

CLEAR VISION

A monthly publication of the Center for Christian Life Enrichment

Soul Food:

Authentic Intimacy: An Encounter with Truth



By Rich Blue

A rare privilege in life is to have a relationship with someone who sees you accurately with positive regard and still accepts you unconditionally. This is a relationship founded upon truth and authenticity. How extraordinary to be seen by another as having all the resources needed to become the person God has envisioned you to be. This is what every child needs to receive from his or her parents.

This is the story of my initiation into authentic intimacy. I was in my 30's, having graduated top in my Master's degree program and successfully practicing therapy for two years. I pursued an opportunity to receive training in group therapy that I thought would round out my resume. I didn't think I really needed to be in group for myself—I was just learning the skills necessary to be a more effective group facilitator.

But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

Luke 19:8-10 (NIV)

I was working with Bob Wright, one of the leading therapists in Chicago. I knew he was an exceptional therapist, yet, I was a bit uneasy around him. I felt like he could see through me and I knew he didn't trust me. I considered myself to be the only Christian in the group and I felt it was part of my mission to lead everyone back to God, including Bob.

After group one afternoon, early into my group life, I saw Bob walking forcefully in my direction. He had an unusual power about him and was unlike

anyone I had ever known. I did not understand why I was so terrified of being in a group led by him. What was the big deal? I had been effectively leading groups for years. I was so scared I actually dreaded going to group and felt sick to my stomach each week as the day and time for group grew closer.

Bob was charging down the hall and I was getting that sick feeling that he was coming for me. The next thing I knew, I was up against the wall and Bob was screaming in my face. It was

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like an out of body experience. Time was suspended and I was hearing every word he was saying with clear precision. I felt torn about what was happening. On the one hand, I was twice his size and wanted to flick him off me and toss him out the window of the high rise we were meeting in. On the other hand, this wild man spitting out his judgments, was seeing me more accurately than anyone else had ever seen me before. What he was saying to me was true. He was loving me with the truth.

Here' a few of the truths that changed my life. Bob was confronting me on my refusal to be genuine. I was putting on a façade of niceness that was intended to manipulate others into liking me. I was out of touch with and unwilling to express my hurt and

anger. I was constantly withholding my judgments and acting superior to him and the other people around me. I saw myself as being the only one who had true faith, acting like I had the inside track to having an authentic relationship with God. I was out of touch with my true self and my feelings. I was not mature enough to experience the kind of intimate and faith-filled relationship I thought I had with God.

I identified with Zaccheus the tax collector in his encounter with Jesus (Luke 19). Zaccheus climbed the tree to see Jesus, yet, in reality, his deeper need was to be seen by Jesus. I had sought out help from Bob because I believed he would see me and help me transform my life. In spite of all of Zaccheus' wrongdoings, Jesus reached out to him and asked to

stay at his home. It was my hope that Bob would help me even though he knew I was hiding behind a façade of niceness, superiority and pseudo-spirituality.

Like Jesus, Bob invited me into a deeper and more authentic relationship with myself. Like Jesus, Bob went out on a limb to befriend what others in his world considered to be an extremely dangerous person—a fundamentalist Christian. Bob had hope for me—he had a vision of who I could become and how I could meaningfully impact the world and the church. Like Zaccheus, I was inspired by his faith in me and dedicated my life to becoming the most genuine, faith-filled, and compassionate Christ-follower I could be.

Upcoming Events at CLE

You can get more information on these events on our website: www.cle.us.com/events

Satellite Growth Group Workshop

October 16th, 2010

Singles Workshop in the City

October 29th, 2010

Fall Retreat

November 5-7, 2010

Tapping into the Power of Personal Transformation

Fresh Start 5K

January 1st, 2011

The Cost of Unconsciousness

By ER

As a soon to be graduate, I have been spending time reflecting on all that I have learned and how group has transformed my life. Early on, I needed to learn how to get in touch with and identify my feelings and ultimately learn how to express and communicate them to others. I knew I had a lot to learn about myself. As I grew, I became aware of what motivates me by understanding that my past experiences affect me in my adult life. I began to discover the strategies I used to protect myself from pain.

One of my ways to protect myself from upset, was to be careful, to follow the rules, and to avoid making mistakes. While this strategy works well some of the time, there is also a big cost. I became rigid and fearful of “getting in trouble.” I would do what I needed in order to feel safe and comfortable. The assignment, making mistakes, gave me the chance to learn that I am still valuable and loveable when I don’t do everything “right.”

I recently made a “mistake” that reminded me that when I do not live consciously I am at risk. I am out of relationship and inwardly focused. Just last week, I “forgot” that we had group on Thursday due to Labor Day and I decided to have a glass of wine with my dinner on Wednesday, breaking the no drinking 24 hours before group RULE. I did not realize the mistake until the next morning when I woke up and started thinking through my day.

What happened next, however, is a good example of how group has matured and nurtured me. I immediately got in touch with my feelings... a quick jolt of fear and anger and ultimately sadness. I then began to process what was happening with me that caused

me to make this “mistake.” I understood my conscious reasons, but I knew that I needed to go deeper to discover what I was NOT conscious of.

I immediately got up, went to my computer and emailed my group and the therapists. There was no question in my mind that I needed to include them. I felt sad because I knew my consequence would be journaling during group, and I only had a few groups left. BIG COST! I lose out on relationship when I am unconscious and not living with intention.

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I continued to process my “mistake” on my calls that day and came to the conclusion that I did not want to miss out on the relationship that group provided and decided to ask for a different consequence. So, here I am writing this paper. I was more scared to write this than to miss group, which makes it a better consequence for me.

Through my experiences and investment in group, I’ve learned the necessity of getting in touch with my feelings, the importance of processing my feelings in order to get a deeper understanding of what is upsetting me, and uncovering the strategies I use to avoid pain.

I’ve learned the principal of taking responsibility for my actions and telling the truth. I’ve learned that there is always a cost for being unconscious, but there is also an opportunity to grow, to be in relationship, and to be loved...even when I make “mistake.”

Welcome, Johnny Noto, our newest staff therapist!



Johnny Noto, M.A., has received his Masters degree in Clinical Psychology from Roosevelt University and has practiced in a variety of settings including a community mental health center in Oak Park, an inpatient hospital care facility in Hoffman Estates, and at Oak Park and River Forest High School. He has experience working with clients from adolescence to older adulthood and has worked with issues ranging from relational difficulties to severe mental illness. Johnny values and enjoys walking with others who are striving to find authentic and productive meaning in their lives while maintaining responsibility and accountability. Johnny and his wife, Jaci, have been married since 2008.



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