself. You must never have fun, only do your duty. Whenever possible, do something to humiliate yourself. You don't have any rights. Your self is vulgar and should be hated. (Hart, 1992, p. 56).

## LESSON 11

### “Neuroticism: Our Emotional Life”

The final personality factor in the Big Five Personality theory is *neuroticism*. Neuroticism is used only as a general term for human maladjustment rather than as a term reflective of Freudian theory (neurosis).

Others have suggested that the emotional content of the factor could be better summarized with the term *emotional stability* or *ego strength/emotional disorganization*.

This factor measures human weakness and imperfection. The scale measures the emotional life of the individual from emotional stability (low scores) to general maladjustment (high scores) among the normal population. The scale appears to measure negative affectivity--the negative emotions of fear, sadness, embarrassment, anger, guilt and disgust. People whose lives are characterized by these emotions are often quite distressed and maladjusted when compared to low scorers on this factor.

Not all persons who would score high on this factor are necessarily diagnosable with a psychiatric condition; however, they may be at a higher risk of psychopathology. Some people with a diagnosable psychiatric condition such as the Antisocial Personality Disorder may, in fact, obtain a low score on this factor.

#### Subfacets

The six subfacets of the neuroticism factor are named for the primary clusters of negative emotions that high scorers tend to display.

247. **Anxiety.** Individuals who score high on the neuroticism factor tend to be sensitive to general anxiety, worry and fear. They are tense and jittery and tend to think a great deal about what might go wrong.
248. **Angry hostility.** High scorers show a readiness to get angry. Whether the anger is ever expressed cannot be determined by a score on this factor. High scorers here are often also low scorers on the agreeableness factor: they are disagreeable and quick to get angry as opposed to those who are slow to anger and who are easygoing toward life.
249. **Depression.** These people are easily discouraged and often have feelings of sadness, hopelessness and guilt. Low scorers on this factor are not necessarily cheerful; to determine whether lightheartedness is present one would have to look at the extroversion factor.
250. **Self-consciousness.** These persons are sensitive to the emotions of embarrassment and shame and prone to feelings of inferiority. Low scorers here are not necessarily socially

poised; they merely do not experience high levels of self-consciousness in social encounters.

251. **Impulsiveness.** High scorers typically have an inability to control wishes and urges. Low scorers are better able to tolerate frustration and resist temptations to indulge in desire.
252. **Vulnerability.** The self-concept of low scorers here is one of capability; the self-concept of high scorers is much more negative, since they feel dependent and stressed.

## Jesus and Paul on Neuroticism

The conjectured scores of Jesus and Paul on these six subfacets show us that Paul was an average person emotionally with many of the same struggles we all encounter in our lives. His low score on vulnerability probably reflects the tremendous sense of call and confidence he had in the mission Jesus had set before him. He pursued the service of Jesus with as much confidence as he previously had pursued the persecution of believers. Paul was not a vulnerable man.

Neuroticism	Jesus	Paul
Anxiety	VERY LOW	AVERAGE
Angry Hostility	AVERAGE	AVERAGE
Depression	LOW	AVERAGE
Self-Consciousness	VERY LOW	AVERAGE
Impulsive	LOW	AVERAGE
Vulnerability	VERY LOW	LOW

## Other Features of Neuroticism

Research indicates that high levels of neuroticism are associated with poorer physical health than low levels. It is tempting for us to think that persons who score high on this factor have simply had more than their share of negative life experiences, so they display more negative affect than the rest of us because of the difficulties they have had in life.

Research shows that the opposite may be closer to the truth. While external events may have a role in shaping the personality of the human, being, especially at the most malleable of developmental stages, people with high scores of neuroticism may attract more negative life events their way than do those whose basic personality configuration does not contain so much negativity. The negative emotions of neurotics lead them to create more negative events for

themselves, especially interpersonal negative events where others react in a punishing way to the neurotic's expression of negative affect.

Neuroticism also seems to be quite stable over time, suggesting that once negativity sets in to color a person's emotional life, it can take on the nature of character or of those parts of personality that remain constant.

## **Confession and Forgiveness**

The Neuroticism Factor deals with the weaknesses and struggles of life that characterize the emotional domain. Two major themes in the teaching of Jesus that deal with a distinctively Christian approach to the resolution and resolving of human weaknesses and sin are **confession** and **forgiveness**.

Confession in the church is often ritualized and closely committed to sins of commission and omission. In psychotherapy we observe confession in a wider sense: the uncovering of secrets, the disclosure of painful memories, the admission of weakness and imperfection. Confession serves as the means by which emotional turmoil is uncovered and exposed to the healing touch of the Holy Spirit. Confession is also the prelude to any successful resolution of the painful effects of guilt, shame and anxiety.

### **Biblical Confession**

Biblically, confession is used in three major ways: the giving of praise to God, the acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as Savior and the acknowledgment before God of personal sin. These three expressions of confession are goals toward which spiritual formation seeks to move people. Likewise they are also three major goals of Christian psychotherapy.

