

The Key Presuppositions of NLP and the Teachings of Jesus

Bobby G. Bodenhamer, D.Min.

Note: I wrote this material during my earlier years in NLP. It is somewhat rough. However, several have requested that I post it to make it available to others going through similar struggles to whether or not what we do in NLP is conducive with Christian Theology. I wrote this article before the development of the Meta-States Model so it is grossly lacking in that area. Needless to say, the Meta-States model teaches us how to really *apply* the Scriptures to our lives.

The question the church most often asks about something new is: Is it Biblical? The Christian desires to know that the information gathered and assimilated does not contradict the Bible. From the beginning of my studies in Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), I have been most observant of NLP and how it relates to the Word of God. I am personally conservative in Biblical theology. As such, I am careful not to involve myself in any discipline that violates the Scriptures. For seven years now, I have been in intense study of NLP. I have read most of the major works of NLP. I have been doing NLP therapy for six years both as a pastor and in private practice and I have been teaching NLP both at Gaston College and at the Corporate level for five years. *My studies have yet to reveal any contradictions between the major presuppositions of NLP and the Bible.* Numerous other NLP trained Christian ministers make similar testimony.

Though I accept all the Bible as God's Word, my research has been primarily in the Gospels. The reason is simply that Jesus was the Master Communicator and God incarnate. And, it is to Him that we should go in our quest to learn how to relate to those we love. As the Great Physician, He is to be our model as we bring healing to hurting people. In The Priestly Prayer Jesus prayed to the Father, "Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). However, other relevant Biblical passages are sighted.

NLP has much truth to offer the Church. Following is a list of the major Key Presuppositions of NLP. All the major teachings and therapeutic techniques of NLP as taught by me are traceable to one or more of these presuppositions. Now, the NLP community views these presuppositions as being useful but they believe that they may or may not be true. In using these presuppositions, an NLP practitioner will find them helpful. However, according to NLP, they may not be of absolute truth. Michael Hall, Ph.D. and Carl Lloyd, Ph.D. write in their booklet *NLP and the New Age Movement From a Judeo-Christian Perspective* concerning the NLP Presuppositions:

From the communication theory of Transformational Grammar and the information processing models of the computer sciences, Neuro-Linguistic Programming arose as a way to total (sic) about and describe human experiences. It offers a model about how brains work (neuro); about how language interacts with the brain (linguistic) and about how to use what we know about these components to systematically get the results we want for ourselves and others (programming). Rather than re-inventing the wheel, the NLP co-founders modeled what they found already working efficiently in the fields of Gestalt, family systems, hypnosis, brief psychotherapy, etc.

Then they created their paradigm of human subjectivity (regarding how human thinking, emoting, behaving, etc. works) as a "model" rather than a theory. This means that NLP focused on offering step-by-step modeling procedures for what actually works in practice to bring about change, skill or excellence. They offered no theories conceptual models to explain **why** things work as they do. Bandler/Grinder called such explanations

"psychotheology," and would have nothing to do with it.

Yet they were no so foolish as to suppose that they could somehow operate in a totally neutral or value-free way. They knew better than that. So they began to specify several of **the key working presuppositions** which their model "assumed without proof." Today, these presuppositions identify some of the general content of the NLP paradigm for human "personality" and functioning. And out of them have arisen the developed techniques which enable people to develop more choice and flexibility in their responses...^[1]

As a Christian, I desire to function from Truth. Therefore, the tools I use in Christian ministry must conform, in my view, to the authority of Scripture. As you study these presuppositions, I believe that you will agree with me that these principles do not contradict the Scriptures. They do, however, compliment the Scriptures. NLP offers the communicator tools that are unsurpassed in usefulness. By definition the Gospel is Good News. As Good News, we are to share it with those who do not know Christ. Should not the Christian interest himself in any discipline that will enhance his ability to spread the Good News?

Before sharing these presuppositions, I wish to warn the Christian. In NLP literature and trainings, one will find some materials that do contradict the Scriptures. These teachings are a result of the individual trainer and/or author's spiritual persuasion. These non-Christian teachings did not come from the originators of NLP. **Remember, I said that the Key Presuppositions of NLP do not contradict the Bible. I did not say that everything being done in NLP conforms to the Bible.**

However, just because there may be some areas that are questionable, be careful not to throw the baby out with the bath water. NLP has much to offer the Christian community. My prayer is that as you read this booklet, you will commit to learn more. And, in the process, you will discover that the wonderful tools of NLP are an excellent aid in modeling our Master as the preacher, teacher and healer that He was. NLP offers tools that will enhance your preaching, develop your teaching and make of you a healer. I am excited about the potential NLP has to offer the Church.

The value of the presuppositions we hold is that presuppositions are one and the same as a belief. We all have our own beliefs. Indeed it is impossible not to have beliefs. A belief is some concept, thought, theory, etc. that we hold to be true or false for us. Often times we may hold varying degrees of beliefs. Some things we may believe strongly, other things we may also believe but not as strongly. Those beliefs that we hold very dear to us and that drive much of our thought and action are called core beliefs. Core beliefs are most important as to who we are as a person and how we relate to others and the world around us.

In the NLP model we understand that beliefs act as a major neurological filter that determine how we perceive our external reality (see Appendix A). Other entities of our mind act as mental filters as well. What is important to us or not important (values) shape our perception. Unconscious neurological filters such as whether or not we are introverted or extroverted, motivated by what we want or what we want to get away from, whether we first look for the big picture or for small details, etc. are Meta-Programs of the brain that have a lot to do with perception.

Decisions we have made in the past act as major filters of perception. These decisions may either be positive or negative for us. Consider the person who has gone through a painful divorce who decides never to get involved in another relationship and risk being hurt again. Both positive and negative decisions are created from experiences of life. Memories from our past are powerful filters that can help or hinder us. Hebrews 12:15 says, "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." This verse clearly states that painful memories, "bitter roots", from the past will block God's blessings in our lives,

cause us internal trouble and damage our relationships. Memories are major neurological filters.

The NLP model describes just how the brain receives and codes our experiences of life. We experience our world through our five senses. Appendix A graphically illustrates how information from our outer world (external event) enters our neurology (central nervous system) through our five senses. This information is shaped by our neurological filters: attitudes, values, beliefs, Meta-Programs, Decisions, Memories, etc. From that we form an internal representation(s) of our experience. The internal representation(s) consists of one or more of the following: pictures, sounds, feelings, smells, tastes and/or words. Indeed, all the brain can do with the exception of unconsciously maintaining our body functions is to make pictures, sounds, have feelings, smell, taste and create words. The internal representation created from our experience of the world is known as our "map". Beliefs play a major role in the creation of our mental maps.

Our internal representations interact with our physiology (body) out of which comes our state. Our state may be one of motivation or stuck, sad or glad, fearful or resourceful, etc. Our behaviors are determined by our state. To change behavior you have to change either the internal representation or your physiology. Proverbs 23: 7 says, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he. . ." The state is determined by the internal representation (map) from which we are at any given moment operating. Important to this paper is that our beliefs help determine what kinds of internal representations we have stored in our brains that drive our walk and our talk. Obviously, what kind of beliefs we hold about communication will determine the effectiveness of our communication. Utilizing the structural understanding that the NLP model gives us of how our brain works and how language affects our behavior, the Christian can draw from God's Word some effective Biblical models for effective communication.

The concept of belief and faith are central to the Word of God. The following is a simplified outline of some Biblical concepts of beliefs:

Ask yourself: "How does what I believe and don't believe affect my life?"

Believe (*pisteuo*) is found 160 times in 150 verses in the Bible. 139 times of these is in the NT.

Faith (*pistis*) is found 270 times in 246 verses. 254 times of these is in the NT.

These two words are from the same root. From Strong's Concordance we see this:

4102. *pistis, pis'-tis*; from G3982; persuasion, i.e. credence; mor. conviction (of religious truth, or the truthfulness of God or a religious teacher), espec. reliance upon Christ for salvation; abstr. constancy in such profession; by extens. the system of religious (Gospel) truth itself: --assurance, belief, believe, faith, fidelity.

4100. *pisteuo, pist-yoo'-o*; from G4102; to have faith (in, upon, or with respect to, a person or thing), i.e. credit; by impl. to entrust (espec. one's spiritual well-being to Christ): --believe (-r), commit (to trust), put in trust with.

Believe (some key passages):

In obtaining healing:

(Mat 8:13 NIV) Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go! It will be done just as you believed it would."

And his servant was healed at that very hour.

(Luke 8:50 NIV) Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed."

In obtaining answer to prayer:

(Mat 21:22 NIV) If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."

In obtaining salvation:

(John 3:16 NIV) "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

(Rom 10:9 NIV) That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

In obtaining wisdom (critical to communication):

(James 1:5 NIV) If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

(James 1:6 NIV) But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.

Faith (some key passages)

In obtaining God's favor:

(Heb 11:6 NIV) And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

In obtaining healing:

(Mat 9:29 NIV) Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith will it be done to you";

(Mark 5:34 NIV) He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

In obtaining freedom from sin:

(Luke 5:20 NIV) When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven."

In obtaining salvation in Paul's theology:

(Rom 3:28 NIV) For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

(Rom 4:9 NIV) Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness.

(Rom 4:13 NIV) It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.

(Rom 4:14 NIV) For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless,

(Rom 4:15 NIV) because law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.

(Rom 4:16 NIV) Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring--not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.

In obtaining Spiritual power (Crucial to communication):

(Mat 17:20 NIV) He replied, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

(Mat 21:21 NIV) Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done.

(John 14:12 NIV) I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

(Rom 12:2 NIV) Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Let us now proceed to study some of the key presuppositions (beliefs) of NLP and how they compliment the teachings of Christ. At first these presuppositions may seem strange and difficult. However, I encourage the reader to read on and to allow your curiosity to direct you to further study and training in NLP. I give you the following as a means of introduction.

1. The map is not the territory.

This statement originated from the work of Linguist Alfred Korzybski in his classic work *Science and Sanity* which was first published in 1933 and is still in print. Just like a map is not actually the territory it represents, the words we use are not the event or the item they represent. What is going on inside your head concerning an event is not the event but your perception of that event. When we experience an external event, we try to make sense of it. In our attempt to make sense of the external event, we make an internal representation in our minds of this event. This internal representation will include information received through our five senses. All internal representations are made up of one or more of the following components: pictures, sounds, feelings, smells, tastes and/or words.

Important to NLP is the fact that our internal representation is not the same as the event itself. In fact, it is a neurological impossibility for us to represent an external event exactly within our minds. Two individuals can see an accident from basically the same position. However, when they report

what they saw, differences between their reports will be evident. The NLP model explains the differences in their perception as being due to the differences in the individual internal representations. The basis of the difference is in the way each represented the accident in their minds. The map is not the territory. We do not operate directly on the world but on our individual perceptions of the world. A wise man once said, "For as he thinks within himself, so he is" (Proverbs 23:7a). No matter what the external event is, it is the internal representation of the external event that determines the man.

