

**Excerpts from Chapter 4 of Counseling to Faith: Volume II - He Restores My Soul**

**Application Example of a Drug and Alcohol Treatment Program That Used the Parable of the Sower Model in Its Design**

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**Wisdom of the Parable of the Sower**

“Do you not understand this parable? And how will you understand all the parables?” (Mk. 4:13).

“His disciples asked him what this parable meant. He said, ‘To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God’” (Lk 8:9-10)

“My son, if you will receive my sayings, and treasure my commandments within you, make your ear attentive to wisdom, incline your heart to understanding; For if you cry for discernment, lift your voice for understanding; If you seek her as silver, and search for her as hidden treasures; Then you will discern the fear of the Lord, and discover the knowledge of God.” Proverbs 2:1-5

For all of my 31 years as a Clinical Director/ Treatment Manager of two separate Drug and Alcohol inpatient programs, the treatment philosophy's foundation was the Therapeutic Community Model of Treatment (TC Model). This treatment model has many distinguishing characteristics that separate it from the other models used in the majority of D&A programs. In this book I will highlight many of these distinguishing characteristics because I believe it is the model that is the closest overall to Biblical principles. For now, as an example, I want to address this model's view of the disorder of Substance Abuse/Addiction. In his text book Concepts of Chemical Dependency Harold Doweiko quotes DeLeon, who is an expert and spokesman for therapeutic communities. “One central tenet of the TC model is ‘perspective of drug abuse as a whole person disorder.’” (Doweiko, 2002). **In Counseling To Faith Volume I – Learning the Ways of the Wonderful Counselor, I mentioned that when I set up the Therapeutic Community in a woman's prison, without being conscious of it at the time, I established the three phases of treatment according to my understanding of the three damaged soils/ souls in the Parable of the Sower.** My professional assessment is that God's Word and scientific research both validate this treatment protocol. I am presenting the program's treatment objectives here because it will give you a frame of reference for the rest of this book, where I present my assessment of God's treatment objectives and protocols for each of the damaged soils. When I started the Inpatient program at SCI-Muncy in 1992, Phase I of the program addressed the dynamics of the Hardened Soil/ Soul, Phase II addressed the dynamics of the Rocky Soil/Soul and Phase III addressed the dynamics of the Thorny Soil/Soul. Now I want to explain what I meant by this.

## PHASE I–2 Months

Jesus comments about the “hardened soil/soul” are in Mark 4:4 and 15. Verse 4 says, "as he was sowing, some seed fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate it up." Verse 15 is the interpretation. "And these are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown: and when they hear immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them." **The “soil beside the road” represents people who hear the Word, but do not understand with it their mind, because they make a decision with their wills to reject it and their emotions are hardened to its truth. They then justify their position with self-deception.**

Phase I of the program addressed the following treatment targets. The participant in the treatment program will:

- Identify and begin to neutralize their major forms of self-deception that hinder their ability to see clearly both the problem and solution. (Dishonest Mind)

- Consider the cost of their substance abuse on themselves and others. (Dishonest Mind and Hardened Emotions)
- Establish a pattern of behavioral compliance to the rules and norms of the program. (Self Will, rebellious)
- Identify and begin to positively manage their major self-defeating behavior patterns. (Will, Mind and Emotions)

Notice that all three of the Hardened Soul's disorders of the soul are addressed. They are self-deception, hardened/deadened in their emotions regarding the consequences of their behavior and their self-will of trying to do "life their way" according to their rules.

