

***INSIDE OUT* – Introduction**

Written by Dr. Larry Crabb in 1988, this book was dedicated to his two sons. I share in his expressed devotion to his children where he begins:

“My greatest privilege and deepest prayer is to be used of God to further the wonderful process of your growth in Christ.” On this shared dedication, I begin a summary.

In his foreword, Larry writes: “Very few Christians feel their disappointment with life deeply enough to fix their hope on what is yet to come. Even fewer face their sin so thoroughly that forgiveness becomes the most valued blessing. **The message of this book**, he writes is to:

- Don’t be afraid of sadness, but understand that your soul cannot be satisfied in this lifetime but that glory awaits us in heaven.
- Don’t be afraid of brokenness, but understand that your sin (of the heart) is enough to make you depraved left to yourself but are made righteous in Christ.

Dr. Crabb sites **two questions that invoke real change (“Inside Out”)** in our lives:

1. What is the object of your deepest desire?
2. Can anyone love me as I truly am?

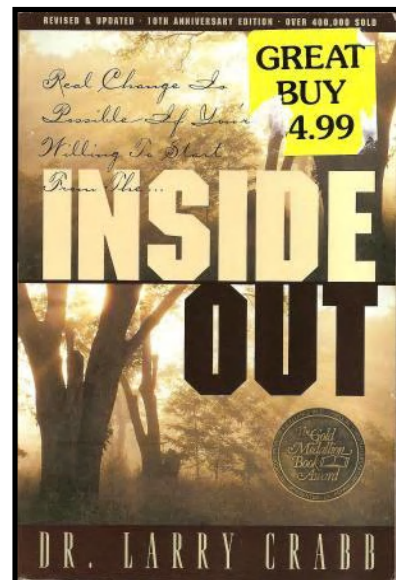
In our quest or journey to answer these questions is the opportunity to learn about whom and what we from a Biblical view; but at the same, to get mired in the contra-views that are interwoven in our culture – even in the church! Pertaining to the church (or “modern Christianity”), the author writes:

“(the view) is that it is within our power to arrange for relief (from hurt, pain, suffering, etc.) that we long for.” But can we expect or hope – as a deep desire – to find relief in on the earth?

According to the author, this hope (as described) is a lie; in other words, we cannot find or expect relief from this present, fallen world; but on contrary, must understand “the ills” of the present life are in part intended to increase our desire for the life to come. He continues by suggesting that God wants his children to be courageous in our sensitivity and sorrow of this fallen world to the degree that:

...the only way to make it is to learn to love. And only those who are no longer consumed with finding satisfaction now are able to love.

Already I am beginning to see what the “object of my deepest desire” should not be; but as we continue along, perhaps more will come to light as to *real* love – both giving and receiving it.



PART 1 – LOOKING BENEATH THE SURFACE OF LIFE

Chapter 1 – Real Change Requires an Inside Look

How often do we look “beneath the surface”; and the heart and soul of who and what we are? We can spend an enormous amount of time and effort to enable comfort and prosperity in our lives; yet, again, do we look “beneath...?” as a first step of an “Inside Out” change.

To better understand, what does it mean to change? For the believer (or the seeker), this change is in the character of Christ; and when we think of Christ, we think of love above all other character qualities. The problem (or predicament) with a look inside is that when we do so, we generally discover that we’re not as good as we thought we are; and the “realization” can bring shame – along with a great effort to present only that (of ourselves) that we think will be well received. Dr. Crabb continues: “We live for the purpose of self-protection, clinging to whatever brings us happiness and security.”

In the effort (and emphasis) of comfort and prosperity, we overlook or even intentionally side-step the inside – such that we fail to take the first step to real, lasting change in our lives. He says, “Most of make-it-through life by coping, not changing. We rearrange what we do, but somehow the core problems involving who we really are remain only partially addressed.”

Looking at the inside is not for *the faint at heart*; but it requires courage! Most of us do not want to learn (or even be reminded) of potential or actual character flaws; but instead, are inclined to “preserve pleasant feelings” by ignoring life’s difficulties. Dr. Crabb writes: “An honest look at problems creates struggles that have more hope of leading to deep change than does a complacency supported by denial.” Why, you might ask? Because the truth – whether about ourselves or other aspects of life – is necessary to fully appreciate and understand who Christ is...and who and what we are in the light of Christ.

There is “our will” that can – and perhaps does – create conflict in the effort to look inside; thus our will must be broken or be exposed to brokenness. In his footnotes, Dr. Crabb writes:

Because our soul is so thoroughly stained with self-reliance, the death of pride (or our will) feels like the death of self. However, the more terrible the blow (or degree of brokenness) to the efforts to preserve our own life (to arrange it so we experience the minimum amount of pain) the more we emerge as truly alive.