Failure to realize or to know this simple fact causes a great deal of miscommunication. We so often act as if and expect other people to have the same perception. Each individual has their own perceptual maps (internal representations) because each individual person has his/her own perceptual filters. Some common miscommunications that occur as a result of this neurological fact are:

a. We oft assume the other person has the same perception we do and we do our own thing without first consulting them. This may lead to conflict. "My wife knows I want that new Dodge Ram so I am going to go ahead and buy it without asking her opinion."

b. We oft "mind read" the other person's thoughts or behavior because we are gathering information off of our maps and not theirs. Indeed, in my work with couples, I find that one of the major breakdown in communication is "mind reads". You hear such statements like, "I know you don't love me." Or, "You don't care about me." Or, "You are so jealous." If your spouse (or anyone else) makes such statement, just ask him or her, "How do you know ___ _____?" Or, "What specifically am I doing to cause you to choose to believe _____?" By-the-way, one of the most used "mind read" statements in the English language is, "I know how you feel." It is impossible for us to know how anyone else feels and such statements rarely if ever bring comfort to the other person.

c. We oft link one thing as meaning something when in reality it does not because we are coming off our own perceptual maps and not that of the other person. "You always late. You don't love me." Or, "My boss never tells me how much he appreciates me. That must mean I am not doing a good job." We need to gather more specific information. "How does my being late mean that I don't love you." Or, you could respond by saying, "I was late so that when I arrived I could be totally with you." And, instead of assuming from your own map your boss doesn't appreciate you, what about asking him/her. Remember, you are operating off of your map and not the other person. And, the other person is operating off of their map and not yours.

d. We may end up giving other people mystical control over us. Because we only can operate off of our maps and because our maps are not reality but our perception, sometimes we allow the actions or talk of others to control our state. "You make me so mad when you do that!" No one can make you mad without your permission. If you are mad then you chose to be mad and you can choose not to be bad for "as a man thinketh so is he". By-the-way, when someone comes up to you and makes such as statement like, "You make me mad." Or, "Your behavior makes me nervous.", ask the person, "What specifically am I doing that causes you to choose to be mad?" Or, "What specifically am I doing that causes you to choose be nervous?"

e. The fact that **The Map Is Not The Territory** but is the map we operate from,

explains exactly how we limit ourselves and what must be done to unleash ourselves. Paul said, "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind..." (Romans 12:2). Is not Paul challenging us to think on other more healthy things? In Philippians 4:8, Paul declares, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Michael Hall says, "Apparently, the ability to shift perspective, to open up one's mind to new and different information and to think in a new way (a paradigm shift) portrays the God-given way that transformation and renewal occurs (Ephesians 4:20-24). [2]

What kind of map do you have of yourself? What is the internal representation (map) that you have inside your head that represents your perception of yourself as a person of worth before God? So often our sense of self-worth is impoverished and distorted due primarily to childhood imprints which are continue to limit us in our adult lives. A child who is constantly reminded that they are stupid will grow up believing they are stupid and will behave that way. Behavior comes directly from the our internal representations (maps) we have of ourselves. Now the Gospel of Christ speaks directly to our self images being recreated in Christ Jesus. Paul informs us in II Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." The word "creature" is *ktisis* meaning "creation". When we accept Christ He "swishes" the old man with his old limiting beliefs about who he is to the new man who is in Christ with all the self-worth that comes from being totally accepted, loved, forgiven and empowered by Christ Himself.

f. The vast majority of our own personal limitations are a result of our own perceptual maps. A must for us to move out of our present limiting state is to own our own maps and stop blaming other people or even God for our so called problems. True, most of us have deep unconscious problems that we cannot "choose" to overcome. NLP provides the understanding of the structure of the problem which enables the NLP trained therapist in guiding you to your God-given resources to overcome those problems. The pamphlet I wrote entitled "How to Take a Bitter Root to Jesus" is an example of such a structural approach to therapy.

The Place of Pure Potentiality

The fact that **The Map Is Not The Territory**, i.e. our perception is not reality but it is our reality in that it is off of our perception (internal representations) that all of our behavior including communication derives. We are what we think we are. Our "maps" both enrich and limit our lives. To a large extent, we are a product of our experiences in life. Our attitudes, beliefs, values, Meta-Programs, decisions, memories and language are to a large part learned behaviors. These neurological filters determine our "maps" or internal representations and are what drives our behavior.

Now let's go back to the beginning and consider what Scripture teaches us about the original make up of our "maps" or internal representations. In Genesis 1:1 we read, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Then on down in verses 26 and 27 we read, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of And in the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

In the creation man was perfect without sin. At creation, man was **Pure Potentiality**. Do you not believe that prior to sin, man had absolutely no limitations. He had no limiting decisions to deal with. He had no bitter roots or strongholds to deal with. In other words, in the beginning with God, man was absolutely totally free of any limiting neurological filters that would screw up his "map" or internal representations. **In the beginning, man was Pure Potentiality.**

Then tragedy strikes in chapter three as Adam and Eve succumb to Satan and partake of the food. Man sinned and he has been sinning every since. In I Corinthians 15:22a we read "For as in Adam all die..." The awful tragedy of sin has resulted in man's potential being greatly marred and sadly but often destroyed. So many of the crowns of God's great creation lie on the waste heap of loss opportunity. Inevitably, much if not all of the great tragedies of lost opportunity are the result of bitter roots brought on by being reared in sin cursed homes and in a sin cursed world.

Hebrews 12:15 (NIV) says, "See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many." Bitter roots or painful memories cause three tragedies with the crown of God's creation: (1) Bitter roots blocks our ability to experience God's grace in our lives. (2) Bitter roots causes us internal trouble including both the physical and emotional. (3) Bitter roots destroy relationships and as a result of destroyed homes. Destroyed homes lead to more destroyed children and the cycle continues.

It is this author's opinion based on six years of doing therapy professionally and 25 years as a minister that bitter roots or painful memories are the major contributor to screwed up neurological filters (attitudes, beliefs, values, limiting decisions and painful memories). Because these serve as major neurological filters, our maps (internal representations) are screwed up; therefore we live in sicken states and behave totally opposite to **The Pure Potential** that God has placed in us.

Is there any hope? Yes, praise God there is not only hope, there is healing but we have to get back to "the beginning" to the Place of Pure Potentiality. How can we do this? Yes, sin is in the world but sin isn't the last word. The last part of I Corinthians 15:22 says, "**For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.**" **What sin has done Christ has undone.** Christ gives us permission to go back to the beginning to **The Place of Pure Potentiality.**

How Do We Get Back To The Place of Pure Potentiality?

How can I get back to the place of pure potentiality? That is a good question. To answer this question, we must consider some basic neurological facts as to how our brain functions. We have already learned the basic truth that our "maps" or internal representations are a product of our five senses. Our painful memories or bitter roots are stored images in our brain that have been constructed throughout our lives. If I were to ask you to recall a memory that is one year old and to notice where you see that image, you would notice a specific location. This location may be in front, in your head, behind you, over to the side, up high, down low, etc. It could be anywhere but the visual part of that image will have a definite location. If I were to ask you to recall an event that was three years old, an event five years old, an event ten years old and on back into your early life, you would notice that those images form a line into your past. The line may be in front of you, to the side, behind you, curved or straight but it will be a line and the older the memories, the further away they are from you. This line is your past time line. You are to a large degree a product of the good and bad memories stored on that time line. These memories have contributed mightily to the attitudes, beliefs, values, Meta-Programs, decisions, memories and language that act as the filters to all your experiences. They determine who you are both good and bad.

Now, if I were to ask you to go back in time to the beginning of your past time line you can

imagine yourself doing that, couldn't you? If you are somewhat uncomfortable with this, I want to point you to II Corinthians 10: 3-5 (NIV), "For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, **and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.**" My total purpose is to lead you to bring your thoughts into the obedience of Christ.

The next step is crucial. Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning, God..." If you were to go back to before your time line, before you were born, before you were conceived, Who would be there? God said to Jeremiah (1:5 NIV), "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations." Jeremiah knew that even before he was conceived, he existed in the mind of God. Moving to the New Testament we read from John 1:1-5, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **He was with God in the beginning.** Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it." Not only does these verses teach us that Jesus was there with God in creation, it also teaches us that Jesus is the light to dispel all the darkness up our time line.

An example in Christian literature where something similar to this is utilized is the presently popular and wonderful discipleship program called *Experiencing God*. The author of that book is Henry Blackaby of the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. In one of the videos that goes along with the course, Henry directs us to face difficult situations by getting God's view. He then draws a diagram of our going up and being with God and looking down on the situation from God's perspective. The major difference in the procedure I'm teaching is for you to go back in time prior to your birth when you were a thought in the mind of God. Being present with the Lord from that position, you can look forward and view your entire life, past, present and future from God's perspective. This is **The Place of Pure Potentiality**.

Once you are in that position, process the following statements. I suggest that you get someone to read them to you so you can concentrate on processing your life from the Lord's perspective. Once you complete each step, nod your head so your helper will know to move to the next statement:

How do we go back to The Place of Pure Potentiality?

1. **The Place of Pure Potentiality** is before any bitter roots, strongholds and limiting decisions were formed. Go back in time to the beginning of your time line.
2. Now, as you are at the beginning of your time line, you do believe that Jesus gives you permission by His blood to go be with Him?
3. Now, go back and be with Jesus before conception when you were but a thought in His mind and totally limitless and with pure potentiality.
4. Once you are with Jesus, your helper says to you, "As you think about your present situation in life, consider all the options and choices that God is giving you now being totally present in pure potentiality."
5. Once you experience the new choices being with Jesus, your helper will say to you, "As you consider your new choices, now, what is it in the future that you will feel now to allow you to feel comfortable with your new choices that you made?"^[3]

This procedure is an act of faith for how can one have an experience with God if one does not believe that He is? Therefore, in going back and practicing the presence of Jesus in **The Place of Pure Potentiality**, you are honoring your God through faith for "Without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Hebrews 11:6). Live in His presence. Start practicing spending much time with Him there. Over time you will begin to experience more empowerment from the Holy Spirit. Over time the bitter roots that exist up your past time line will begin to minimize and, yes, even disappear. You will immediately begin to have more choice in your life. Could this be the place of spirituality? I think so.