253. Therapy seeks to bring clients to peace with others, self and the past so that rightful praise can again be given to God.
254. Therapy seeks to help people become fully aware of their humanness and the resulting need of the creature to be rightly related to the Creator.
255. Therapy seeks to promote an honesty about weakness, wrongs committed, needed actions neglected and unresolved issues so we can fully invoke the forgiveness of God.

### **Confession of Sin in Psychotherapy**

Most therapists have experienced the confession of sin by clients during the course of counseling. Confession emerges because in the process of exploring the agonies of one's soul it sometimes becomes necessary and helpful to reveal inner secrets.

To expose oneself verbally or otherwise to God or another human being involves a radical

lowering of one's defenses, and the act of penitent confession itself brings profound healing--reordering values and freeing energies that had been bound up by the process of trying to hide.

Protestants have for the most part expelled the confessional from the church.. In our effort to privatize our relationship with God so that we can avoid interacting in a confessional way with another human being, we have neglected an important vehicle for personal change. In spite of our vigilance to keep the confessional out of the church, it has come back into the church--this time in the form of Christian counseling.

Confession in all its biblical forms gives all the followers of Jesus an important tool we can use to deal with our weaknesses, our neuroses, our sins, our frailties. Along with the accompanying dynamic of forgiveness, we can maintain our solid and sure connection with God.

## **Forgiveness**

If the Neuroticism Factor in human personality represents human frailty and weakness, then forgiveness represents God's provision for that universal human condition. Forgiveness is related to justice and mercy, topics we have previously discussed. Forgiveness is the bond that links justice to mercy.

Forgiveness is a unified entity even though it has many components. In the past, secular therapists looked upon forgiveness as a religious idea. Now, even secular therapists have taken renewed interest in forgiveness as a means of healing a damaged past and building a future that consists of love, justice and trust. Forgiving seeks to restore the interpersonal relationship by restoring communication, determining the exact wrong, pardoning the offense, releasing obligations and allowing trust to reappear. The offended party lets go of a record of wrongs, a need for revenge and associated negative feelings of bitterness and resentment.

Forgiveness is both an act and an attitude. It springs from an internal motivation to repair and maintain a relationship that has been damaged by hurtful action.

Forgiveness also involves replacing one's right to resentment, condemnation and subtle revenge with love toward the offender. When someone is unforgiving, such an attitude is expressed in a toleration of revenge, an acceptability of rejoicing in the misfortune of the offender, an acceptability of wishing to respond in kind, a tolerance for harboring long-lasting grudges, and a tolerance for ruining the reputation of the offender.

In general, the closer the relationship, the more difficult forgiveness may be when the connection is wounded or injured by offense and wrongs. Marital and parent-child relationships are among those that can cause the most severe of pain.

## **The Two Dimensions of Forgiveness**

“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

If we cannot forgive and release others, we will never fully know how God has done that for us.

These two teachings give us two distinguishing marks of Christian forgiveness that sets it apart from the forgiving that those unrelated to God can or might do with one another.

256. ***Our interpersonal forgiving is related to the forgiveness that God offers us.***

1. Because we have been forgiven, we are to become forgivers.
2. In the place of what comes naturally to us (bitterness, wrath, anger, wrangling, slander, malice) we are to cultivate kindness and tenderheartedness, both made possible by continual forgiving just as God in Christ continually forgives us.
3. Bitterness has a seductive quality to it because I can retain power over the offending person by not forgiving him or her. The allure of power over another is a strong human temptation.

257. ***Jesus teaches that our forgiving should not have limits on it.***

1. Jesus expects us to seek our forgiveness from those we have offended.
2. Forgiveness is at the heart of who God is.

### **Forgiveness is not these things:**

258. An undoing of the wrong or an obliteration of a past event.
259. A promise to trust the offender unconditionally in the future.
260. An excusing or denial of the reality and severity of the offense.
261. Reconciliation with the offender (a desired outcome that may or may not accompany forgiveness).
262. A condoning of the offense, claiming that something doesn't matter when it does.
263. A pardon for the offense, something only an official can provide.
264. Absolution of the offender, absolving any responsibility (a matter for God himself to adjudicate).
265. Forgetting.

### **Forgiveness Is a Process**

Forgiveness is the ultimate answer God intends for the tragic offenses we sustain in life. But genuine, God-honoring forgiveness is never the same as some superficial, quick cure-all for all the pains and hurts of life.

## **Stage Sequence for the Forgiving Process**

266. The offense must be identified clearly, as well as the attending negative emotions (hurt, anger, desire for revenge) that have built up around it. What is the offense? What is it not?
267. We must receive God's forgiveness. Only the truly forgiven are able to forgive well.
268. We must rediscover the humanity of the offender and come to realize that we are probably more similar to the offender in our own fallenness than we are different from him or her.
269. We must forgive. The actual forgiveness may involve contact with the offender, reconciliation with the offender or receiving an apology from the offender. The essence of the forgiveness is a letting go of the need for revenge and of the need for any further restitution.
270. The forgiving person must incorporate into awareness a new, re-framed perspective on what happened so that the positive emotions such as love can again appear in time toward the offender.