To pass through life with the intention of self-protection is to live in denial of whom and what we are; and thus, is to forgo what God intends for us to be.

PART 1 – LOOKING BENEATH THE SURFACE OF LIFE

Chapter 2 – An Inside Look can be Frustrating

From the beginning, the difference must be made between performance and dependence – with respect to the process to look inside. Sometimes the approach of “trying harder”, moral effort or performance is not enough; but sometimes, we just have to admit or acknowledge that self-improvement and self-reliance is not useful or effective.

In the vein of this moral effort, Dr. Crabb examines three possibilities:

1. Duties: that more of Christ is reflected in more time (or effort) applied to the service of the church, etc; thus, if we think or believe that we are failing to change, we apply more time or effort to the Bible, service and other activities
2. Holy Spirit: the work of the spirit is miraculous indeed, but can we expect such permanent change in our lives by the asking – or through an invitation such as an outpouring, ordination or even second-baptism?
3. Obstacles: with neither of the other two options forcing us to look inside, this third invokes some practices of modern science or psychology to include counseling, support groups, and other effort – all aimed at helping us through the apparent “obstacles” that seemingly prohibit or limit change.

In response to the third of these possibilities, the author cautions that: “More often than not, psychological efforts do not resolve the deepest issues which are spiritual. “ In this conclusion, should we believe (or accept) that the deeper and deterministic obstacles are spiritual in nature – rather than emotional or something else?

He continues with the other two:

Dealing with our insides can be frustrating. Disciplined Christian living (or moral effort) fails to resolve all the problems in our soul. Inviting the Holy Spirit to take over our life leaves part of our being untouched (referring to that which we – without a counselor – do not attempt to identify, remains denied or addressed). Looking honestly at our insides with the help of a counselor leads sometimes to confusion and morbid self-preoccupation.

He concludes the chapter with:

But still our Lord requires us to clean the inside of our personalities before we can experience legitimate cleanliness on the outside.

Though the direction or description of the “look inside” may seem a little fuzzy and confusing – even conflicting – my intention is to continue on and perhaps understand what Dr. Crabb is advising toward real change from the *inside out*.

PART 1 – LOOKING BENEATH THE SURFACE OF LIFE

Chapter 3 – Knowing What to Look For

The adoption or application of modern psychology in church is attributed in part to the growing doubt of whether “duties” such as confession, prayer, Bible study, forgiveness and reconciliation were adequate for authentic change. According to Dr. Crabb, the church began to apply psychology in the mid-1900’s for such described basic problems as *getting along* with ourselves and others. What is particularly important in the change is that some evidently believed that Bible alone was insufficient to address many of life’s social, personal problems.

For the believer, this introduction left two choices or possibilities:

1. To ignore the issues of internal character development (or change) and concentrate on the “duties” – as described in the last chapter
2. To consider (and apply) psychology through a process of evaluating one’s temperament, healing painful memories, expressing the hurt and pain, restructuring the mistakes of your parents, facing destructive emotions and hidden agendas...and bringing them under conscience control

Nothing in either (or both) of these choices however, enables an honest examination of the inside of the person through guidance of scripture – according to the author. He believes that “with God’s help, we can understand what needs to be understood.” Assuming he is right, let’s continue with his key scripture from Jeremiah 2:

My people have committed a compound sin: they’ve walked out on me, the fountain of fresh flowing waters, and then dug cisterns— cisterns that leak, cisterns that are no better than sieves.

According to the author, this scripture identifies the fundamental problem of each and all of us: first, we are thirsty – or we have longing for the things that God has (and can) provide; second – and at the root of the problem – is that we look for these longings in the wrong places...or we don’t go to God for them. He comments:

To put it simply, people want to run their own lives. Fallen man (or all mankind) is both terrified of vulnerability and committed to maintaining independence.

He continues to say: “Simply trust (in God) is out of fashion. Self-protection has become the norm.” To have *longing* is a good thing; but this aversion to trust is a wrong, foolish strategy.

He concludes that “an inside look must anticipate uncovering deep, unsatisfied longings that bear testimony to our dignity as well as foolish and ineffective strategies for keeping ourselves out of pain that reflect our depravity.” Let me close by saying that both must read-on to carefully realize what Dr. Crabb is describing by such terms as “self-protection” and “depravity”.

PART 2 – WE’RE THIRSTY PEOPLE

Chapter 4 – If anyone is Thirsty...