2. Meaning is context dependent.

Taking material out of context presents a major difficulty for both the use and interpretation of the Bible. Misapplication of the Word through pulling a verse out of its context and applying it to the fleshly needs of the interpreter has resulted in much hurt. The fact that this practice based itself on Scripture however misguided makes it even more appalling. Consider the following:

1. Many of my forebears here in the South justified slavery from such Scriptures as Colossians 3:22; "Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord." Indeed my home denomination of the Southern Baptist Convention formed from a split from the American Baptist Convention over the issue of slavery. Preachers all over the South justified the degradation of slavery based on taking such passages out of context.
2. Justification for the beating of children comes from such passages as Proverbs 22:15: "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." Indeed, horrific corporal punishment in some Christian homes have resulted from an incorrect interpretation of this passage. One need only to look at Ephesians 6:4, "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord", to find a correction on such abusive practices. Clinical study after clinical study reveal the awful results of abusive corporal punishment.
3. Many atrocities result from a taking out of context Ephesians 5:22, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." As a minister for twenty-five years, my eyes and ears have witnessed the beating of a spouse justified based on this Scripture. One need only read the preceding verse to find correction: "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." Let the husband move on down the passage to verse 25, "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord." Let the man of God be a Godly husband who first submits to the Lord and then to the Jesus in his wife. Let the wife submit to the Lord and then to the Jesus in her husband. "Submission" in this context has nothing to do with slavery, it has everything to do with love *agape* style.
4. Another example of taking Scripture out of context applies to the saying, "Eye for an Eye and Tooth for Tooth". Even murderer use this passage to justify their sin. In Exodus 21:23-25 we read, "But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise." This Scripture presents guidelines for Judges to use in meting out just and fair punishment and was in no way meant to give any person permission to exercise vengeance. The Christian will turn to Matthew 5:44 for direction in such matters, "But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. . ."

Alfred Korzybski in *Science And Sanity* (1933) Made This Statement: "All Meaning Is Context Dependent." In other words, any time you change context you change meaning. Think of word "love". If I say I love my wife, I mean one thing. If I say I love my dad, I mean another. Think of a wooden chair. In the context of chair, the wood means one thing but think of it before it was chair, before that and before that?

A classic example from NLP literature is the story of the Taoist farmer. We find this story in Bandler and Grinder's book, *Reframing*. The farmer owned one horse and he had one son. In that time and place he was considered wealthy. One day his horse ran away. His neighbors said, "How tragic. Your one and only horse has run away." The farmer said, "Maybe!" The next day the farmer's horse returned and brought a wild horse with it. The neighbors said, "How fortunate. Once you had one horse. Now you have two horses." The farmer said, "Maybe!" The farmer's one and only son climbed on the wild horse and was pitched off whereupon he broke his leg. The neighbors said, "How tragic. Your one and only son has broken his leg." The farmer said, "Maybe!" The next day the conscription officers came by to draft the farmer's son into the army to go fight in the war. But, because he had a broken leg, he was excused. The neighbor said, "How fortunate. Your son doesn't have to go off and fight in the war because he has a broken leg." The old farmer said, "Maybe!" In all these events the facts remained the same. The context changed and the meaning changed.

Another great example is Dr. Milton Erickson's work with rebellious daughter. A father brought his sixteen year old daughter in to see Milton Erickson. Upon entering the office, the father said to the daughter, "Sit here." He then turned to Erickson and said, "My daughter is headstrong. She doesn't listen. She doesn't listen to me or her mother. She is always telling us what she thinks." Erickson waited patiently for the father to complete his explanation of the problem. When the father finished, Erickson replied, "Now isn't it good that she will be able to stand on her own two feet when she is ready to leave home?" The father responded with stunned silence. That was the end of the therapy. Erickson did not change the daughter's behavior. He simply changed the context of the behavior. When the father brought her to Erickson, he viewed his daughter's stubbornness as argumentative. Following Erickson's reframe, he now viewed his daughter's stubbornness as a resource for her survival as an adult.

While driving along a country road, my wife and I passed a dairy farm. The windows of the car were down and the aroma from the barnyard poured in. My wife held her nose and exclaimed, "Shoo, that stinks." I said, "To you the manure stinks, to the farmer it is money." All meaning, including that stuff, determines itself by context.

If it is true that all meaning is context dependent, than any word, phrase or statement can be rendered meaningless by a reframe. When you change context you reframe. Recently, I was talking with Dr. Gene Rooney pastor of First United Methodist Church in Jefferson City, Missouri. Gene introduced me to NLP in 1989 and has since been a constant guide, teacher and instructor. Gene has developed a painful muscle disorder. When I asked him how he was doing, he said, "I take the pain as a message that I am still alive." Now, I suffer chronic pain from a spinal fusion that I had in 1974. It has worsen as arthritis has taken up residence. When Gene said, "I take the pain as a message that I am still alive", guess what that did to me. Yes, I immediately thought of how my pain not as a message of death but of life. I don't think Gene meant to do therapy on me but he did.

You can ask yourself a question, "In what context would this problem be beneficial to me?" As you ask yourself that question, trust the Holy Spirit to give you an answer. You might be pleasantly surprised. Isn't that what Paul meant in Romans 8:28 when he states, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." In the context of faith, even those events and things that at first may seem harmful to us works to God's good in our lives. Romans 8:28 reframes our hurts to His helps, our pain to His

pleasure, our tragedy to His triumph, our sufferings to His salvation by changing the context from this world to His world.

When you hear someone make a statement that indicates a problem or an objection for them, you may wish to assist them by asking yourself the question, "Where could this problem be an asset for this person?" Trust the Holy Spirit to give you an answer that you may share with the other person. Sometimes you can really help people. Plus, it is an excellent way to handle objections.

Jesus was w master at reframing. All of His "But I say unto you..." statements were reframes in the light of the newness of the Gospel. Consider the following examples:

1. (Matthew 5:21-22 KJV) Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.
2. (Matthew 5:27-28, KJV) Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.
3. (Matthew 5:43-44 KJV) Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

Much of Jesus' teaching revolved around the reframes that His coming revealed. The Woman at the Well in John 4 is an example. To the woman the well water was just that. To Jesus the well water was a metaphor or reframe for her need to know Him. This water was temporal. His water, i.e. His life was eternal. In the ninth chapter of John, Jesus and His disciples saw a man who was blind from birth. The disciples inquired of Jesus, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents...?" In the context of their tradition (and their map of the world), someone must have sinned for this man to be so unfortunate. Our Lord answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was in order that the works of God might be displayed in him" (John 9:3). Jesus then proceeded to heal the man.^[4] In the context of God and our Lord's ministry, the man's blindness gave Jesus opportunity to heal the man and proclaim His Messiahship. In the context of the Disciples' thinking, somebody sinned.

THE CROSS: God's great reframe on the world.

Paul says, in 2 Corinthians 5:17-19, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation." And then in verse 21 he exclaims, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." God took our sin from the context of our weaknesses and changed the context to the Cross and His perfection and eliminated sin and its effects.

In October of 1978, on the 33rd anniversary of the completion of the Bridge of the River Kwai, Dennis Roland of New York and his former guard, Ryuji, walked together arm in arm, over the black, steel-girded span. Said Roland: "I bear no bitterness (toward the Japanese), but I have many memories."

Although it was not part of his plan, at Calvary rebellious man constructed a bridge. In crucifying the Son of God, man had a part in building the "new and living way" to God. Now all of us, whether we are Greek or Jew, circumcision or uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, can walk together across that bridge. Paul declares, "For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us"^[5]

In the eyes of those who crucified Him, they thought He was a common itinerant, somewhat eccentric preacher. But in the eyes of God and those who believe on Him, He is the savior of the world. God took what was man's greatest act of barbarity and reframed into His greatest act of love. In the world's frame, Jesus was a failure. In the frame of the lost, desolate, without meaning searcher, He is the Savior of the world and the author of life. That is why I say that the Cross is God's greatest reframe on the world for He reframe our hopelessness into His hope; our sin into His forgiveness; our tragedy into His triumph.

3. The meaning of communication is the response you get.

Communication refers to the exchange of information. It operates as dialogue in a system of feedback responses from sender and receiver, not a monologue. The response of the person with whom we communicate reflects the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of our communication. If they respond to our communication in the manner we desire--we have succeeded. If their response differs from our intent, we can simply send other signals. This model leads to a non-blaming style.

Notice Jesus' communication style in his encounter with the Samaritan woman (John 4). After he engaged her, he brought up the subject of "living water" as a metaphor--undoubtedly to tease her mind. But the response he got? Sharp sarcasm, a hint of insult, and rejection. "Sir, you have nothing to draw with [Where's your bucket?], and the well is deep; where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob [Who do you think you are anyway?]..." (John 4: 11-12).

This probably did not reflect the response he desired. So he persisted. "Everyone who drinks this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (4: 13-14 RSV). Her response? Cocky disbelief and misunderstanding! "Give me this water that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." (4: 15).

The response he wanted? Not exactly. So he persisted. "Go, call your husband and come here." That touched a very raw nerve--so she lied. "I have no husband." And to that he validated her--he validated that she told me "the truth" from one perspective. "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband; this you said truly." (4: 16-18).

Response? She changed the subject--tried to argue religion(!) (4: 19-24) but had received *the seed* of grace and kindness from him and soon responded, "I know that Messiah is coming... when he comes, he will show us all things..." to which Jesus said, "I who speak to you am he." (4: 25-26).

What mastery of using *the response you get* to guide you in how next to respond so as to gently, graciously, and truthfully nudge the conversation in a productive direction! The meaning of Jesus' communications in the first exchanges? She read things as "arrogance, stupidity, big-talker, ridiculous, intruding into my private affairs, etc. Obviously, Jesus did not throw up his hands because he "failed" to get through to her. He just kept altering his behavior until he got the kind of curious, explorative, wonder-filled responses that he wanted.

Regardless of your intent in communication, the response you get indicates what you communicated to the other person--in spite of what you intended. Take it as feedback and use it. I (BB) view this as "taking one-hundred percent responsibility for my communication."

Responsible communication means that I always have the option to make changes in my communicating until I get my outcome. If, I only take partial responsibility for my communication, I will more likely give up trying.

What do you want from another when you communicate? This describes your desired outcome for conversing. Taking full responsibility for your communication helps you to order your communication signals until you get the response you desire. Consider the implications of this in witnessing. Sales people sometimes say that they make eighty percent of their sales after the fifth call. That sounds as if such persistent salespersons have taken full responsibility for the communication exchange.

4. The person with the most flexibility of behavior will control the action.

The communication exchange with the Samaritan woman shows the active involvement that Jesus took in communicating. Initially, his metaphor of "living water" failed to get the response he wanted (John 4:10). Yet to her attack (4:11-12) he refused to take the bait and argue about his importance. He shifted to a more playful mode to tease her mind (4:13-14). To her next insult, he shifted to "a serious mode" in asking her to bring her husband--thereby also shifting the subject a her personal life. Now this touched a nerve. It got close to her personal needs.

