



Torah, Psychology and The Life Model™: What's "Kosher?"

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Among Bible believing people there is concern about the interface between our theological/spiritual and psychological understanding. *Never the twain shall meet!* There is good reason! I have stood with one foot in each of these “camps” for over 30 years, learning how to deal well with them both, without losing the integrity of my faith. In the early 80’s as I obtained my graduate training, it was very difficult to find a reputable school that taught mental health treatment from a Biblical perspective. I opened my own state certified out-patient mental health clinic in 1992, and for a season, led monthly discussion groups with area pastors and therapists about the integration of religion and psychology. I declared that my work would be within a Judeo-Christian worldview. A portion of my professional services brochure read as follows:

It's not just the integration of psychology and theology, it is the use and submission of all psychological knowledge to the authority of Scripture in the context of faith. It is not just intellectual agreement with the Bible. It is knowledge, agreement and trust in the person of Jesus Christ of Nazareth to make healing possible.

This was contrary to many such clinics where the practitioners did not—and still do not —clearly declare the worldview within which they counsel. As a result, many esoteric or “new age” perspectives have become normal in that arena so people who seek services there may not even realize it. Truth be told, according to ongoing Barna Polls, most Christians in America are functionally illiterate regarding the Bible. Add to that the stress of seeking counseling when you had never imagined the circumstances you are in, and it is easy to see how they may not be aware of non-Biblical influence.

On the other side of that divide are the mental health professionals who in general do not adhere to a Biblical worldview of a Creator God who remains involved in our lives and has established His ways for us to honor. They consider such belief to be anywhere from a neurotic need for assurance to an outright psychotic delusion. There is too often a large difference between the stated spiritual neutrality of professional mental health services and the actual lack of it when it comes to the Bible and Christian faith. Even for providers who are Christians personally, I do not believe it is adequate to simply tack on a prayer before or after a counseling session, working within a secular model, and call it “Christian therapy.”

Not only are there those who question someone of faith providing psychological services, when I came into the understanding that the Whole Word is still valid for today, and became Torah pursuant, it opened yet another avenue of confusion and potential suspicion. Now it isn't only the difference between a secular worldview and a Christian worldview; there are also differences between a traditional western Christian worldview and a Hebraic Messiah-centric worldview of both theology and of what constitutes the mind, will and emotions or the soul and the spirit, or the heart and the mind. Though we see in the Scriptures that we are to be dealing with matters of the spiritual realm as well as of the physical realm, what exactly that means or "looks like" can be very confusing.

In our Set Apart Ministries (SAM) community, we acknowledge the importance of both salvation and sanctification in the lives of those who honor Messiah. We have been using **The Life Model™** as part of our "*halachah*," the way we walk, in our community since our beginning. It focuses on life and restoration, without the use of clinical diagnostic terms. Our SAM community has specific **Life Model** gatherings, along with our other gatherings, as well as weekly Shabbat study and worship.

For those new to us in Set Apart Ministries, I am writing to identify the history of how we came to this material, where we find value and where we differ, and how our use of it has been modified as we moved from a traditional Christian worldview to a Torah pursuant Messiah-centered worldview and lifestyle. In part 2, I will begin to address some of the specific teachings that are easily misunderstood or are just plain different! The English terminology regarding "man," "flesh," "soul," "heart," "mind," "spirit," "wisdom," and so forth, does not always allow one to distinguish some of the specifics that are more clear in the original Hebrew. It is also true that in Hebraic thought all of these aspects are really so fully integrated that they cannot be dealt with individually. Rather than the "either/or" of our western Greek thinking, the "both/and" nature of Hebraic thought also complicates presenting these concepts clearly in another language. The insertion of Greek terminology, especially that of the "sarx," does lead to some confusion. May *Yeshua haMaschiah* be lifted up in it all!

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Set Apart Ministries came into being "officially" on January 1, 2000, but it was in the making before that official start. As a Clinical Social Worker, first in a group practice, and then in my state certified mental health out-patient clinic, I had been seeing a large number of people who were severely traumatized through ritualistic, satanic abuse. I had never made a particular decision to take this direction, but in the late 1980's, I did choose to speak all over our area about my concerns about deceptions and various kinds of "new age" mentality that were subtly sliding into the church. Soon after that, I began to see new clients that were seeking freedom from witchcraft and other traumatic occult histories. In part, this led to my break away from the group practice into my own, allowing me to declare that I practiced within the scope of a Judeo-Christian worldview. I was all too aware of the alternate worldviews that had made their presence known within the mental health field as well.