Addressing the believer or Christian, the author describes two possible types or categories within the church:

1. Those with high standards of commitment who are either satisfied with their performance or are very frustrated because they don’t seem to *measure-up*
2. Those who are satisfied with living “respectable lives” and are reasonably happy as long as money, health and relationships are doing well.

Dr. Crabb points out that the goal of an inside out change is neither for conformity to standards (#1) or a happier life (#2) – although both of these must or will develop as by-products of Christian maturity. He writes: “Real chance produces maturity” – or that “rare type of character that makes it possible to love.” Now, let’s consider the nature and condition of *longing* (or being thirsty).

To begin by examining our *longing* is to except that we have desires that are sinful – but are also human; and secondly, that what we often desire is not realistic or attainable in this lifetime. Because we having *longing* (or desires) that cannot be fulfilled or satisfied, we hurt! As long we have desires left unsatisfied, we will have hurt and pain. **What must occur is to accept both the truth of unfulfilled desires or *longing*; and to face the hurt and pain that has resulted in our lives...or souls.**

There is the human tendency – even commitment – to eliminate the hurt and pain by such things as medicating and addictions with drugs or alcohol, works or actions (sometimes “duties”) considered redeemable or personal pleasures of one sort or another. We may try anything to numb the pain!

Jesus said (from John 7): “if anyone is thirsty, let him come to me.” What does it mean to come to Christ? As both God and man, Jesus understood the *longing* or desires of man; but he also realized that – apart from God – man had not...and would not find fulfillment or satisfaction. Whether we consider the time and period of Jesus ministry – or any period since then – this unfulfilled *longing* remains – as does our foolish strategies to satisfy it.

PART 2 – WE'RE THIRSTY PEOPLE

Chapter 5 – Springs of living water...than why so much pain?

Dr. Crabb points-out that the direction of the Bible's writers gave clear direction that *love is the only approach to life that achieves God's purpose and gives us a sense of relationship with Christ and others.*

He cautions that the "country-club" atmosphere of some churches – with promises of "having it all now" – is a dangerous and misleading message that emphasizes and showcases those who can give testimony to such "blessings".

There are three types of *longings*:

- *Crucial longings* that include those necessary for life to be worth living – but for which Dr. Crabb says can only be met by God
- *Critical longings* that include legitimate and important desires for quality relationships that contribute to the enjoyment of life
- *Casual longings* that include all others ranging from the trivial to the significant

On unmet *longings*, he indicates that when *casual longings* are not met, there can be some discomfort; but when *critical longings* are quite different. He says: When *critical longings* for relationship with others and activity that makes a difference are frustrated, I (Dr. Crabb) experience more than manageable discomfort. I feel a deep sorrow, an *immobilizing lost-ness* that, at least for the time, empties my soul of energy to continue.

As difficult as unmet *critical longings* may be, it is nothing compared to *crucial longings* – or those only met by God. He explains:

Only God can supply what my soul most deeply desires. I was built for infinite love from Someone (he writes)...without Someone who cares and something to do that matters, life is an unspeakably cruel experience to be avoided, distorted or denied. The consequence of living with no satisfaction of our crucial longings is the beginning of Hell.

Referring to Jesus' words from John 7, when he beckoned "the thirsty", his intention was to help them realize that the *living water* flows out – from within us. What does this mean – flows out from within? It means that real change occurs within us – at the core of being - where the *crucial longings* reside.

Think of *longings* in illustration like a target: the "Bulls-eye" would be the *crucial longings*, the adjacent circle, the *critical longings* and the outside perimeter, the *casual longings*. Daily "service" or attention might be given the *casual* or trivial longings; and more intense attention to the *crucial* where, when unmet or in jeopardy, can cause anger at the least...and much consternation moreover. Ideally, all three categories of *longings* would be wonderful, wouldn't it? But we more often or invariably do is to seek joy (or fulfillment) in the *critical longings*

while seemingly ignoring the *crucial*; or expressed another way, we seek people rather than God for joy or fulfillment.

Dr. Crabb explains that there are two “ideas” or processes about joy or fulfillment: The first considers that God makes us comfortable (satisfying the *casual* or even *critical longings*), then he develops our relationship (with Him) or *crucial longings*. The might be thought as the “outside-in” process or idea.