So she changed the subject. She picked up on the classic Samaritan-Jew argument: "The true place to worship." From this our Lord paced her by picking up on her knowledge of the coming Messiah. Eventually he disclosed Himself as the Messiah in a way that he seldom did with people. What flexibility he exercised in communicating with people. He flexibly altered his approach as a canoer moves back and forth, fast and slow down a fast-moving river to navigate all the turns and bends. Eventually, he got the response he desired.

This illustrates beautifully this principle--in any system, the one with the most flexibility over their own behavior (not that of others!) will ultimately control the interaction. We see this same kind of flexibility in the apostle Paul: "To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak: I have become all things to all men that I may by all means save some" (I Corinthians 9:22).

Accordingly, the more choices you have in your communication toolbox, the less change you will become stuck. We recommend learning the NLP toolbox so that you radically increase your choices. Then you will learn how to become weak to the weak and strong to the strong. You will learn to "...become all things to all men, that you may by all means save some" (I Corinthians 9:22). Attaining such skills means becoming more effective and productive for the kingdom.

5. There is no failure, only feedback.

Imagine what would have happened if Jesus had operated from the "failure frame-of-reference with the woman at the well?" "I tried. She just wouldn't listen! She's just too prejudiced, hateful, upset. What's the use?"

If he had thought thus, he would have ended the conversation and he would never have touched the woman at the well with his grace. But he didn't! To even quote such lines in reference to

Jesus doesn't fit--they don't sound Christ-like, do they?

Apparently, Jesus did not respond to her lack of desired response as "failure." He just treated it as feedback--as information.

Now, what would not happen if you receive seeming 'failures' as feedback? What would happen if you did not receive such as feedback? What would not happen if you did not receive such as feedback? It seems to us that if you, and ourselves, received everything that happened to us as feedback, we would all become ferocious learning machines.

If you communicate with someone and fail to get the response you want, what do you do? *Alter your communication*--the stimuli that you present--until you get the response you want. In this way, you turn failure into feedback. Feedback, not Wheaties, comprises the breakfast of champions.

We never see Jesus going into the mode of defending himself. He simply spoke truth and listened for the response. Sometimes people rejected his message. This occurred when he visited his hometown of Nazareth. Though his teachings and miracles amazed the people, they questioned the source of his wisdom and power. "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?" (Matthew 13:54-55 NASV). Consequently, Jesus "...did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief" (Matt. 13:58). Did Jesus become a failure? No. Did he quit? No. "A prophet is not without honor except in his home town, and in his own household." He read it as their limitation, not his.

The apostle Paul planned to go to Rome to preach as a free man. But when he went to Rome, he went as a prisoner. Again, "failure?" Not according to him. He used the experience as an opportunity to witness to the guards. And, many accepted Jesus. He used the opportunity also to write. "Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel" (Phil. 1:12 NASV). Given his desire to spread the gospel, imprisonment simply became a means to that end!

Living life by this presupposition changes all areas of life, but especially those areas that demand persistence and the wisdom of learning from "what doesn't work." People tend to give up too easily. Many marriages would not have ended in divorce if the couples considered communication as feedback rather than failure. Thomas Edison's 10,000 experiments in search for a filament to work in his light bulb illustrates this principle. When asked, "It must be hard to have failed 10,000 times!" Edison replied, "I didn't have 10,000 failures. I just found 10,000 ways *not* to make a light bulb." No failure--only feedback!

How many relationships end because people "fail" to get what they want immediately? How much ministry ceases because people take "failures" as a reason to quit or back off? How many people don't say Yes to Jesus because we hear their initial No as defeat and failure? Conversely, what would happen if we accepted such as feedback?

**Believing That There Is
No Failure Only Feedback
Demands That You Forgive Yourself**

Receiving failure not as a message of doom and gloom but as a message for learning and motivation require that one take seriously the Biblical message of grace and forgiveness. A guilt ridden person knows not peace in the heart and knows not real contentment. Effective communicators operate from a free spirit. How can one communicate the Gospel freely from a heart

laden with guilt and self-condemnation? An individual strapped by self condemnation cannot effectively portray themselves to those around them. Regrettably, for these people, even God's forgiveness provides inadequate means for freedom from their guilt. They operate within the deep well of self doubt and self punishment unable to acclimate the glorious forgiveness of our Heavenly Father through the precious blood of His dear Son. Emancipation from the bondage of self criticism radically alters this person's ability to portray themselves to others. As it stands now, they reside in a prison made of the bars of an overriding guilt.

For the person bathed in self condemnation I ask one question, "If you know God has forgiven you, how can you hold an unforgiving spirit toward yourself?" Please consider that by not forgiving yourself, you block God's grace in your life. The destructive force of this action equals that of not forgiving others. You limit God's ability to use you because you block the power of our Lord in your life due to your unbelief.

You say, "I am not worthy." Amen! True! But, He makes us worthy. Our unworthiness becomes His worthiness. Allow the message of the Cross to echo throughout the chambers of your inner person erasing all those images of sins gone by. His blood disappears all your past sins. Remember Psalm 103:12 (NIV), "...as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." The Psalmist declares that God ". . .knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust" (Psa 103:14 NIV). He knew your unworthiness when He died for you. Indeed, your unworthiness allows Him to show you how much He loves you.

Consider the Apostle Peter who denied our Lord at the trial. Later Jesus just looked at Peter . The Bible says, "The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: 'Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times'" (Luke 22:61 NIV). How many times do you think Peter "remembered" how he denied knowing the Lord when Jesus needed him so desperately? No doubt many. I bet he jumped every time he heard a rooster crow. But following the Resurrection, Peter got on fire for Jesus and preached the sermon at Pentecost resulting in thousands coming to Jesus. Indeed, Peter became the leader of the Church in Jerusalem. **He became an effective communicator of the Gospel helped immensely by accepting our Lord's forgiveness and forgiving himself.**

And what of the Apostle Paul? Do you not know that Paul wrestled with forgiving himself for persecuting the Christian Church? He oft referred to his past behaviors. Paul, however, knew he was forgiven. He gives the best teachings of forgiveness found anywhere in the Bible. This persecutor of the Church after coming to know Christ wrote, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come" (2 Cor 5:17 NIV)! No grander statement can be made of the wonders of the marvelous grace and forgiveness found in Christ. And, because Paul personally experienced this grace, out of that freedom he therefore communicated effectively this grace.

The consequences of not forgiving ourselves exact too high a price. Consider the price of not forgiving yourself:

1. **We live under a cloud of confusion of uncertainty.** Satan presses our VCR button of the past. The movie runs graphically revealing our sins of the past. Guilt and self-punishment haunt us. We conclude, "I did that terrible deed. I carry a load of guilt. How can God forgive me. I feel so guilt ridden. Maybe God doesn't love me and want forgive me."

Our guilt blocks the certainty of God's forgiveness. The peace that passes all understanding passes us by and we experience no real, genuine peace and contentment. If through Christ we could forgive ourselves, maybe we could accept John 3:16 (NIV), "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

God promises "eternal life", not part time life. But when we don't forgive ourselves, we live in uncertainty that God can forgive us for all eternity. And, because we live in uncertainty about our relationship with God, we transfer this uncertainty to our relationship with others and communication breakdown occurs.

2. **We beat up on ourselves.** We punish ourselves on an ongoing basis. Satan pushes the imaginary VCR play button and we replay those tapes of the sins of the past. After running our "sins of the past" tape, Satan declares, "See, I told you that you are an awful sinner. Look what you did. You can't forgive yourself of that awful deed." Listening to Satan instead of God, we say to ourselves, "I must be a terrible sinner. Satan is right. God can't forgive me of that." Thus, we go our way denying the very reality of God in the Person of Jesus on the Cross dying for our sins. We live in bondage and limit our ability to communicate and ministry effectively.

3. **We develop a sense of unworthiness and low self-esteem.** Following Satan's playing the tape of our past sins, we conclude, "I'm guilty; yes, I am unworthy." We experience low self-esteem because we live under a cloud of guilt. God won't answer my prayers because my sins block even God's ability to forgive me. All the time Satan keeps his finger on the VCR player of our mind. Sins past flow on the TV of our minds. What little faith we had shatters. Our self-esteem crumbles on the floor.

Clouds of guilt overshadow us as Satan replays the tape of sins that God long ago said "...as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us" (Psa 103:12 NIV). Satan pushes the play button of sins gone by. God desires to rewind that tape, push the "record" button for the purpose of installing a total new scenario of His "reprogramming" our minds with His love and forgiveness and the new person we are in Him. God says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come" (2 Cor 5:17 NIV)! Does this "new creation" not include an erasure of the old and the installation of a new memory of who we are in Christ? Who will you allow to control the VCR of your mind, Satan or God?

4. **By allowing this cloud of uncertainty to overshadow us, we will try to overcome our guilt and our unforgiving spirit through excess and compulsive behavior.** We turn to alternative and often sinful behavior in a futile attempt to overcome our guilt and unforgiving spirit. Could this be the reason many get into drugs, alcohol and affairs? Can it be that much of this behavior actually reflects an individual trying desperately to escape the pain of the inner guilt?

After years of involving myself in ministry and therapy, I believe that more than we may at first realize, much compulsive and addictive behaviors trace to a hurting heart crying for release from the doubt, uncertainty and guilt from sins of the past. This behavior pours out of an empty heart seeking to quench its thirst at the dry hole of sin. Not being comfortable with yourself, you seek a new toy to alleviate the guilt and self-punishment. The problem lies not in what you eat but in what is eating you.

5. **We may even develop a sense of false humility and piety.** "I'm just not worthy. Just a worm am I." This may very well reflect not true humility but an individual seeking a pious copout of responsibility before God. Such an attitude provides an opportunity for us not to face ourselves and others. Communication breaks down for we come out of a false sense of self. How can one communicate meaningfully when the person before them has on a false face? You will never be able to "get to know" such a person for they block your communication because they don't want you to get to know the real them. Do you know such a person?

If this person were to accept God's forgiveness through faith, they could pull off the false face and open themselves up for effective communication with others. Ephesians 2:10 (NIV) reads, "For

we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us." When we accept God's forgiveness, we become a new person in Jesus. Because this new self reflects the Person of Jesus who made it new, we find this new self quite lovable by us. We can and do forgive this person readily. No longer ashamed of our new self in Christ, we take off the false face. We open up to others and let them in. Communication becomes effective.

6. Sometimes the opposite of compulsive behavior exhibits itself. We deprive ourselves of the riches and wonders that God has for us. We cannot accept God's blessings because of the guilt, self-punishment, false sense of unworthiness and the false face we wear to protect us from others discovering who we are on the inside. By not accepting God's blessings to us, we thus continue the self-punishment through self-deprivation. We erroneously rationalize, "Maybe if I reject God's blessings and deprive myself enough, this awful guilt will go away." As a result of this refusal, our hearts long for His touch and our soul aches for relief. Because the consequences of such hurt inevitably express themselves both in verbal and non-verbal behaviors, even those closest to us find themselves unable to reach us at a deep level. These blocks carry over into our business world and we sabotage our own success.