## PHASE II-3 Months

Jesus comments about the "Rocky soil/soul" are recorded in Mark 4:5-6 and 16-17. "And other seed fell on the rocky ground where it did not have much soil; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil." "And in a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away." **In this Rocky Soul condition, the person with a decision of their will, accepts God and His truth but under times of persecution and pressure they "fall away". Notice that two of the three faculties of the soul are referred to and they are the mind and the will which the person used to attempt to stand fast in God's truth. The only faculty of the soul not identified as being aligned with God is the emotions which by the process of elimination must be the problem. Persecution and pressure have a way of squeezing our unresolved issues to the surface. My conclusion is that in this soil/soul sorrowful memories and emotions come in like a flood to drown their joy and faith and as much as they might exert their willpower and their mind, they cannot recapture their faith and joy.**

Most of the individuals in treatment have some unresolved emotional issues that are potential roadblocks to their recovery from Substance Abuse/Addiction. Life is full of hurts and sorrows and there are at least two factors that intensify this for most individuals that I have seen in treatment. One is that many of these people were wounded early in life, and the other is that the life of a person who abuses substances is usually a dangerous one and therefore a traumatic one, and because of this, they probably have accumulated more emotional life trauma along the way than the average person. For many of them, drug and alcohol use had become an artificial coping mechanism for dealing with their emotions. They were either never taught how to walk through the emotional healing process or they knew how to walk through the healing process but decided to try the easy way of taking a substance to relieve the pain. This issue is a major factor in the individual's attempted recovery from Substance Abuse/Addiction, because these unresolved feelings and memories sting them like a swarm of

inter-psychic hornets that trigger feelings of anxiety, fear, anger and depression. These hornet attacks frequently trigger cravings to use drug or alcohol as a way to self-medicate themselves in an attempt to cope with these feelings. If the stinging hornets don't lead to Substance Abuse they can frequently lead to being "frozen" in anxiety and inaction, immobilized and unable to move toward the solution of their life problem. With this issue in mind, the following targets were addressed in Phase II. The participant in the treatment program will:

- **Increase their Emotional IQ by being able to identify feelings and manage them in productive ways.** If they are successful at mastering this step, they can minimize the spawning of emotion-generated cravings to use drug and alcohol and other emotion driven self-destructive behavior.
- **Identify traumatic issues that threaten their recovery attempt.** Traumatic issues from the past can create problems when they are remembered and the person gets swallowed up in painful memories and emotions.
- **Practice healthy coping mechanisms when they are triggered into experiencing cravings for drugs or alcohol, because of past traumatic memories and associated feelings.** There numerous healthy coping mechanisms available to individuals when they are experiencing cravings to use drugs and alcohol, such as sharing their pain in supportive relationships.
- **Make a long-term plan to resolve the trauma and if appropriate begin the process of resolution in treatment.** For most individuals the resolution of major trauma does not occur in their initial treatment. The power of these issues may overload the individual while they are initially trying to establish a drug-free lifestyle. In a six month inpatient program it is possible to begin to resolve these issues.

The above treatment targets addressed the dynamics for Rocky Soul. In Phase I, they addressed their self-will and self-deception. In Phase II, they are now learning to manage unresolved emotions by not letting those feelings lead them back to old patterns of drug use or to acting out in other self-destructive behaviors.

## PHASE III–1 month

Jesus comments about the "Thorny soil/soul" are recorded in Mark 4:7 and verses 18 and 19, " And other seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop." "And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, and the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word and it becomes unfruitful." **In summary, the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come to choke our faith when we do not maintain the constant vigilance necessary to pull out these weeds from the garden of our soul.** We live in this world, so coming into contact with these thorns of distraction are inevitable; however, in the midst of them we need to keep our relationship with Jesus strong by giving proper attention to Him and His Word. Spirit-led

self-awareness, self-discipline and a lot of work are necessary to not be overcome by these thorns. The thorny soul is an undisciplined soul who is easily distracted from keeping “their eyes on Jesus.” Phase III targets are as follows. The participant in the treatment program will:

- **Integrate what they learned and practiced in the first two phases of treatment into a sustainable lifestyle pace.** (practice discipline to stay focused on recovery). The first two phases of treatment were very intense and were not meant to be the individual’s long-term pace of recovery. At this point in treatment, the individual must adjust their pace and transition themselves into a sustainable lifestyle of recovery.
- **Develop an aftercare plan.** This aftercare plan included both professional follow-up and self-help/peer support. It also addresses all of the significant recovery practices that were established in the first two phases of treatment and included the unfinished pieces of treatment like unresolved trauma issues that were identified in Phase II.