The second considers that God uses difficult times or struggles (unmet critical or even casual longings) to work from the “inside-out”. This second idea or process is the one that Dr. Crabb believes is accurate because, as he puts it:

Until we acknowledge painful disappointment in our circumstances and relationships (particularly the later), we will not pursue Christ with the passion of deep thirst. **Or to put it simply, we rarely learn to meaningfully depend on God when our lives are comfortable.**

At this point, he summarizes what has been presented:

- We have *longings* or desires
- Christ has not promised to meet our *casual* or *critical longings*. He has promised to supply all we need to accomplish his purpose – but that does necessarily mean or include personal comfort or convenience
- He has promised to satisfy our *crucial longings* by wetting our appetite in the present life and serving a banquet in the life to come. Still, hurt or pain are part & parcel for this life because some *longings* go unmet...
- Disappointment is a standard part or chronic reality of the Christian life because complete joy will not occur until the next life, relationships on earth are never perfect – or meet our *critical longings* – and “fallen people” depend on (or put their hope in) anything other than God and, consequently, experience frustrated demands along with anger, bitterness, fear, self-reproach and depression

He concludes: the longings of our heart must be faced, the disappointments of our soul must be experienced...for only then, “we will learn how to free ourselves from self-centered preoccupation with the frustration of our *longings* so that the real love of God and others becomes possible.

PART 2 – WE'RE THIRSTY PEOPLE

Chapter 6 – Becoming aware of our thirst

At the beginning of this chapter, Dr. Crabb makes a striking or bold condition:
The choice before us is rather stark: either live to be comfortable (both internally and externally, but especially internally) or live to know God.

There are reasons for experiencing the *crucial longing* or thirst for Christ (as a first step toward *real* change); these reasons are:

1. To be free from compulsive sin...or break bad habits
2. To understand the source of our sin – and our inability to love others
3. To have a passion for Christ (not just a discipline) that is a witness to others

Now, with his explanation on these reasons, let's continue. In the first reason, there is tendency to experience thirst for Christ only for immediate relief (from pain or hurt). In an analogy to physical pain, immediate relief is more important than a cure or healing. To stop the pain or hurt is not the cure or healing, of course; but only feels like it because the pain is reduced or numbed. Such an approach to hurt and pain is ineffective and, applied to compulsive sin, does not free us from the sin. Yes, Christ does offer forgiveness for sin but he offers freedom from sin that, when a part of our lifestyle, is described as besetting, compulsive or a stronghold.

It is difficult to face our pain and hurt; thus, some choose to live in denial or avoidance; but no matter the reaction, the pain remains – as well an approach to dealing with it. The usual sources have already been mentioned as drugs, sex, and other physical pleasures; but again, these so-called sources only numb and do not our cure; and what's more, offer no solution for sins represented by these sources. These sources – or the human tendency to seek after something other than God for our thirst or *crucial longing* – enslave or hold us captive. Dr. Crabb comments: "Sinful habits become compulsively attractive when the pleasure they give relieves deep disappointment in the soul better than anything else one can imagine."

The second reason stems from self-protection or the denial of hurt and pain. According to Dr. Crabb, "Protection against pain blunts are ability to love." He continues:

Self-protection or trust: every behavior ultimately reflects one choice or the other. We either **accept groaning** (as a way of life) and eagerly await our Lord's return with single-minded devotion to Him, or we try to **escape** the unpleasantness of a groaning heart by **denying** the impact of any troubling reminder that life is not as it should be.

Of course, the later of the two is self-protection which, as he notes, "is the silent killer of true community."

He closes the second reason by advising us (or the reader) that self-protection cannot be recognized in our lives until we realize the pain from which we want to protect ourselves. He closes:

If the thirst of our soul (crucial longing) is neither understood nor experienced, we won't be inclined to ask whether our style of relating to people could be designed to keep us safely out of touch with the pain of a relentless thirst. To deeply understand sin – the ways in which we violate love – we must first become aware of our thirst. Facing disappointment is necessary for Christian growth.

More on self-protection will be presented later on...

The third reason has to do with passion. Dr. Crabb draws the attention to division within the church over whether it should follow: “a *solid faith* rooted in propositional truth versus and *exiting faith* drawn from our experience of Christ.” To this “division” he writes:

Perhaps the missing element in both camps is the neglect of an important doctrine of Scripture, **namely man's dependency on God**...We cannot live without God because we built to enjoy what he only provides. Our *longings* are therefore at the very center of our dependency.

When we embrace our hurt and pain, we are able to pursue God more passionately; but to remind the reader again, **becoming aware of our deepest longings is a painful process therefore will not come easily.**

Now the steps recommended to facing our thirst or *crucial longings*.

1. Ask the **tough questions** that produce confusion. Why the tough questions...and confusion? Because when we face these questions, the consequential confusion will cause us to do one of three things – according to Dr. Crabb:
 1. Abandon our Christian faith and search for any immediate relief
 2. Run from the confusion (flight) and claim renew faith commitment to God
 3. **Cling to Christ by faith** – even though the confusion remains...