On-the-other-hand, living in the awareness of total forgiveness by God and self, we operate from a freedom that only Christ can give. Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:34-35, NIV). **If you believe that Jesus died for your sins, you have to believe totally and completely that you live in ultimate freedom in Him. You must, indeed you have to forgive yourself to hold the believe that His death covers all sin. One cannot not forgive themselves who does not not believe that Jesus has set them free by the power of His blood.**

A Free Person Forgives Readily And Is Empowered To Take Failure As Feedback

Having totally received God's forgiveness by totally forgiving yourself enables you to take those times when you do not perform at optimum level as opportunities for learning. Indeed, if I understand the Scriptures correctly, during those times of hardship, uncertainty and even calamity, we allow those to take us to the throne of Grace and allow God to teach us His lessons in the throes of suffering. This truth applies to whether the suffering comes on due to our failure or to failures outside our control. No matter, a forgiven person operates from a well of water that never runs dry. He/she has resources that exceeds any calamity or hardship.

The Christian who takes all failure as feedback simply says and believes, "Yes, I blew that one. For my misdeeds I ask and receive God's forgiveness. For my inadequacies I will learn how to perform more effectively. For the lessons learned, I keep those for future reference. For the future I say with Paul, 'Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead' (Phil. 3:13, NIV)." The person who holds the belief that there is no failure only feedback, this person exists as a learning and growing machine. Their motto is not, "I am a failure." Their motto is, "What do I have to learn from this opportunity?" The blood of Christ makes this possible.

6. The way communication is presented affects how it is perceived.

A great portion of communication occurs via non-verbal channels. This means that we always and inevitably not only communicate by *what* we say (verbally) but also by *how* we say things (the non-verbal facets: tone, volume, facial expressions, breathing, postures, etc.). These messages exist as *para*-messages. Sometimes, however, one of our messages may refer to (reference) another

message.

Saying, "I love you!" carries one meaning. Saying it sarcastically another. Saying it with fingers crossed another. Saying it in tears--yet another. *The way* that we use our para-message signals can tremendously affect the way people hear, perceive, and receive us. Many people give more weight to tonality or physiology or eye contact or some other non-verbal facet than to the linguistic content. Others reverse that. This suggests the importance (and power) of congruence--aligning all of our communication channels so that they communicate the same message and not conflict or contradict each other. Congruence makes our communicating believable.

Jesus knew the impact of different types of communication and so utilized a number of different presentation ways. Sometimes he presented his message directly, sometimes indirectly, sometimes by example, sometimes by story. When he began using only stories (parables) with the crowds, his disciples didn't understand why and so asked him why he so spoke. He said:

"To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. For whoever has, to him shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. Therefore, I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand" (Matt. 13:10-13 NASV).

At first reading this appears to be a hard saying. However, the key is in the word "mysteries." The word "mysteries" is from the word *musterion*, which is from *mustes*, one initiated and that from *mueo*, to close or shut (Latin, *mutus*).^[6] In New Testament times the word "mystery" was a technical name for something which was dark and unintelligible to the outsider. Yet, the mystery was crystal clear to the initiated. The initiated knew the meaning of mystery.^[7] In the culture to which our Lord came, there were many secret societies even as there are in ours. These societies had many secrets known only to the participants. Imagine someone coming into one of our churches when we are celebrating the Lord's Supper. How would this person feel if he was ignorant of the purpose of the Lord's Supper? It would seem ridiculous to him. However, for the initiated the Supper takes on deep significance.

Our Lord presented many of His teachings in parables so the initiated would understand and appreciate the deep teachings of God. True, the hostile Pharisee would be in the dark. However, that was not the fault of the Lord. One understands Christ from within. For those who refuse His entry, there is no understanding. Thus, our Lord used the parable to instruct His own in the riches of His Kingdom. The way communication is presented affects how it is perceived.

Stories & Parables as Trance-Formations in The Soul

I suppose that the single most used method that our Lord utilized in communication involved the parable. Nowhere do we see trance in the Bible in a more evident way than in the parables and stories of Jesus. Linguistically, a parable functions, in form, as a metaphor that speaks about one thing in terms of another. Dilts (1983) defines a metaphor as "a figure of speech in which something is spoken of as if it were another." (p. 74). "Metaphor" literally means "to carry over." Thus, metaphors "carry" (bear) a message "over" to another's mind by means of the vehicle of a story. The listener takes the framework or structure of the metaphor and interprets through their own experience. In this way metaphors become powerful indirect conveyers of messages. Precisely because the message comes in the frame of an seemingly *unrelated* story, the message bypasses the person's conscious mind and goes right into their unconscious mind. Neat!

A therapist who uses therapeutic metaphors designs them to have a similar structure (isomorphic) to the client's experience. Because of the similarity, their unconscious mind can interpret the metaphor in relation to their own needs. The client will take what he or she hears and represent it in terms of his/her own experience.

So when we read or hear Jesus' parables, our conscious mind becomes occupied by the details of the story--the content. But at unconscious levels, our deeper mind interprets and hears a story behind the story and it goes to work applying its lessons. Sometimes we can recognize this when another or we say, "I just don't know why, but that story really touched something deep inside me." By occupying our conscious mind with the unrelated story, our Lord can thereby put us in trance in order to get to our unconscious mind with his message.

Do you think *the Parable of the Good Samaritan* primarily concerned two busy religious leaders who obeyed the law by remaining clean? Or, did Jesus use that story to condemn a religious system wherein leaders put legalism above helping and loving someone in need? And, what effect do you think it had when Jesus chose to make a "hated and despised Samaritan" the loving hero of the story?

When Jesus started his ministry, he taught scripture in a straightforward way as in the "Sermon on the Mount." This got him into trouble and threatened him before his time. So, he shifted to a different methodology--he began using parables to get to the unconscious minds of his people in a non-threatening way (Matt. 13). Here Jesus showed himself an expert at putting people in trance. Metaphors offer a far less threatening communication form than direct advice. As a form of indirect communication, it bypasses conscious defenses.

Stories, as a form of hypnosis, "sneak around our left brain mental blocks. Stories inform us indirectly which means the static of cognitive dissonance is avoided to a great extent." Stories feed the imagination and right hemisphere of the brain with pictures and dramas (Hall, 1985, p. 151•155).

If we naturally use stories to so define ourselves, then by hearing and experiencing new stories we can redefine ourselves. Here describes the psychodynamic power within any story from a piece of gossip, to a movie, a fairytale, a life script, etc. What story would you like to begin to use which would make your life bigger, better, and grander?

Given this hypnotic nature of stories, do we wonder that the "gospel" itself comes to us in the format of a story? Think about that. The four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) exist in literary form and expression as *stories*. To read them invites one on a guided visual imagery. It invites a reader to walk into the story of the one who represented the Creator in flesh. "He who has seen me has seen the Father..." (John 14:9). And significantly, the very word "gospel" comes from "*God•spel*" ••God's story that casts a spell, and what a spell it casts!

7. Resistance Functions As a Sign That We Lack Rapport.

Jesus got resistance from the woman at the well. He got resistance from his two disciples walking the Emmaus road on Easter afternoon. When he asked them about their conversation, they shot back, 'Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?' (Luke 23:18). In both cases, he read their so-called "resistance," not as his own personal inadequacy or their demon-possession(!), but as *not having created enough relationship*. So he continued working with them. "What things?" he asked Cleopas and the other disciple (23:19)--as if he didn't know! He took their "resistance" and used it as feedback to create more rapport.

By way of contrast, we often read such "insult" or "resistance" as trouble, failure, difficulty and throw up our hands. We just give up on the person. We visit one time; get resistance, and never return. So, we lose them. This seems especially dominant in the area of visiting inactive members. Such persons show some resistance and we write them off.

Why not? In addition to using that as a trigger for "feeling bad," we simply lack the skills necessary for working with and overcoming the resistance.

We condemn them as sinners who do not love the Lord. John Savage (1987) focused his studies and research for his Doctor of Ministry on reclaiming inactive church members. From that research he discovered that ninety-five percent of people who drop out of church do so due to a cluster of anxiety provoking events that occurred in their lives. Usually these involve personal rather than church issues. But when they turn to the church for help, they didn't find help forthcoming. And when faced with such seeming non-concern, they lash out in anger. Then, others, not knowing how to handle their resistance fail in ministering to them. And so we lose them to the church.

These dropouts leave the church and do not return unless someone listens to their pain and ministers to it. We can expect them, by the nature of their situation and state, to feel and act in a resistant way. Their hurt drives this. In order to minister and restore them necessitates accepting their pain and establishing rapport with them. Like Jesus, we have to take their barbs--"Are you the only one who doesn't know anything?!" and gracious say, "What things? Tell me about them..."

Consider the power of this presupposition about resistance. It shifts responsibility to us--in *how we handle it*. Believing this empowers us to re-establish rapport even with the grouchy--the grumpy, the out-of-sorts, the hurting. Sounds like ministry! This belief also enables one to continue communicating even in the face of anger and sarcasm without taking it personal, to say within, "Forgive them, they don't know what they're doing." It keeps us matching their internal reality by "saying words that agree with their internal model of the world."

Both NLP and the model of Jesus say we *can* overcome resistance. Overcoming resistance becomes possible even with irate church members. Obviously establishing and maintaining such rapport plays an essential role in ministry and therapy.

Rapport moves us into a more harmonious state with another. Our spirit comes to agree with another's spirit. Paul wrote "be in the same mind" (I Corinthians 1:10). When two people adopt the "same mind" about something--they enter into rapport. Detecting resistance from someone signals us that we have lost rapport.

8. I am in charge of my mind, and therefore my results.

The entire thrust of Scripture is that the mind of man is changeable. Consider Paul's statement in Romans 12:2:

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

The word "mind" (nous) means mind, disposition, practical reason, understanding, thought and judgment. Paul uses it twenty-one times. To Paul, the inner direction of the Christian's thought and will and the orientation of their moral consciousness should be in a constant state of renewal.^[8]

Managing Our State Phil. 4:11-13

(Phil 4:11 NIV) I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content (auto-self; arkes-govern/rule; self-governed) whatever the circumstances.

1. Agreement Frame With People (2)

(Phil 4:2 NIV) I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord.

2. Joy Frame About Everything (4)

(Phil 4:4 NIV) Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

3. Frame of Sweet Gentleness (5)

(Phil 4:5 NIV) Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

4. An Anti-Worry Frame (6)

(Phil 4:6 NIV) Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

5. A Valuing Excellence Frame (8)

(Phil 4:8 NIV) Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things.

