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FILTERS

By Robin Moore, MS, LHMC

Daniel 12:4 . . . many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased . . .

The Information Age has made it possible for "knowledge to increase" and our God-given ability to take it in efficiently is more important than ever. With the success of the internet, search engines, and mobile devices, we are the first generation in history that is more concerned with *filtering out* information than gathering it in. We are thankful for the advances in medical and scientific knowledge that have alleviated suffering and provided a better way of life for millions. With advances in technology we have the knowledge of hundreds of libraries literally at our fingertips, on our laps, in our phones! Now, more than ever, the ability to filter and evaluate the information we take in is a critical skill. How do we decide which information to keep and which to ignore? God has created us with a finely-tuned system for taking in very large amounts of information, making meaning of it, and responding to it. We connect and organize the pieces of information we take in and make meaning of them in the form of a narrative or story. For example, if we see a lone person walking along a busy road, we think, "He must have run out of gas," or "He is looking for something," and then if we see a vehicle, we think, "Oh, that must belong to that man," quickly making connections into a narrative. Once we have a story, we are less likely to notice information that does not "fit" and we quickly accept information that supports our story as fact. If I am diagnosed with cancer, suddenly I will pursue information that will help me decide what my story of having cancer is going to be - the very same information I would have filtered out before it became personal. For the most part, our story system of filtering information works well for us.

Often in this broken world, our identity-stories are based on information we have gathered from abusive or unhealthy relationships instead of from our relationship with God. We may hold the story "I am a bad child/parent/employee/spouse" and quickly our system for organizing information kicks in. We only notice the information that "fits" our negative story and accept it as fact. In these days of increased knowledge, we can quickly be overwhelmed with online quizzes, talk shows and how-to books that confirm our story of "I am not good enough" and depression or anxiety take over. If this describes you, it is important to seek out a trusted friend, pastor or counselor who can help you identify the positive information about yourself - your strengths and worth in Christ - that you have filtered out. It is time to re-author a new story as a disciple, a learner who sometimes makes mistakes, but who is loved by God.



Robin Moore is a licensed mental health counselor working at Meier Clinics in Bothell, Washington. Robin loves helping individuals and couples re-author their stories to include self-confidence and satisfaction. She has been married for 26 years to Bill, a senior software engineer. They have 2 sons, one married and one engaged. They are all an active part of church in the community. Watching the growth of their 2 year old grandson reminds Robin often of God's love story and the "learner" process.

He Restores My Soul

By George Stahnke

One of the many things that I love about God is found in Psalm 23:3a. "He restores my soul." In the Amplified Bible, it reads, "He refreshes and restores my life (my self)."

Can you think of specific instances when you have been discouraged, bowed down by the pressures and demands of life? It does not have to be a catastrophic event that threatens the health of your soul. More



often than not, it is the small things continually building, one upon another, until the accumulated weight brings despair. You continue to perform but you lack emotional vitality. You go through the motions meeting the expectations of others while inwardly there is a growing numbness, a weakening of the soul.

In this state of the soul, there is also increased vulnerability to various temptations. If the need for spiritual refreshing and renewal is not recognized, the condition of the soul continues to erode. Here is where one becomes increasingly self-focused. Relationships are strained as emotions wear thin. The thought processes become clouded, as the moral fabric continues to be unraveled. The person maintains their religious persona but the authenticity and joy of their relationship with God is diminishing. Given enough time, the consequences become more severe, straying further from God to pursue sinful desires. This continued erosion of the human soul is a slow and progressive process that has brought many to ruin.

When confronted, a person at this stage slips into ego management, denying there is any reason for concern, saying, "What is your problem? Everything is just fine!" When the state of their soul is questioned they minimize, "It's not as bad as you think." Often they will blame shift while playing the victim. It's gut wrenching to watch people we know and love caught in a downward spiral, refusing to listen to what they call those holier than thou do-gooders. "Why don't they just live their own lives and leave me alone!"