Dr. Crabb says, “**An honest look at life will produce confusion.**”

2. Explore the imperfections of key relationships until you experience **deep disappointment**. Why seek after disappointment in relationships? To this matter, the author responds:

The mature Christian is growing is his ability to love people as they are, not as he wishes them to be. The purpose of admitting how disappointed we are in everyone else is not to fuel our criticism and anger or to fasten the blame for our failures or how our parents raised us (or didn't raise us). The purpose is precisely the opposite: to expose to ourselves how we wrongly demand that others always come through for us and to learn to

move toward them without that demand, to love them freely and genuinely.

He emphasizes the condition necessary for this outcome (of strengthened love) as a consequence of facing disappointment. Unless we learn to hope, the outcome will be resentment and self-pity – rather than strengthened love. He closes by saying, “feeling disappointment puts us in touch with a thirst that only hope can satisfy.”

3. Study your own approach to relationships with openness to **developing conviction**. How much of what we do is driven by self-centered commitment or self-protection to avoid hurting? Unless we study the way that we relate to others, we cannot know desire to love better – according to Dr. Crabb.

Confused?	Live by faith from the one who has been faithful
Disappointed?	Put your hope in Christ who is the hope of our salvation
Convicted?	Learn how to love from the one who created love

Being confused, disappointed and convicted deepens our awareness of how thirsty our soul is; and facing our thirst will:

- Free us from the sin that so easily entangles
- Deepens our awareness of how we fail others
- Increases our passion for pursuing God and, in turn, sharing this passion...

PART 3 – DIGGING BROKEN WELLS

Chapter 7 – Looking in all the wrong places

Both in the introduction of this chapter and, to a larger extent, the teaching of Paul; believers are warned of the attention and adherence to “the law”. The human tendency to establish and/or adhere to law includes the tendency to circumvent or find ways around it. This tendency applies to both religious and civil forms.

In religion, as specifically Christianity, there are two categories of sin explained by Dr. Larry Crabb:

1. **Visible acts** of transgression – against Biblical standards; these are thought of as religious such as the book of Leviticus
2. **Subtle violations** of the Lord’s command to love

In many communities is practiced a *code of conduct* – according to the author; that leads us to first of two categories...more than the second which, he believes, is more important. He gives the example, that when the Lord invites thirsty people to come to him, He asks them to do more than burn their dirty books (as an example of sin), but to – more importantly to look at how they treat relationships to see whether self-interest corrupts love. To recall that God looks on the inward man (his heart), the “visible acts” are not enough – but must begin with the “subtle violations” of the heart – for which man is measured in God’s assessment.

Among the hindrances to the healthy treatment of relationships is self-protection. “Playing it safe” is often a hindrance to loving others, as Dr. Crabb points-out, and indicates an inability to trust God’s love over all other responses or replies of other peoples love. Self-protection is contradictive to love and can lead to anger and bitterness – but those who do not desire or recognize their thirst, cannot be aware of such relational issues and problems. At the root of this self-protection (as the designation suggests) is the impression to keep others from an intimate and damaged part of our lives...to include God if that were possible.

He (the author) describes two important points on the matter of “moral” living:

1. One can be moral, disciplined and disciplined without depending on God; but living without self-protection depends on trusting in God
2. We must look (or search) beneath the details of how we relate to others and focus on the **purpose of our relational style**.

He closes the chapter with the following comments on self-protection:

The demand to keep ourselves is strong. We look in all the wrong places for the relief our souls...although we **demand** that our pain be relieved.

PART 3 – DIGGING BROKEN WELLS

Chapter 8 – The problem of demandingness

Picking-up from chapter 7, the **demand** for relief from our pain comes from our own willingness, pursuit and effort toward dealing with our thirst or crucial longing. When we circumvent God – who is able to satisfy our thirst – we impose demands on others. These demands may come in the form of:

- Our spouse respond to our needs...or even wants
- Our children respond to our training – and thus, exhibit Godly lives
- Our church (body of believers) responds to needs in ministry, etc.
- ...and anything or anyone else that we impose demands or expectations...

When we take responsibility for our own happiness – to include the demands on other people – we are being foolish because we cannot control people or the established expectations for our own happiness.

To begin (with reality), we cannot be in control of all such circumstances – for ourselves or other people; thus, the notion of self-controlled happiness is doomed from the beginning – and the **demand** for such expectations breeds further frustration for everyone. Moreover, such self-control is our own failure to acknowledge the place of God in our lives; that He is the creator (of all things) and we are the created – He is the master...and we are the servant (s).