6. A Modeling Excellence Frame (9)

(Phil 4:9 NIV) Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me--put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Running Your Brain God's Way

1. Internal Representations: #'s 1-5

2. Physiology: #6, "put into practice"

Regrettably, most of us believe that we have no control of our minds. Richard Bandler is quite possibly the foremost authority alive today on controlling one's thought processes. He writes:

Most people don't actively and deliberately use their own brains. Your brain is like a machine without an "off" switch. If you don't give it something to do, it just runs on and on until it gets bored. If you put someone in a sensory deprivation tank where there's no external experience, he'll start generating internal experience. If your brain is sitting around without anything to do, it's going to start doing something, and it doesn't seem to care what it is. *You* may care, but *it* doesn't...

I want you to find out how you can learn to change your own experience, and get some control over what happens in your brain. Most people are prisoners of their own brains. It's as if they are chained to the last seat of the bus and someone else is driving. *I want you to learn how to drive your own bus* (italics mine). If you don't give your brain a little direction, either it will just run randomly on its own, or other people will find ways to run it for you--and they may not always have your best interests in mind. Even if they do, they may get it wrong!^[9]

Bandler in his writings and conferences teaches people just how they can take control of their thought processes. As Christians, we desire to have the mind of Christ. Paul teaches that the spiritual man knows the mind of the Lord which results in his having the mind of Christ.^[10] The Christian surrenders control of his mind to Christ. And the very act of surrendering our minds to Christ is a mental process. By thus controlling our minds, we control our behavior. By controlling our behavior, we determine our outcomes. Our outcome with others (especially significant others) as Christians is for permanency in the relationship. This means that if our thoughts are hindering our relationship, we need to take control of our thoughts by surrendering them to Christ.

NLP and teaches you two ways to control your internal state. "State" refers to the internal emotional state of the individual. Your internal state determines your external behavior. Your internal state could be happy or sad, energetic or depressed. The first way to control your internal state is by controlling your physiology or body. Try this exercise: Stand up, throw your arms up, lift you head high, breathe high in your chest, smile and try to be depressed. You cannot be depressed with your body in that position. Depression requires a totally different physiology. Now you know why physicians prescribe exercise for depression.

The second way to control your internal state is through the control of your internal representations. Now let us experiment. Recall some pleasant experience from your past. What ever pops up in your mind, go with that memory. If one does not come to memory, you may wish to imagine a pleasant experience. For some people, closing the eyes helps with this experiment. Once you have this pleasant experience, hold on to it for we are going to play around with this pleasant experience. You now have it? Now notice the visual part of it. As you recall the experience, what do you see? Just notice the picture of the memory (A small percentage of people may not visualize well. If this is true for you, imagine what the pleasant experience looks like. Or, get an idea in your mind of a pleasant experience.).

Now that you have the picture of the memory, make the picture larger. When you made the picture bigger, what happened to your feelings of the experience? Did they intensify? Now shrink the picture. Make it smaller and smaller. Did the intensity of the feelings decrease? Experiment with making the picture bigger and then smaller. When you make it smaller, do your feelings decrease? And when you make it larger, do your feelings increase? If this was your experience, you are like most people. However, you may be one of the few whose experience is different. We all code our experiences in our minds individually. Now, put the picture back where it is most comfortable for you.

Maintaining the same picture, I want you to do something else with it. Move the picture closer to you. Just imagine that the picture is coming closer to you and it will. What happens to your feelings? Move the picture farther away. What happens when you move the picture farther away? Do your feelings intensify when you move the picture closer? Do your feelings decrease when you move the picture farther away? For most people this is true. When you moved the picture farther away, the picture probably decreased in size. This happens with most people. Notice that as you change the mental representation in your mind of the experience, your feelings change. You may

wish to experiment with the brightness of the picture. Is the picture in color or black and white? If it is in color, make it black and white or vice versa. When you changed the color, did your feelings change? Is it in focus or out of focus? Do you see yourself in the picture or are you looking through your own eyes? Is the picture three dimensional (3D) or flat? Does it have a frame around it or is it panoramic? Experiment by changing how you represent the experience. Change the location of the picture. If it is on your right, move it to your left. Did it ever occur to you that you could change your feelings by changing how you internally represent an experience? The strength of NLP is in these processes of the mind. NLP works primarily with mental processes rather than with content. You changed how you felt about an experience by changing the image. Thus, you were making the changes at the mental process level. The content of the image or memory was left the same.

You noticed that as you changed the mental codings, the feelings changed as well. By changing the visual, auditory and/or kinesthetic codings of the internal representation of an event, you change your internal state. When you change your state, your behavior will change. Therefore, by controlling your mind, you control your outcomes. How true is the statement: "For as he thinks within himself, so he is" (Proverbs 23:7a).

9. People have all the ability they need in order to succeed.

This presupposition means that every Christian has all the resources he needs in order to become the person he believes God desires for him to be. There are no unresourceful people, only unresourceful states. The Biblical doctrine of the Holy Spirit informs us that we are indwelt with God Himself.^[11] What resources the Christian has! We have God Himself indwelling us. And, "greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world" (I John 4:4b). Paul committed his life to this truth. Writing from a Roman prison, Paul said, "I can do all things, through Him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13). The word "strengthens" is a present participle of the verb *endunamoe* which means to strengthen.^[12] It has the idea of empowerment within it. And being a present participle, the word indicates continual strengthening. The word is actually a compound word which combines the preposition "in" (*en*) and the verb form of the noun "dynamite" (*dunamis*). What resources the Christian has access to through the indwelling Spirit of Christ! And, every Christian has access to the same power.

As Christians and as NLP practitioners, we believe that all permanent changes are internal changes. Paul wrote, "For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man" (Romans 7:22). The law of God in the inner man is the Word of God acting on the conscience of the man through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. I know of no other Christian counselors who integrate the Scriptures in counseling more than do John and Paula Sandford of Elijah House. They write:

...Christians see no lasting change by any other means than changing the inner heart by reaching the spirit with conviction of guilt, confession, and forgiveness. We are not changed from outside in but from the inside out.^[13]

The Christian is indwelt with God Himself. As a result of the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, the Christian has all the resources he needs in order to succeed in the will of God.

NLP believes that people have all the ability they need in order to be what they want to be. The job of the therapist is to assist them in accessing their own resources. We are again back to mental process and not content. People find their resources in their own God-given abilities.

Tad James makes an interesting observation in The Basic NLP Training Collection. Following the death of Einstein, they weighed his brain. His brain was found to be heavier than the average person's brain. The thinking then was that the weight of his brain gave him his intellect. However,

placing a rat in an enriched environment will result in a measurable increase in brain weight in about forty-five minutes. This finding indicates that brain activity increases brain mass. In actuality, Einstein's brain was heavier because he did think the thoughts he did. So it is possible in a short period of time to make changes inside someone. That is what NLP is all about.^[14] The human body is indeed quite a creation. The Creator endowed us with all the ability we need to become the person He wants us to be. NLP offers humanity tools that enable us to make full use of our God given abilities. NLP allows the practitioner to guide the client in accessing their own God given resources.

10. People will make the best choices open to them at the time.

For most of my twenty years as a pastor, I lived in frustration with many people. I could not understand the choices they made in life. I mean, after all, didn't they know better? No, they didn't know better. Exposure to the findings of NLP has resulted in my taking a new look at the Scriptures. What did Jesus mean when from the Cross He exclaimed, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). How could they not have known? He was guilty only of loving people. How could they be so blind? They were blind and Jesus had a forgiving spirit towards them. They really did not know what they were doing. If they had known that this Jesus was God's Messiah, they would have embraced Him rather than crucified Him.

Likewise, I believe that people really do make the best choices available to them at the time. And, people includes you. Those times that you behaved in a manner below your expectations indicate your humanity. You did the best you could in those circumstances. Isn't it logical? Who would knowingly make a choice detrimental to their welfare? Consider the people in your life. Realizing that they are making the best choice that they presently have available to them will revolutionize your relationships.

The fact that people (including you) behave in accordance to the best choices available implies forgiveness. What will holding this belief do for your family life? What will be the result of your practicing this presupposition in all areas of your life? In communicating with the significant others in your life, try giving them more choices. They will love you for it. And this brings us to the next presupposition.

11. All communication should increase choice.

Jesus was the eminent choice giver. The Woman at the Well in John 4 is illustrative of our Lord's ability to increase choice. Her choices in life indicated a woman who was desperate for love and meaning in life. Numerous adulterous affairs pointed to much inward pain. Then she met Jesus. He gave her the choice of drinking from a well that never ran dry. He did not force Himself on her. He just offered her a drink. And she chose to drink of His Living Water.

Jesus' encounter with the Rich Young Ruler is an encounter of increasing choices.^[15] Until the young man met Jesus, he limited himself to living life in accordance to tradition and wealth. He asked Jesus what he was to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus spoke to him concerning five of the Ten Commandments. He readily answered that he kept those. Then Jesus increased his choices by introducing him to the possibility of giving up his idol (wealth) in order to follow Him. The author summarizes his choice: "But when he had heard these things, he became very sad; for he was extremely rich" (Luke 18:23). Our Lord always tried to expand the horizons of people He confronted. The Rich Young Ruler had an excellent opportunity. Yet, he chose to remain the same. The point being, Jesus communicated choice. How much choice does your communication give to the people in your life?

12. Every behavior is useful in some context.

I am not saying that every behavior is the correct behavior. Nor, am I saying that every behavior is righteous behavior. I am saying that within the context of the person performing the behavior, the behavior is fulfilling some need of the individual. For example, we certainly would not say that the adulteries of the Woman at the Well in John 4 were correct behavior. However, for the woman, the behaviors were useful. Her adultery was fulfilling some need. Then she met Jesus and her needs changed and her behavior changed. Likewise, you may disagree with the behavior of those in your life. Remember, that behavior is fulfilling some need. You would be wise and a more effective communicator to discover what need that behavior is fulfilling.

In NLP we believe that all behavior has behind it a positive intent. This is another way of stating that every behavior is useful in some context. Again, let me emphasize that I am not saying that every behavior is without sin. I am only saying that at the time the person did the behavior, that person was doing the best they could with the resources they had. Their intent at the time for themselves was positive based on their ability at that time. In working with people, discover what the intent behind the behavior is. Only when you discover and satisfy this intent will you be able to bring about change. NLP provides the necessary language patterns and techniques to satisfy the positive intent of unwanted behaviors in a more Christlike manner.

3. A person's behavior is not who they are.

Presupposition number three states that the meaning of communication is the response you get. Another way of saying this is that the most important information about a person is that person's behavior. Now I am saying that a person's behavior is not who they are. On the surface these may sound contradictory. However, we must realize that a particular behavior is a particular action by an individual at a particular time. In another situation or another time the person could very well behave differently. Behavior is, therefore, contextual. In another context, behavior may change drastically. We make many mistakes in our relationships by equating a person's worth by a particular behavior. Our Lord could accept the person and then change the behavior. Jesus saw in people more than they saw in themselves. Our example of the Woman at the Well is an excellent illustration of how our Lord could accept a person without accepting their behavior. Notice that He did not preach to the woman condemning her because of her sin. He tactfully and lovingly led her to the Living Water.