I had already determined my need to be as clear as possible about Scriptural teaching if I were going to declare myself "officially" practicing within a Biblical worldview. I didn't want to risk doing "Christianity according to Barb!" My Lutheran upbringing gave me some familiarity with the Bible, and a relationship with Jesus, but certainly not an in-depth theological understanding to allow me to integrate it with my

profession. (In those days, there were few places one could be trained as a Christian therapist.) I completed a two-year Teacher Training course in the Bethel Series, giving me a comprehensive systematic overview of the entire Word as part of my training to make that declaration. This is where Janell Schroeder and I met, becoming prayer partners at that time. I had already begun the process of weeding out my professional materials that I viewed as incompatible with my understanding of Biblical Truth.

In the search for reliable, coherent and Biblically sound teaching for dealing with the severe trauma, seen in DID/Dissociative Identity Disorder and various personality disorders and so forth, I knew pretty quickly that my own faith journey was foundationally relevant. I couldn't possibly be of help to people suffering not only physical and sexual abuse, and psychological issues with mind, will and emotions, but also from invasions and trauma in their spirit if I didn't know clearly who I was and Whose I was. That became abundantly clear as I witnessed demonic manifestations in my clients and needed to know how to respond!

Over a three year time period, I searched out and studied the matter from every psychological and psychiatric perspective and then every spiritual perspective I could find, from historical material of a hundred years ago to the most current....all the way from a Jesuit perspective found in Malachi Martin's book, Hostage to the Devil to every identified denomination that would address the issues, and some "Bible church" leaders perspectives as well. There were "grains of truth" that seemed to stand through all these various perspectives, as well as mentoring from my senior pastor at the time, who had spent many years ministering to survivors of satanic ritual abuse. Eventually this led me to a conference that met every other year with people from all around the world who were standing with similarly traumatized people. All were drawing near to our Father and His Son, Jesus of Nazareth, no matter their denominational background, in their desire to learn more than just the psychological needs but also the spiritual needs for recovery.

Among that group was pastor/psychologist E. James Wilder, PhD who was with a group of professionals at Shepherd's House in Pasadena, CA who were treating many, many survivors. They were actively seeking out ways to help them most effectively without further traumatizing them in the process. They were actively seeking out the most current research on how the brain is affected by trauma, and the impact it has on relationships and the development of maturity, so that they could find ways to bring restoration. They recognized the importance of having a strong community to support the people as they recovered. They saw that usually it would be a community of faith that might step up to help. They also saw how poorly equipped even the most well-intentioned people were. They began to actively use prayer in their work, as were many of those in attendance, including me. This was a VERY BIG DEAL for anyone trained in professional mental health services because it was viewed by other professionals as disreputable to include prayer in treatment! (I was once turned down for speaking at a holistic spirituality conference because I was "too Christian." That was fine with me!)

Wilder et al also recognized that the need was so deep and wide, around the world, that it wasn't feasible for there to be enough professionally trained providers to reach all. They saw the wreckage of families in America and the horrors of genocide in Rwanda and elsewhere. They saw the need to provide simple ways to help people in community mature in themselves and help others in need of that maturity and trauma recovery. They prayed and studied and searched; finally compiling what we now know as **"The Life Model™ Living from the Heart Jesus Gave You."** From the foreword:

*The Life Model is a unifying approach to ministries of counseling, recovery, pastoral care, prayer ministry, deliverance, inner healing, child rearing, body life and health. The Life Model is a multigenerational model of redemption and maturity from conception to death. While the Life Model incorporates the best in science and medicine, we were careful to create a model that was **not based on Western education, but rather on a biblical worldview** that is thousands of years old and well tested for the transformation of identity, character and culture.*

*The Life Model has **three distinctive features**. **First**, it depends on multigenerational community for the formation of maturity. **Second**, it depends on an Immanuel Lifestyle where God's interactive presence informs all we do and creates "shalom." In shalom, everything is in the right place, at the right time in the right amount for God's people. The **third** distinctive feature of the Life Model comes from the specific learned, relational skills needed for a mature human identity. ...The absence of key relational skills and maturity are almost always behind failures of ministers, ministries and missions.¹*

The needs of the severely traumatized clients were beyond the scope of my clinic services which led to a season of prayer and fasting, resulting in the founding of Set Apart Ministries (SAM). Perhaps it will be obvious then, as to why I understood to use the **Life Model** for the basis of the personal recovery and maturity work that was needed. Janell Schroeder (a co-founder along with my husband, Bob) also stood with me and the survivors. She pursued much training in these matters. We had only a very few other support people. The people we were serving in SAM were primarily those with severe trauma initially though it wasn't long before we began to see the impacts of what might be considered "normal" trauma in the more general population as well. It became less of "us" and "them" between helpers and help-ees, and more about how YHWH was working in all of us. Many of those who began with us had already fallen out of various congregations where there was no one who knew how to handle their multiple, ongoing issues, inexplicable behavior and especially demonic manifestations.