This nature of self-control is said to predominate when our lives are not going as we expected or, even worse, are in a crisis or distressful circumstance. In such a place, we can **demand** from God while, in desperation, look for any relief from the momentarily or prevailing pain that may lead to moral compromise...even a ruined life! Even if such “pragmatism” does not kick-in, the individual may still believe that their demands have merit – or deserve a response, etc.

According to Dr. Crabb:

Demandingness is a serious problem partly because it rarely feels like a problem. We may actually feel strong and more alive when we pursue our demands (and rehearse to ourselves the credibility). It’s possible to sense a flush of counterfeit spirituality as we approach God in a vigorous attitude of petition that’s fueled by a **demanding spirit**: It feels good. A disease without symptoms is bad enough, but a disease that increases our feelings of well-being while it slowly destroys our health is worse.

The maturing believer is able to desire much, pray for much, but **demand** nothing. From the book of Hosea, chapter 7, the author points out that when the believer repents of his demandingness, God listens... and hears. As Job also learned – through his unimaginable losses – a demanding spirit is ugly because it reverse the realistic position (s) of who God is...and who we are; it is a self-exalting such that God beneath us instead of above us.

PART 3 – DIGGING BROKEN WELLS

Chapter 9 – Exposing wrong directions

After several days away from the book, I pick-up with the “wrong directions”; and the idea or possibility of having such directions exposed. In this exposing process is the fundamental – but aged dilemma – of how we honestly view ourselves. It is easy – even human nature – to distort one’s view of himself; with **extremes** of exalting himself to grandiosity or denigrating oneself to the lowest possible level...and all possibilities or variations therein.

Dr. Crabb recommends help from three aged-old sources or methods:

1. The Holy Spirit of God
2. The Word of God, or the Bible
3. The people of God, or the fellowship of believers

Once we accept the very real and even certain nature of distorting ourselves, then we can admit that help is needed; and if we consider that God is knowledgeable and capable in such matters as those of us who I believe he created, than we can consider these three sources of help...and maybe even apply each and all.

From the scripture in Psalm 139, chapter 139 (from *The Message*):

Investigate my life, O God, find out everything about me; Cross-examine and test me, get a clear picture of what I’m about; See for yourself whether I’ve done anything wrong—then **guide me on the road** to eternal life.

From this passage, the Spirit believer is tasked with actually *seeking out the Spirit*; or searching for the Spirit as a helper for honest evaluation of our hearts. Consider that when the Spirit is at work, the believer is **convicted** of his sins – which then enable **confession** and progress toward **restoration**...and growth. Also in the book of Psalm, chapter 51, David cried out:

God, make a fresh start in me, shape a Genesis week from the chaos of my life. Don’t throw me out with the trash, or fail to breathe holiness in me. Bring me back from gray exile, put a fresh wind in my sails!

David obviously knew of his own need for God and, in this plea, cries out in desperation for restoration. Never mind that he was a fugitive and being hunted-down by the deranged, but powerful King Saul; he still was aware of “his own need” for God, for restoration...and growth to trust and obey...and not fear.

On the Word of God, another Psalm from *The Message*: “How can a young person live a clean life? **By carefully reading the map of your Word...**”

To read the Word is not simply to read it; but to hide it in our hearts – to know and to live it!

PART 3 – DIGGING BROKEN WELLS

Chapter 9 – Exposing wrong directions

Many people read the Word; but not all people are changed or experience growth. Why is that so; can it be the Word? No, it is not the subject matter but the individual's heart or response. The Spirit must be present to help us understand spiritual things or subject matter; and furthermore, the heart must be ready and willing to learn – or experience **revelation** or insight from the Word.

Dr. Crabb comments:

Biblical scholarship may be more important than impressions but it's worth nothing if it doesn't eventually lead to personal impact. The text must affect our life and make us more loving, not just fill our head with more facts to support favorite doctrines.

He does not suggest that we limit your reading (or study) to the scriptures only; but, as he says, takes classes...read commentaries..., "but do it all for the purpose of knowing God, yourself, and others so you become more loving."

As undoubtedly with David (in Psalm 51), a "humble attitude of **dependence** expressed in the conscious goal of self-exposure gets us asking the right questions as we read our Bible.

Finally, the people of God; the author underscores the "warning" to all believers to not turn away from the living God; or in other words, keep the faith!

From Hebrews, chapter 3:

So watch your step, friends. **Make sure there's no evil unbelief lying around that will trip you up and throw you off course**, diverting you from the living God. For as long as it's still God's Today, keep each other on your toes so sin doesn't slow down your reflexes. If we can only keep our grip on the sure thing we started out with, we're in this with Christ for the long haul.

