



Syndrome vs. Sindrome

In this world we live in there are numerous maladies and ailments. Perhaps none of which are more confounding than those affecting our mental, emotional and spiritual well-being. In this age of information one need only visit some of the more popular book stores online to be overwhelmed by a plethora of "self-help" publications seeking to help us identify and cope with such afflictions ranging from our faith, on through to addictions to personality disorders.

There is a great divide in beliefs and strategies for core treatment methods between the "clinical" and the "faith-based" approaches to healing in the current mental health care climate. To be sure ~ there are good and bad examples of clinical treatments ~ some even making for horrific headlines. And I would be remiss if I didn't add there were good and bad examples of Christian approaches to mental health in our communities. Yes, even well meaning Christians can sometimes do more harm than good. And while these differences will likely continue I am hopeful that these two apparent "sides" on the issues of mental health will stop antagonizing each other and start sharing "best practices" as allies so that the real enemy, medical/spiritual and quite likely both, can be defeated.

As little as 50 years ago the mentally ill were confined to jails, asylums and almshouses where conditions were despicable. Reformists (mostly Christians) from churches around this country pushed for change in the treatment of these individuals to provide better medical, mental and spiritual care for the mentally ill. Yet, shamefully, a mighty stigma still exists surrounding the label "mentally ill" in both secular and Christian spheres.

Friends, irrespective of our differences in beliefs, values or even denominations ~ as Christians we need to come to a place of understanding and empathy, and in doing so, develop mutual goals:

- recognizing the value and worth of others
- respecting our differences so that we may build from a common ground
- offer dignity and hope to sufferers in a time of great distress
- and declare grace in all circumstances

Syndrome vs. Sindrome ~ What is the answer?

The word Syndrome (noun) is defined as: *A group of symptoms that collectively indicate or characterize a disease, a psychological disorder, or another abnormal condition.*

Thus the term Sindrome (*) could be defined as: *A group of sinful choices or decisions that collectively indicate or characterize the flesh manifesting itself through a pattern of sinful behaviors typical of the human condition.* (*Not a word. Simply a manufactured term for the purpose of illustrating my point).

How do we respond to the question of Syndrome vs. Sindrome? Where am I personally in this melee?

- I believe in the redemptive powers of Jesus Christ
- I believe that salvation is freely offered.
- I believe that mental illness is from the very bowels of hell.
- I believe that Satan and his minions are at work in this world trying to deceive our minds and distort our bodies in an effort to keep us from realizing the Glory of God.
- I believe that God has given man the ability to intervene on His behalf through the use of science as a tool and will honor mans' efforts in these areas so long as it is glorifying to Him and seeking to fulfill His will.
- I believe that Mental illness is not a choice and sufferers cannot simply, "Pull themselves up by the boot straps." Like a heart condition or a broken bone mental illness requires and responds to treatment ~ not only through Christ but sometimes through science.

Let me share that in the past I was held captive to alcohol. While I was in the midst of its baffling and confounding grip my cognitive abilities were more than slightly impaired. A popular saying regarding alcoholism states, "The man takes a drink, the drink takes a drink ~ then the drink takes the man." This is illustrative of one bad choice (the man takes the very first drink) followed by exponential losses to this degenerative condition (the drink takes a drink) ultimately ending in the loss of one's life (the drink takes the man).

But even the very first of the now popular 12 step programs (A.A.) recognized the need for a "higher power" for there to be success. Friends, that "higher power" is the one and only Almighty God. And by the grace of God alone I have been free from alcohol for nearly four years! There is a stanza in my favorite hymn, Amazing Grace, that says, "I once was lost, but now am found, was blind but now I see."

The mentally ill are also lost and blinded to God's grace and the healing, redemption and salvation available through His son Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

Our task then is to follow Biblical teachings, each according to our gifts (whether as medical practitioners, counselors, family members, friends or pastors) to do whatever we can to help lift the veil of deceit and despair the enemy has cast over the eyes, ears, minds, hearts and souls of our friends, neighbors and loved ones.

If it requires intervention through medicine to counter-attack a chemical imbalance ~ Amen! God has provided the knowledge to recognize it and treat it. If it requires hospitalization to safeguard our fellow man ~ Amen! God has given us the facilities. The watchword needs to be "Whatever it takes!" And the chorus needs to sing Amen!

Syndrome or Sindrome? The answer is both. But for each of us to come to a point of repentance and change we must first come to a place of acceptance. Acceptance of who we are, where we are and what we are doing. You can see the light while your wearing a welding helmet ~ but it is not clear. It is dimmed and discolored and distorted.

If you or someone you know is wearing a welding helmet I want to encourage you and tell you there **is** hope, healing and restoration waiting for you. Seek help to get rid of the welding helmet that is clouding your vision, your mind and limiting your life.

With a heart of compassion I stand witness before you that God is at work in your life! He does not want to harm us! He is merciful, and loving beyond measure! He is closer than you realize! He is standing at the door knocking ~ If there is an obstacle in your way that is keeping you from answering that door, seek help from a friend in Christ, a counselor, a pastor and do whatever it takes to answer that call and let God bring you out of the darkness restoring your sight and let Him bring healing into your life.

There is grace leading toward victory and our true Victory is in Jesus Christ!