The Biblical doctrines of Salvation and Sanctification speak clearly that people can and do change. In our relationships with others, should we not model our communication after that of Christ? He took people from where they were to where they could go. He accepted sinful behavior as a cry for help. In our relationships, let's use love in our communication to go to the root of behavior. When people are acting in a manner that troubles us, they are crying out for help. By using tact, love and your communication skills, you can reach the need that the behavior is expressing.

14. Behavior and change are to be evaluated in terms of context and ecology.

In communicating and relating to people, this presupposition challenges us to be aware of the context of our conversation. And, we are to note the total system (individual, family, coworkers, etc.) involved in any desired changes we wish to make. Is the desired change congruent within the individual himself? Our Lord spoke of an unclean spirit leaving a man. After leaving, the evil spirit decides to return to the man. Upon returning, the evil spirit finds that the place is unoccupied:

Then it goes, and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they

go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. That is the way it will also be with this evil generation (Matthew 12:45).

Proper ecology for this person required that Jesus occupy the void.

A question the therapist must ask of the client is: "Is the desired change appropriate?" As a Christian therapist, I have had clients desire my assistance in helping them in the continuation of sinful behavior. For example, I am thinking of a client who desired to leave her husband and marry a younger man. Her husband did not abuse her. He loved their two children. He was active in church with his family. I could find no Biblical reason to justify her leaving him. I, therefore, could not assist the client in her desired outcome. My work with her consisted of a lot of spiritual reframes. She did leave her husband. I just recently received a letter from her. Her letter expressed hope of marital reconciliation. Her desired outcome violated spiritual ecology. I could not assist her in attaining this outcome. Also, as you work with people, you will discover that the human personality consists of a lot of parts. Each part of the individual must become an ecological part of the whole person for the change work to last. NLP provides the tools necessary in communicating with and bringing the Lord's healing to these unconscious parts or "bitter roots" as they are called in Hebrews 12:15.

Another question to ask is: "Is the change congruent with other people in the system?" All communication, behavior and change are to consider the person and the total system. In working with family systems, consider everyone in the family. Dr. Gene Rooney states: "The concept of Ecology refers to the concern that any changes made at one point in a human system must be compatible with and adaptable to the other parts of the system."^[16] NLP offers powerful tools for rapid change work. You can easily bring about changes in one marital partner that will confuse the other. Be sure that all persons in the system are part of the change work. And if you cannot get them all involved, be sure to warn those with whom you are working of the consequences to the total system. Thus, the choice to continue becomes theirs.

A scribe came to Jesus and asked Him, "What commandment is the foremost of all" (Mark 12:28)? To him Jesus replied:

"Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is this, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these. (Mark 12:29-31).

In this reply, Jesus summed up what it means to be Christian. As a Christian you have three loves: First, you love God foremost of all; second, you love your neighbor; and, third, you love yourself. The love (agapao) of which Jesus speaks is a love that is unconditional in its scope.

Our communications and change works should reflect this devotion to our Lord. It is not to stop there. Our communication and change work should reflect this same love and devotion to others and to ourselves. Until you love yourself, you will with difficulty love others. The love of God in the Cross of Christ gives you permission to love yourself and the power to love others, even your enemies. If it wasn't possible to love our enemies, our Lord would not have commanded it. Jesus says, "But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven..." (Matthew 5:44-45a).

As we carry this thought of ecology through love over into our relationships, we bring in a powerful tool for harmony through communication. Consider the Divine institution of marriage and this

presupposition. Paul commands husbands to "...love (agapate) your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25); The verb Paul chose is the same verb (agapao) our Lord chose in the Great Commandment. In this text it is a present tense in the imperative mood. Paul is commanding the husband to love the wife continually and unconditionally. God doesn't give the husband or the wife permission to love somebody else's wife or husband.

This reminds me of the story of the gentleman coming to his pastor with his marriage problems. He said, "Pastor, my wife isn't a good cook. I'm going to leave her." The pastor replied, "God says, 'Love your wife.'" The gentleman responded, "But pastor, you don't understand. She is lazy and a poor housekeeper." To this the pastor said, "God says, 'Husbands, love your wives.'" The man was becoming adamant. "Oh, but pastor," he charged. "She doesn't care about me. She works against everything I do." The pastor asked, "You mean to say that she is your enemy?" Thinking the pastor was finally coming around to his view, the man replied with joy, "Yes, pastor, she is my enemy." To this the pastor exclaimed, "God says, 'Love your enemies!'" In communication the Christian has only one option, love. To do so guarantees ecology.

15. Respect the other person's model of the world.

In the first presupposition we said that the map is not the territory. By this I simply mean that our internal representation of a certain event is not the event. Our internal representation is our concept of what the event is all about. Someone else could have seen the exact same event from a similar location and have a different internal representation of the same event. Policemen take this human reality into consideration when they interview witnesses to an accident or a crime scene

The internal representation that is unique to each represents that individual's model of that particular event. Each person processes information in his own unique way. For instance, one person may experience more emotion than another over a particular event. The other person may associate the event with distinct internal pictures. Another may code or store the event in their mind as internal sounds. Or, there could be any combination of feelings, pictures and/or sounds. Respecting the other person's neurology in recording and expressing events is to respect their model of the world. When you respect their model of the world, you respect the person and they will love you for it.

During the last twenty years of serving as a pastor, I have removed myself from helping many people. I really desired to help them. However, after one session, they did not want to see me again. What did I do to get such a response? The answer is simple. Rather than respecting their model of the world, I immediately started preaching to them. They would share some problem they were having that was obviously sinful behavior. I would immediately begin to apply Scripture passages that contradicted their behavior. I know that some Christian counselors believe in confrontational counseling of this nature. I used to believe in such techniques. I do not practice this any more. I listen sympathetically to their needs and problems. This does not mean I agree with them. You can respect another person's model of the world and not agree with it. Only after I get the intent behind the behavior do I resort to Scripture. Usually, the intent behind the behavior does not violate the Scriptures. By accepting their model of the world, I am able to establish rapport with them and begin serious change work. I agree with the principle of NLP that states that rapport is the first step to lasting change work. And, you will not establish rapport unless you respect the other person's model of the world.

Jesus always respected the other person's model of the world. Two blind men approached Jesus seeking healing. Jesus asked of them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" Their response was, "Yes, Lord." Then our Lord touched their eyes and said, "Be it done to you according to your faith." The Bible says, "Their eyes were opened" (Matthew 9:27-30a). The implication is clear. Jesus asked their permission before He healed them. Without their permission, He could not heal.

Our Lord respected their model of the world. His model was one of belief. When the model was unbelief, Jesus could not heal.^[171] Could we not say that a definition of faith would be to give Jesus permission to work in our lives? I think so.

Respecting the other person's model of the world is to submit to the other person. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote about the "Man for Others" in his classic, Cost of Discipleship. To respect the other person's model of the world is to submit to the other person. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus commands us to go the extra mile and to turn the other cheek.^[18] Respect for the other person's model of the world is an act of servanthood. It is an act of obedience. Any therapeutic intervention requires respect for the client's model of the world.

16. Individual skills are a function of the development and sequencing of Representation Systems.

The Representation System comprises the five senses: Visual, Auditory (sounds), Kinesthetic (feelings), Olfactory (smell) and Gustatory (taste). NLP gives primary attention to the first three. They are the key ones for communication and change. Our minds not only take in information this way, but our minds also store information through the Representation System. For instance, what we see, we store as pictures; what we hear we store as sounds; and what we feel we store as emotions and feelings. In accessing these memories, we reverse the process. Much of NLP builds on the truths of these presuppositions.

Our Lord was aware of this as He used all three major Representation Systems in His teachings. In John 3:11 He uses all three: "Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak (auditory) that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen (visual); and you do not receive (kinesthetic) our witness."

King David expresses his devotion for God using the Representation System:^[19]

O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth (Gustatory) for thee, my flesh longeth (kinesthetic) for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To see (visual) thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen (visual) thee in the sanctuary. Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise (auditory) thee. Thus will I bless (auditory) thee while I live: I will lift up my hands (kinesthetic) in thy name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness (kinesthetic); and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips (auditory) (Psalm 63: 1-5).

This presupposition is extremely important. Knowledge of how humans receive, store, process and elicit information is crucial to rapport building and permanent change work.

17. People respond to their own internal maps.

The map is not the territory. However, our map is our perception of the territory. And it is from our perceptions that we respond. External information enters our minds through our Representation System (five senses). We filter this information through our internal neurological filters. Our neurological filters consist of our beliefs, values, attitudes, language, memories and other psychological filters. Our minds code this information as an internal representation in visual, auditory, kinesthetic, olfactory and/or gustatory or any combination. This internal representation is our Internal Map. Our internal representation interacts with our physiology and produces a state. Our internal state drives our behavior. Simply put, our perception is our projection (see figure 1). Our perception determines our actions. A wise man a long time ago said, "For as he thinks (reckons in his soul) within himself, so he is" (Proverbs 23: 7). It follows, therefore, if you wish to assist a person in changing, change their perception.

Our Lord was aware of this biological truth. One day Jesus came to the pool of Bethesda.^[20] This pool was unique. At certain times an angel of the Lord would stir the waters. The first sick person to enter the pool following the stirring received healing. Obviously, many sick people gathered at the pool. For, everyone desires to get well, don't they? At the pool Jesus found a man who had been sick for thirty-eight years. Jesus did not assume that the man wanted to get healed. Respecting his Internal Map of the world, Jesus asked him, "Do you wish to get well" (John 5:6b)? The man replied that he was unable to get into the healing pool. Someone always preceded him. From this, Jesus knew that the man's Internal Map desired healing. "Jesus said to him, 'Arise, take up your pallet, and walk.' And immediately the man became well, and took up his pallet and began to walk" (John 5:8-9). His Internal Map said, "I desire healing," and Jesus healed him

Our Internal Maps can be a blessing or a curse. As we read on in Chapter Five of John's Gospel, we learn just how much our internal perceptual maps can hinder us. Jesus healed the Lame Man by the Pool of Bethesda on a Sabbath Day.^[21] When the Jews saw the man healed and walking, one would think that they would be rejoicing with him. However, that is not the case. The internal maps of the Jew had "tradition" stamped all over them. Tradition was all they could understand. They were blind even to a phenomenal miracle performed by the Son of God. In verse fifteen the man told the Jews that it was Jesus who healed him. Instead of praising Jesus for healing the man, driven by their

traditional internal maps, the Jews persecuted Jesus. And in verse eighteen we read:

For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father (see verse 17), making Himself equal with God (John 5:18).