Thorny Souls are characterized by being undisciplined. Phase III of treatment is the phase in which the individual must establish a disciplined lifestyle in order to practice the skills of recovery in a daily routine and a sustainable pace.

## ORDER SEQUENCE

The order sequence of soils/souls addressed in the treatment program above—Hardened Soul, then Rocky Soul, then Thorny soul is significant. I have found that addressing the issues in a person’s life according to the sequence of the soils presented in the Parable of the Sower is often the most effective way to approach them and I believe research has proven this to be true. This is important because, if you try to address someone’s emotional wounds (Rocky Soul) before they neutralize their self-deception, self-will, and bitter emotions (Hardened Soul), their work on an emotional issue can easily turn to self-pity and deepen their unhealthy self-deception of the “victim’s stance”. If this happens, any attempt to work on their emotional wound feeds into their anger and self-deception to justify their self-destructive behavior and makes them worse. Similarly, if self-discipline as the sole method (Phase III—Thorny Soil) is pushed before traumatic/painful unresolved emotions are managed, then self-condemnation or hopelessness can be the result. When emotional pain takes hold of them and they get frozen in feelings of depression or anger and they can’t muster up enough self-will to push through it, guilt, self-condemnation or hopelessness could be the result because they keep failing using self-discipline alone.

## SUMMARY

This example of the treatment program I set up according to the principles of the Parable of the Sower was a general template for treatment. In addition, for the purposes of this book I have just presented to you a treatment outline. In the real world, clinical

wisdom is needed to make appropriate adjustments accordingly and generally not all the needed work can always be done in the same treatment setting. It is easier to accomplish these objectives in a long term six month Therapeutic Community; however, these targets help to establish an overall “big picture” of what treatment and programs of recovery are trying to accomplish in the long term. This review of the Phases of Treatment is intended to help give you a tangible picture of how these dynamics of the soils described in the Parable of the Sower were used in secular Substance Abuse/ Addiction Therapeutic Community Treatment Program. It is my heart passion that these principles become more intentionally engrained into the everyday life of our Christian culture to include the church activities. We all need recovery in some way and our private and church life need to incorporate these principles. I hope that after reading this summary of chapter four of this book, you have a deeper appreciation for Psalm 23:3 where it states that, “He restores my soul,” and how this restoration covers all three aspects of the soul including the intellect, emotions and will/volition. The remainder of this book will be an elaboration of the treatment objective protocols that I have identified in the Bible for each of the three unproductive/damaged soils/souls. To end this chapter, I believe it would be helpful to review the table below that reiterates the dynamics of the four soils/souls.

	Beside The Path	Rocky Places	Soil Full of Thorns	Good Soil
<b>Spirit</b>	Weak, Running from Truth	Aware But Weak	Strong Moments, but mostly Weak	Self-Aware and Strong
<b>Soul</b>				
<b>Will</b>	Prideful, Self-Will, Rebellious	Surrendered to God and His Word, but Weak	Undisciplined, Wandering, Distracted	Surrendered, Committed, Focused
<b>Emotions</b>	Bitter, Angry, Hardened, Dull/ Deadened	Changeable with Painful Emotions and Memories	Fear Breakouts, Lust/Desires	Motivated by Heart Emotions of God
<b>Mind</b>	Avoidant of the Truth, Deliberately Dishonest, Emotional Blind Spots	Recognizes God's Truth, but thought process is clouded by emotions, and/ or has Blind Spots Caused by unresolved emotions	Recognizes God's Truth, but Distracted and Sidetracked	Renewed Mind and Trained to Think in the Ways of God
<b>Overall Soul Theme</b>	Rebellious, self as god	Emotionally Wounded	Undisciplined	Single-minded and focused on the Lord and His Word.

1. Harold E. Doweiko, Concepts of Chemical Dependency, Brooks/Cole 2002, 356