Space does not allow me the liberty of revealing the many ways in which our loving God patiently pursues the weary and thirsty soul. Whether discouraged like Elijah when threatened by Jezebel (1 Kings 19:2-8) or enduring temptation like Jesus in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11), we will receive His tender care and be refreshed. When in fear like Peter, who denied Christ (Matt. 26:75) or like Thomas who could not believe Jesus had risen from the dead (John 20:26-8), God will meet us at our point of need.

God's grace also extends to the soul of the prodigal (Luke 15:11-24), who having walked away from God, is continually pursued by Him, healing the soul of its backsliding, and restoring it to His favor. Where ever we may be in life's journey, God brings us back, relieves, refreshes, and comforts our soul with renewed discoveries of His love and the promises of His word (Psalm 19:7, Psalm 51:7-12). We only need to respond.



George Stahnke has been in ministry for 31 years serving fifteen as a senior pastor. He has taught in Ukraine, Philippines, India and China. George works in the Counseling department at Focus on the Family and is the founder of Renewal Ministries of Colorado Springs, which includes private counseling. For more information on Focus on the Family, visit www.focusonthefamily.com.

It's Time to Talk about It

Timberline Knolls Urges Families to Take Time to Talk About Eating Disorders

It's well known that an eating disorder can be life-threatening. But you may not know that eating disorders cause more deaths annually than all other mental and emotional health conditions combined. That's one important reason that February is designated National Eating Disorder Awareness Month and this year's theme was "It's Time To Talk About It." Timberline Knolls and the National Eating Disorder Association worked together to do their part to turn the country's attention to the life threatening disorder.

According to Dr. Kim Dennis, medical director at Timberline Knolls Residential Treatment Center, "Eating disorders are much more common now than they have been in the past. We're not sure exactly why that is, whether we're simply more proficient at identifying them or whether they actually are increasing in frequency," she explained. "But it means that there are more opportunities for women to conquer their disease and live healthy lives if we reach out and let them know help is available."

To raise awareness, Timberline Knolls issued a "Chat Challenge" urging everyone in their own community of Chicago and nationwide to set aside 30 minutes to learn more about eating disorders and to reach out to loved ones - daughters, sisters, nieces, mothers, friends - to talk about what can be done to help others. Timberline Knolls has information on its Web site about the warning signs and effects of eating disorders, which provided a good starting point for the conversations (www.timberlineknolls.com/eating-disorder/signs-effects) and NEDA also provided extensive information at www.NEDA.org.

Timberline Knolls continues to encourage the community to recognize the pressures, attitudes and behaviors that shape the illness. "Setting aside a time like National Eating Disorders Awareness Month is just one way to wage the war on unrealistic, body-perfect expectations," said Dr. Dennis. "Our goal is to work to prevent eating disorders and body image issues, and continue to improve access to treatment."

Timberline Knolls is a residential treatment center for females, ages 12 and older, nestled in a wooded area in a southwestern suburb of Chicago. Meier Clinics provides Christian counseling services for those residents who request it.

Partnering together to change lives is the motto and desire of Meier Clinics Foundation. We know that we can't provide charitable counseling care to the many who need it all by ourselves. We need partners - individuals, families, organizations, businesses - to partner with us in extending Christian counseling care to those communities where God has planted a Meier Clinics. Would you, your family, or your business be willing to partner with us?

In addition to financial help, we also need to update our aging computer system. If you are able to help in any way, please contact us or send a contribution to:

Phone: 800-848-8872

Online: www.meierclinics.com/donations

Mail: MCF, 2100 Manchester Road, Suite 1510, Wheaton, IL 60187-4561

MCF is a 501(c)(3) non-profit. Donations are tax deductible within IRS regulations.

Thank you for taking time out of your day to read our newsletter. We hope it has been encouraging and enlightening. If there is a topic you would like us to address in the future, please feel free to contact us at info@meierclinics.com.

If you would like to speak with one of our staff members, please call us at 888-7CLINIC to be directed to the Meier Clinics nearest you. Or you may contact us by e-mail at intakepost@meierclinics.com, or **see us on facebook**.