In this passage is not only a personal warning, but the fellowship warning to encourage each other. The author makes the following promise that:

But when the worms of **self-protection** and **demandness** are *let out of the can*, when people get to know each others hurts and disappointments, when issues that really matter are actually talked about, then there is the potential for a life-changing fellowship.

Even with the presence of other people (or fellowship), we must understand that the "road to relationship is never smooth"; but as Dr. Crabb adds, "Learning about oneself through intense interaction with fellow believers provides an incomparable opportunity to grow. Yes, it's a lot of work – but it has its rewards!

PART 4 – CHANGING FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Chapter 10 – Defining the Problem

Equipped with the three sources of help, what is the problem – or what is true (and honest) about our individual heart?

On addressing this problem, Dr. Crabb writes:

As we try to understand the process of change, we must realize that deep change comes about less because of what we try to do and how hard we try to do it, **and more because of our willingness to face the realities** of our own internal life.

From 1 Corinthians 8, he adds or augments the scripture with: ‘true knowledge produces a humility that keeps us open to more thinking. He adds that **personal integrity** is essential as a commitment to never pretend about anything in our own internal life.

I think the author also warns us that there is not one, clear-cut, Biblical model or process for change one’s life; but as models and methods are explored, the singular “mark” should be whether it produces **Christ-like character and behavior**.

In identifying problems, we must be aware that, as Dr. Crabb points-out, we are both *victims* and *agents*; he writes:

As longing people who thirst for what this world can never provide, we have all suffered disappointment. **We have been hurt by others.** We are victims whenever we are sinned against or whenever we suffer in any way without cause.

But we are also agents, **choosing to respond to life according to our understanding of what is best.**

In either capacity – or both – he cautions:

Because we are foolishly determined to arrange for our own gratification, we refuse to believe in God, and to trust him with our longings in a way that frees us to deeply love others.

In our hurts (or pain), we have “deep longings” or needs; whereas, in our role as *agents*, we sometimes develop “wrong strategies” for life.

Understand that God knows your hurts – he knows when you have truly been victimized or taken advantage of...whether you are truly aware or not. “Deep longings” come as a result of our human nature to fix or end our pain or hurt. As probable mentioned before, we may seek-out and try all sorts of things to heal this hurt, but as Dr. Crabb points out, “**the pain is not the problem**” that limits or prevents *Deep Change*.

PART 4 – CHANGING FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Chapter 10 – Defining the Problem

What must be addressed for *Real Change* is the sin in our lives (or hearts) that results from our being an *agent* – or the “wrong strategies” that occur...

Return to the condition of **self-protection**, he writes:

I believe there’s a simple reason why sin in the heart, that commitment to self-protection that manifest itself in so many *defense* styles of relating, is so rarely recognized as deep and serious. We can’t recognize self-protection until we see what were protecting. Until we face our disappointment as a victim, we cannot clearly identify the **strategies** we’ve adopted to insulate oneself from disappointment.

On the possibility of *Deep Change* – from the Inside Out, he believes it is a rare occurrence because:

Very few people are willing to embrace their disappointment. And even fewer when they’ve faced their disappointment and are filled with excruciating pain and sadness, are willing to firmly say, **‘My pain is not the problem. The problem is the determination to relieve my pain anyway that I can.’**

He concludes that “self-protection and love are opposite. The experience of pain has the power to either harden us in our self-protective style or to drive us to a deeper trust in God.”

What then is the value of entering our disappointment? Well, it is the opportunity to face our sin head-on and to expose the evidence of self-protection and demandedness in our lives. When our ability to love (or to love) is not predicated on conditions or demandedness of others, than we can truly love as Christ intends for us to love. Thus self-protection (or the opposite of love) is gone or is every dying.

Facing the disappointment means facing the ways in which those we expected (or thought) to love us, did not love us after all. To sidestep this disappointment is to forego the opportunity of real love. Love is not blind to what other have done (or didn’t do); but it accepts them, forgives and warmly continues according to the author. If the heart could speak on the essence of love, it would say:

Although God’s love for me does not remove *the sting* (or disappointment) of your (the expected person) failure (to love me), it gives me all that I need to stand as a whole person, capable of loving you regardless of your future failure. My love for you determines in large measure my experience of joy...

Maybe that’s what Paul meant in 1 Corinthians 13, when he wrote that: “Love doesn’t want what it doesn’t have...”

PART 4 – CHANGING FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Chapter 11 – The Power of the Gospel

Dr. Crabb begins this chapter with the basic but poignant question: “Is it really possible to change?” More specifically, is it possible to change for the better – to be more like Christ.

