

"Grace Notes"

from Monty Knight's *Notes of a Pastoral Counselor: Reflections across Half a Century* (Wipf and Stock 2024)

Who or what defines you, i.e. tells you who you are and what you're worth?

It's like a rubberband—when you're an adult and your anxiety is provoked—and you feel like a kid in overwhelming circumstances that were unreasonable, or even unfair.

The Bible is written backwards. It's not a science nor a law book. The Bible is a love story.

Addiction: when enough never is.

Helpful counseling is creating a safe space for patients to face what they're most afraid of.

Being a minister has more to do with being than with doing; it's who you are, not what or where you do it.

For an alcoholic, one drink is too many and a dozen aren't enough.

The most important word in the Bible is **charis** (Greek for grace); it's the root word for *charis-ma* (gift) and *eu-charist* (gratitude/thanksgiving).

More concrete thinkers prefer the right box to put anything-- even people--to put what or whomever inside.

No one comes to counseling alone; they always bring others along, whether the others are physically present or not.

"Works righteousness" is the worst sin in the New Testament.

Most things tragic are terrible, but not everything terrible is tragic.

Alcoholics don't drink because they're thirsty, any more than food addicts eat because they're hungry, or a retail addict goes shopping for another pair of shoes in a closet already too full.

God doesn't exist; God is. And because God is, we are.

Everyone is grieving something or someone: what they've lost or needed/wanted, but didn't get.

In Christian theology and ethics, good is absolute; evil is relative. Evil is always a distortion of what is good, what C.S. Lewis called “spoiled goodness.”

Anxiety is to emotional medicine what pathogens (bacteria and viruses) are to physical medicine.

A secular marriage is for getting; a Christian marriage, for giving.

The most important ethical principle for a counselor is to not collude with the pathology in the person/system.

Emotional, even social pathogens are non-self-regulating. Getting rid of them is like getting rid of germs or viruses. You can't. Instead, you have to develop a stronger, more effective emotional immunological response in relation to such bullies.

Monotheism reflects a more integrated, congruent psychological projection; polytheism, the projection of a more fragmented, dis-integrated self.

The Bible word for spiritual is breathing; psychology comes from the Bible's word for soul.

There are only four moral issues in marriage: dishonesty, violence, addiction and negativity. Addiction isn't a moral issue—it's an illness. But when you're addicted to what or whomever, you have to lie, cheat and steal—too often to and/or from yourself.

The hardest person to tell the truth to is first and finally ourselves; it's not unlike who's the hardest person to forgive.

Forgiveness is more for ourselves than anyone else.

Healthier people are more self-aware. Which requires one to become, psychologically, better integrated and congruent, i.e to embrace both the positives and the negatives in ourselves and our lives.

Loss, failure, disappointment—even trauma—is not meant to define us.

Secular religion is conditional and competitive; in Christian faith, worth/value is unconditionally given, not earned. It is not meant to be achieved, but merely expressed.

Addiction reveals more shame than pride, more fear than confidence.

Whatever we're trying to run from is running us; whatever we own—psychologically (morally and spiritually)—stops owning us.

How did Jesus put it? That only truth-telling can free us.

Which is harder? To not take yourself too seriously? Or to take yourself seriously enough?

Neurotic people are pleasers who most fear failure, even making a mistake.

When a muscle tightens too soon, it compromises and impairs the golf swing. This is not unlike what happens to counselors when their anxiety is provoked. That's when they stop being helpful.

At its worst, what is tragic is when even your best option is still bad; at its best, when your decision to not hurt whomever can still be hurtful.

Everyone who seeks counseling is wearing a T-shirt. On the front it says, "Help me." On the back, "But I'm not going to let you!"

Obsessions and compulsions are like addictions: you can't get rid of them; you have to replace them with healthier, more constructive than destructive options.

Neurotic people take too much responsibility for others; people with a personality disorder are professional victims and blamers.

Good counselors co-opt their patients' defenses. The best counselors help patients face and come out from behind their own defenses.

To worry about someone is to scare them.

Children are great observers, but poor interpreters, i.e. kids get it wrong.

When you don't understand irony, it's like missing the forest for the trees, or thinking you have your hand in God's, when what you merely have instead is God's hand in your own.

Figurative language is just as truth-full as language that is literal—just in a different way.

"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgement you pronounce, so are you being judged." No, those are not the words of a modern psychologist describing projection.

God doesn't judge or condemn; God is unconditional acceptance. Rather, we fallen folk project our damaged, broken selves on to an image of God that looks too much like us.

In healthier relationships, being responsible to is more important than being responsible for.

A part is not all of whomever.

Life is both a gift to celebrate and be thankful for and a problem to solve. And if you don't do both, you'll likely do neither.

Some problems are like mysteries—they're less to be solved and more to be merely entered into.

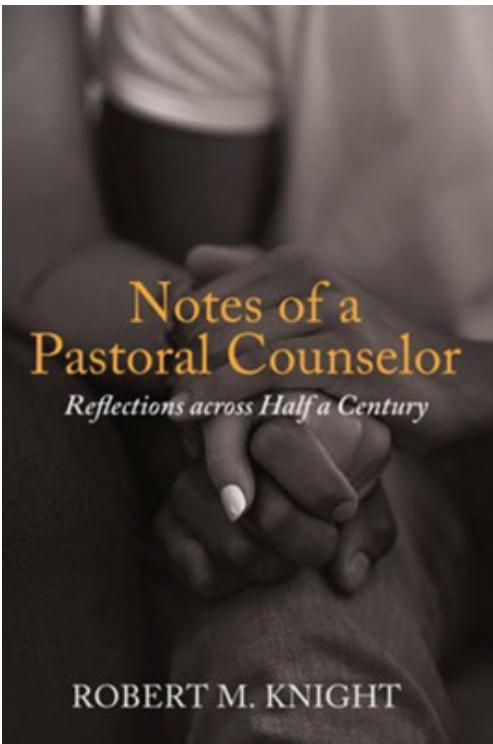
Even just wanting someone else to change merely provokes their defensiveness; the only one any of us can change is ourselves.

Likely the most important thing any of us can do for anyone is to get and keep ourselves out of a Victim posture.

When whatever provokes our anxiety: spot it quicker, stop it sooner and don't over-escalate the drama.

Winners define their circumstances; losers are too defined by their circumstances.

Not believing in God is not as much of a problem as whatever the kind of god you do or don't believe in.



**FOR MORE
INFORMATION
CHECK OUT
OUR WEBSITE**



www.drmontyknightcounseling.com