During this time period, Janell, Bob and I had already begun to study the Word from a Hebraic perspective and were in the process, ourselves, of realizing that we could hardly expect to help people step out of practices that are not included among Yah's instructions for His people if we were still in them ourselves! Yet, we were already seeing the benefits of the material provided through the **Life Model** in helping us help others. The ability to identify specific markers of what a healthy growing person looks like in each stage, from infancy, through childhood, adult, parent and elder, was tremendously helpful as we identified what was needed for each person. The observations of which kinds of struggles and difficulties in one's earlier life had likely led to some of the current problems, along with specific workable ideas for how a family or a community can come alongside to bring restoration were —and remain— invaluable to us.

As noted by Wilder, parts of this needed recovery could only happen in a healthy functional community when people's biological families were so destructive! I had thought at first that other people who were "strong" in maturity and faith would be willing to come along side us to support those in need, but sadly,

¹ **The Life Model: Living from the Heart Jesus Gave You**; by E. James Wilder, et al; Fifteenth Anniversary Study Edition, Revised 2013, pages vii-viii.

found that there were far more people in need of help than people willing to help....it seems it was mostly those who had experienced much pain who were willing to stand with others who have endured pain, as we all found restoration together.

When it seemed obvious to us that we needed to stand on the Truth of the Whole Word as being valid for today in order to best stand with those in need for recovery and restoration in all ways—physically, emotionally, relationally, spiritually—we lost some of the survivors and support people who wanted to remain within traditional Christian practice. We did not desire or direct this division, but when we began to schedule our activities around Shabbat and eventually the Feasts, the practical differences became evident and were not well received by those who did not understand. It was about this time, that we also understood that our Abba was “expanding our borders” from standing with those coming out of satanic ritualistic abuse background, to also stand with those choosing to return to the ancient paths, stepping out of traditional Christian expression of faith practices.

Here, you can go back to the original lengthy quote (emphasis mine) from **The Life Model** to see this sentence:

*...we were careful to create a model that was not based on Western education, but rather **on a biblical worldview that is thousands of years old** and well tested for the transformation of identity, character and culture.²*

The Life Model contains very useful information about the issues of community, relationships, maturity and recovery, but it is written within the scope of traditional Christian theology of the past two thousand years. It was developed with the theological understanding that Jesus intended there to be a new church birthed at what is called Pentecost. (We recognize that as Shavuot.) When the material moves beyond the basic instruction, we know that there are some concepts presented that are not consistent with our “Whole Word of Torah valid for today” perspective that goes back to the Beginning.

For us, the Torah is the plumbline.

In SAM, we are dealing with both Papa’s Torah- the Word, and Mama’s Torah-the development of character and maturity (Proverbs 1:8-9). (Please see further explanation of this concept in the **Be Ye Set Apart** PowerPoint presentation on our website home page.) In our pursuit of mature relationships and restoration of His people, any materials we draw from are always subject to Torah being the foundation; for correction as needed to be in accordance with His Word as best we understand it.

Relational Joy and The Life Model

The Life Model has spread quietly to many Christian groups: Evangelical, Anglican, Coptic, Roman Catholic, Eastern Rite Catholic,

² Ibid.

*Holiness, Arminian, Wesleyan, Calvinist, Savationist, Pietist, Reformed, Lutheran, Messianic, Anabaptist, Brethren, Apostolic, Emergent, Pentecostal, Mennonite, Vineyard, YWAM and Baptist to name a few. **The Life Model is endorsed by none of these groups, but all find help in a model built on the fundamental bonds that transform those who receive abundant life in Christ.***³

We have made it a point to let those who participate with us in **Life Model** work that Wilder et al do not share our Hebraic perspective. As you can see from the above quote, Wilder and company are aware of these differences, but are still willing to allow their material to be adapted as Believers see the need. We have continued to use the material with that understanding and do consciously address any issues that arise that are in conflict with our Hebraic understanding. I haven't yet found any comparable material that is prepared with a Hebraic worldview that addresses the issues and needs of recovery from the varied trials of life in as productive a way as **The Life Model**.

I am putting our understanding in writing as we will not always have the opportunity to personally address it. This paper will include a basic overview of our differences or agreement on a number of topics although there may well be more to add in the future. Please note three categories of concern:

- Some teachings seem to be presented in a confusing or incomplete way, though there is Scriptural support with which we agree.
- Some teachings and assumptions are made that differ from our Hebraic view, but are well within the scope of traditional Christian theology.
- Some later teachings/concepts we believe are beyond the range of traditional Christian and our Hebraic theology and appear to us to be moving toward more shaky ground or "new age" perspectives.

Like other faith communities, we see commonalities and differences. In addition to the **Life Model**, we have used additional resources prepared by Wilder and company in **Joy Bonds**, which examines how bonds develop in relational context, and **Banana Baseball**, which is a humorous but descriptive piece on the importance of meeting the needs of the nucleus accumbens of the brain...and how unmet personal relational needs lead to addictive behavior. These things we have found very helpful and are comfortable with them from a Biblical perspective.

³ Ibid, page xii.