Aside from this chapter’s content, my belief is that individuals do change; they must change as time and events occur in their lives; thus the question of change is, as said previously, is it possible for that change to be from within...or the *Deep Change* as termed previously? Well, that depends...

The believer is sometimes stricken with what Dr. Crabb calls the **expectation** of too much. In our present day of the prosperity gospel – and the ideas of health and wealth – springs such notions that God wants to shower us with blessings that eliminate struggle, sorrow and all the aspects of the *fallen world* that we live in; but this notion or expectation is not what God intended in the offering of joy and peace. Yes, Jesus committed himself to leave us peace, but his commitment of peace was to support us through the struggles and sorrow. It may seem like a “fine point” (that God would not eliminate these difficulties, but provide some support), but realize again that we live in a fallen world...and imperfect world where sin is present...

Recalling that the Word is one of three sources, the gospel is likewise powerful in facilitating real, deep change; and he writes:

The present power of the gospel lies not in its ability to generate an internal warmth that overcomes every experience of disappointment and struggle. If that its claim, then I’m ashamed of the gospel. But if its claims is that dead people can live, that people who haven’t the slightest hope of eternal happiness can live in Paradise forever, that a way has been made for sinners who deserve to suffer at the hands of a wrathful God to be declared righteous and therefore fit for a relationship with God, then, with Paul; **I am not ashamed.**

Referring again to the prior categorization of individuals as either *agents* or *victims*, a brief on each of the following:

- Dealing with necessary pain (pain in our heart) – be careful not to fall in the trap of focusing on eliminating pain or hurt; we will always have such in this fallen world, and with it, turn to the God (Spirit, Word, Fellowship) for times as these.
- Dealing with obvious pain (sin in our behavior) – more than our own “good intentions” or self-will is the need to “work on sin in our own heart” through the sources listed above and repentance...
- Dealing with relational sin (sin in our heart) – Dr. Crabb is convinced that “self-protection” is the least considered of all sin; and that consequently, is at the root of why we do not have relationships of any depth...of love.

PART 4 – CHANGING FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Chapter 11 – The Power of the Gospel

On relational sin, he writes:

Change is a lifelong process of facing how alone we feel in all our relationships, how badly we want what even the best marriage or friendship can't provide, and then going on to see how stubbornly committed we are to not feeling the necessary ache of profound disappointment. **Until we realize** with tears how determined we are to move away from pain and how that determination reflects our blasphemous decision to preserve our own life, we will not be able to identify the subtle ways in which our relational style violates love for others by keeping us safe.

PART 4 – CHANGING FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Chapter 12 – What it takes to Deeply Change

In the question of “how far inside do we have to look?” The answer is that there will always be opportunity to see more:

- Buried emotions that never disturbed us...
- Devious purposes that didn't seem to interfere...
- Painful feelings of sadness that turn a good morning into...

On the matter of maturity as believers, he writes:

A mature relationship with Christ is reflected in the capacity to hear whispers of assurance when discouragement is oppressive. And even when we are mishandling frustration by retreating into an angry pout, mature depth want let us escape the convicting awareness that we're designed to love, even in this situation.

Change, he writes, is: “in the Christian life is progressive. We move from change in our conscious direction to *change in our approach to relationships to change in the direction of our being*. Each change represents a work of God and is therefore good. “

Again, I say, that we all change...but is it for bitter or better, for bad or good, for self (protection) or for God (to love others).

PART 4 – CHANGING FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Chapter 13 – The “good stuff” beneath the bad

As he closes this book, Dr. Crabb reassures the reader that there is “good stuff” beneath the bad. He writes:

Many of us live our entire lives without ever tapping into the “good stuff”, without ever seeing our weathered, cancerous skin become smooth as a baby’s cheek. Because we refuse to apply the ointment that burns off the diseased crust, we settle for **natural goodness**, for the nice things that we do that Christians and non-Christians alike are capable of choosing. We seldom experience **supernatural goodness**, the release of energy of Christ that is deposited deeply within us through salvation.

He closes (and reminds us) with:

If you long to discover the energy of Christ within you, to change from the inside out by releasing the new life in your soul, you must do 3 things:

1. surrender to God
2. take an inside look in the safety of a loving community
3. develop the spiritual sensitivity necessary to recognize the promptings of God’s Spirit as he stimulates the godly desires of your new heart

Where does it begin? Well, it begins with a personal decision based on the honest recognition of your dire need for Christ as your savior. As Christ loves you, so too can he change your heart to love others rather than living a life of self-protection...

It’s possible...even desirable; **the question is with you...**

H. Kirk Rainer

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