Their internal maps said, "You don't break the Sabbath Day!" And they responded to the only map they had.

David Seamands has written an excellent book entitled Healing for Damaged Emotions. In this book he tells of the work of the famous plastic surgeon, Dr. Maxwell Maltz. Dr. Maltz began to notice that many patients experienced the same personality problems after surgery as before. Even though his surgery dramatically improved their appearance, they still saw themselves as being ugly.^[22]

How could someone have obvious physiological changes made to their face through plastic surgery and be blind to the change? Everyone else noted the improvements in their appearance. Yet, the individual would insist there were no changes. You know the answer. Though externally their faces were different, their internal maps remained the same. And it is the internal maps that control perception and projection.

You respond to your Internal Map. It is the only one you have. Your spouse responds to his/her own internal map, not yours. Your children respond to their own internal maps. Everyone does the same thing. We all respond to our own internal maps. Before response changes, the internal map must change. To assist a person in changing, we must be flexible enough in communication to bring about perceptual changes within that person. The rapport building skills, communication skills and change techniques taught in NLP are valuable tools in understanding your own map and changing it. Also, these same tools will enable us to determine the other person's map. And, once we understand their map, we can communicate with and bring positive changes to their map.

18. The mind and body affect each other.

More and more, the medical community is beginning to accept that the mind and body are one. How else is the "placebo effect" explained? For years medical doctors have substituted sugar pills for supposedly true medication. Many times the patients got well from taking the sugar pills. Recent studies indicate that a person's belief about a particular medication determines to a great deal the effectiveness of that medication. As a therapist, I know that in order for me to help a client, the client must believe that I can help him. And, I must believe that I can help the client.

When Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane agonizing before the Cross, the Bible says, "And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground" (Luke 22:44). I am of the opinion that the spiritual and mental stress of facing Calvary caused our Lord's body to literally ooze blood. Many of the Psalms depict the connection of the mind and body. Consider Psalm 22 which depicts the Psalmist's cry of anguish and its effect on his physiology:

I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It is melted within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And my tongue cleaves to my jaws; and Thou dost lay me in the dust of death. (Psalm 22:14-15)

The deep seated depression and the subsequent effect on the Psalmist's physiology leap from these verses. Instead of saying our "bones are out of joint," we would say, "I feel fragmented." Instead of "My heart is like wax." We would say, "My heart hurts." Or, "My heart is heavy." Or, sometimes you hear, "My heart is weak." All such sayings are but verbal expressions of how our minds are making us feel. Where is your emotional pain located in your body? In what body organ are you now feeling your emotional pain? That could very well be the next locus of illness or surgery. Many physical illnesses are traceable to emotional stress. Ulcers, ulcerated colitis, migraine headaches, arthritis, asthma, allergies and even cancer have had emotional connections. In my own therapy practice, I have known people with stomach problems, high blood pressure, headaches and skin lesions have their problems disappear once healing of emotional problems took place.

One of the exciting happenings in modern medical research today is the connection between the mind and body. We have roughly one hundred billion individual nerve cells within our bodies. Most of these nerve cells are in the brain. Each of our one hundred billion neurons connect to at least one thousand others. Importantly, connections between nerve cells are not physical. That is, they are not directly and mechanically attached to one another like electrical wires. Paul A. Goodwin, PH. D., a neurophysicist explains this connection:

...they connect neurochemically, through a device known as a synapse--actually just a very small gap between adjacent neurons, the gap being architecturally supported by other cells, known as glial cells. Within these synaptic connections, different neurochemicals are used to communicate, transmit an electrical nerve impulse from one neuron to another. So far, about sixty different neurochemical transmitters have been identified that serve the purpose of communication between neurons. ^[23]

The nerve cell synapse has receptor molecules that either permit or do not permit the neurotransmitters to enter the nerve cell and communicate information. Dr. Goodwin uses the analogy of a lock and a key. The receptor molecules are like keyholes that permit or do not permit the neurotransmitter entrance. The pain killing drug acetaminophen (Tylenol™) and other similar drugs work due to this process. Acetaminophen serves to plug up certain receptor molecules (keyholes). This "plugging" prohibits the entrance of the neurotransmitter into the nerve cell. Thus,

the nerve cell will fire less than it normally would. As a result of a decrease in the firing of the nerve cell, there is less pain.

Neurotransmitters are primarily in the brain. However, you will find them throughout the body. Dr. Goodwin makes a profound deduction from this that should be of utmost interest to all Bible students:

Exploring the implications of this point further, we find that transmitter molecules normally associated with the brain are also produced by various parts of the body. For example, the adrenal gland produces dopamine-like hormones that can be utilized by the brain. This finding recently led to a potentially effective treatment for Parkinson's disease. Other normally brain-related transmitter-receptor molecular complexes have been found to make up the walls of certain cells in the immune system. These findings all tend to establish a strong chemical communication relationship between the body, the brain and, indeed the *mind*. Since the immune system is involved, can it be that the body can be cured of an illness through the medium of the brain just by one's *belief* that it can be done? The answer to this question seems to be a qualified "Yes," as is indicated by many documented instances of spiritual healing as well as by clinical evidence regarding the placebo effect. ^[24]

Through a simple experiment, you can experience the mind-body connection. Give yourself a big smile. Do you feel the good feeling in your head? Keep the good feeling in your head and stop smiling. Now move the good feeling down to your neck. Next, move the good feeling into your chest. Now, move that feeling down to your stomach and bathe your stomach and abdominal area with this feeling. How does it feel to smile literally down on yourself? How is it possible for your body to respond in such a manner? The answer must be through neurotransmitters.

Such discoveries are a gold mine of opportunity for the Church. To the father of the boy possessed of the demon who desired healing for his son, Jesus said, "...All things are possible to him who believes" (Mark 9:23b). We know that Jesus healed only when there was belief. Belief was a prerequisite for the answering of prayer:

And Jesus answered and said to them, "Truly I say to you, if you have faith, and do not doubt, you shall not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' it shall happen. And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive" (Matthew 21:21-22).

And, belief is essential to salvation: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). When our internal maps reflect belief, our bodies respond with healing. When our internal maps reflect belief, God can answer our prayers. When our internal maps believe in Jesus, God responds with salvation.

19. Human beings are capable of one trial learning.

When God made the human mind, He made a marvelous organ. It is amazing how rapid the mind can learn. For example, someone may have thrown you into the water when you were young. Ever since then you remember to experience fear at the very thought of water. Such learnings take place when the emotional level is high.

Jesus spoke about one trial learnings. To Nicodemus Jesus said, "...You must be born again" (John 3:7a). The infinitive "be born" is gennethenai and is aorist passive. Aorist means it is past tense. I understand this to be a single event in the past. And passive means that it happens outside of

Nicodemus. The word again is anōthen and could translate as "anew," "again" or "from above." Paul confirms this interpretation in several places. Consider his statement to the Ephesians:

In Him (Jesus), you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation--having also believed you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise (Ephesians 1:13).

The verbs "believed" and "were sealed" are aorist verbs. Paul is referring to a particular event in the past. Millions testify of that one experience in life when they passed from darkness to light. Now, I am not necessarily saying that you must have a one time experience in order to be a Christian. Billy Graham's wife, Ruth, says she does not remember a single life changing experience. She says that she has always been a Christian. However, the Bible certainly indicates that one time experiences do happen that radically redirects life. Consider Paul's experience on the Damascus road.

I was ten years old when during a revival meeting in Rutherford Baptist Church, Boone, North Carolina, I was "born again." That one trial learning transformed my entire life. I have never forgotten it. I have had other events in my life of "one trial learnings." Following years of living outside God's will, with deep emotion my Heavenly Father accepted the Prodigal back home at Grace Baptist Church, Gastonia, N. C. I will never forget that experience. I doubt if Peter ever forgot walking on water or the time he denied Jesus. Yes, the human mind is capable of "one trial learning." NLP provides the technology in utilizing this ability of the human mind to bring about permanent and deep change. Indeed, in NLP we believe the quicker the change the better.

[1] L. Michael Hall, Ph. D. and Carl Lloyd, Ph.D. *NLP Neuro-Linguistic Programming and the New Age Movement From a Judeo-Christian Perspective*, page 7. I highly recommend this booklet for anyone who has a question concerning whether or not NLP is "New Age." You can write Michael at Empowerment Technologies 1904 North 7th Street, Grand Junction, CO 81501-7418. The cost of the booklet is \$1.00. Or you can find it on our web site at <http://www.neurosemantics.com> under the "Christian" button.

[2] Michael Hall, *Ibid*, p. 10.

[3] I am indebted to John Overdurf and Julia Silverthorn of NeuroEnergetics for the form of this languaging.

[4] See John 9:1ff.

[5] Ephesians 2:14)

[6] A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. 1 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1930), p. 103.

^[7]William Barclay, The Gospel of Matthew, Vol 2 in The Daily Study Bible Series (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957), P.72.

^[8]J. Behm and E. Wurthwein, "Nous in the New Testament," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. 4, ed by Gerhard Kittel, trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. b. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), p. 958.

^[9]Richard Bandler, Using Your Brain for a Change (Moab: Real People Press, 1985), pp. 7-8.

^[10]See I Corinthians 2:15-16.

^[11]See John 14:12-17.

^[12]William F. Arndt and Wilbur Gingrich, eds., A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 263.

^[13]John and Paula Sandford, The Transformation of the Inner Man (Tulsa: Victory House, Inc., 1982), p. 83.

^[14]See Tad James, "An Introduction to NLP," in The Basic NLP Training Collection (Honolulu: Advanced Neuro Dynamics, 1990), Tape 1.

^[15]Luke 18:18-30.

^[16]E. Gene Rooney, Neuro-Linguistic Skills for Communication and Change, Level IV (Reynoldsburg: L.E.A.D. Consultants, Inc., 1986), p. 1.

^[17]See Matthew 13:53-58.

^[18]See Matthew 5:38-42.

^[19]Michael Hall, "NLP Presuppositions in the Bible," Anchor Point, Vol. 3, No. 6. June, 1989, pp. 1-2.

^[20]John 5:1-9

^[21]See John 5:9b-18.

^[22]See David A. Seamands, Healing for Damaged Emotions (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1988), pp. 58-59.

^[23]Paul A. Goodwin, Ph. D., Foundation Theory: Report on the Efficacy of the Formal Education Process in Rural Alaska (Honolulu: Advanced Neuro Dynamics Corporation, 1988), p.24.

^[24] Ibid., p. 33.

Learn More About Neuro-Linguistic Programming and Neuro-Semantics® at
[The Institute of Neuro-Semantics](#)

©1997 by Bobby G. Bodenhamer All rights reserved.