

CRAZY FOLK

Theresa, who lives almost a thousand miles from Louisiana, telephoned me. (*For years, I have been her spiritual 'big sister'.*) She was alarmed: "Barbara, I am scared! I think I'm going to lose my mind!" Because I was familiar with Theresa's many serious trials, I was empathetic to her. But, I wanted to steer her away from worrying about her mind. (2 Tim. 1:7)

I said, "Theresa, go on and lose your mind. You are not famous! If you go crazy, it is not going to make the 6 o'clock news!" She laughed at how I spoke. I continued: "If you lose your mind, when you get it back, the people who loved you before, will love you afterward!" She said, "Barbara, you are so funny!" I said, "Go ahead and laugh, laughter is good for you. Crazy people are always laughing; and I don't think they do much worrying." She said, "I feel much better." I said, "That's good; and there's nothing wrong with your mind. Put on the 'whole armor' of God, okay?" She agreed, and we hung up. **No intent to belittle mental illness. I spoke what occurred to me to say at that time. She had really been troubled and previous calls had created costly phone bills. I didn't need to 'hold her hand' this time.*

One Sunday morning I was preparing to leave for church service when Carlana, an attorney friend, telephoned. Since she was distressed, I skipped morning service, and attended church that night. (I have a conviction about not "passing by on the other side" of anyone - see Luke 10: 30-34.)

Carlana had been depressed for a long time, although she taught Sunday school for many years. Carlana is analytical, like me. Unlike me, she was cynical about God

when her marriage and financial circumstances declined. She cried and talked about her fear of losing her mind, the six-figure annual income she no longer earned, and the bills she couldn't pay. I pleaded with her to view her troubles as opportunities to trust the God whom she taught others about. It was not easy to get through to her. Ultimately, I told her that genuine happiness is not the absence of sorrows, but the presence of God. We ended the call after she promised that she would have a serious talk with her pastor.

Aside from services at my church in New Orleans, I was formerly active in local missionary work at churches. At one particular church class, the Bible discussion derived from Mark, chapter 5. However, someone brought up an incident when an inebriated man came to their church. Then, others commented how 'crazy' the man acted, and how he made a scene at the altar. I asked what became of the man? They said they put him outside. That bothered me! I managed to point out that just like all of us, the man still needed deliverance from something; and that man was like the man in Mark chapter 5. Their response was that they hadn't realized it, and they expressed regrets.

Theresa and Carlana (*not their real names*) feared loss of their minds. The man who was at that church was perceived as out of his. Going crazy / being crazy stirs a detested situation.

Nowadays, it's more common to hear about concern for losing one's mind, than concern about losing one's life (*not to mention one's soul -Mark 8:36*). Justifiably, Theresa and Carlana were concerned about the degradation and social stigma assigned to people who are perceived as "mental" or "crazy."

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CONFIDENCE

The dictionary defines confidence as belief in the powers, trustworthiness, or reliability of a person or thing. Antonyms of confidence are distrust, uncertainty, and doubt. Books as well as seminars abound to teach confidence. Advice on the worldwide web tells people to: write down your skills and qualities so you can feel good about yourself, have an attitude of certainty, act confident, believe in yourself, hold your head up, be sincere.

Some people want to be confident because they believe it is simply a good feature to possess; and some who display calmness are perceived as confident, but perhaps they're not. Some people who speak with authority may or may not be confident about what they convey. Still, others are confident because of their social status or financial ease; because of good skills, ability to pull themselves up by the boot straps, education, family ties, because they have good dental and medical insurance; shop at the finest places, have burglar bars and security systems on their homes; because they can 'hold their liquor'; and others feel confident because they have quality homeowners' and flood insurance.

Genuine confidence invigorates the psyche; and it ought to be anchored to a solid structure. A prominent reason why confidence is worthwhile having is because it undergirds our major, as well as minor life pursuits and achievements. (*Example: Considering the current economy, we may need to learn to sew our own clothing or begin our own produce garden; or for our health, we may need to begin an exercise regiment; for the good of the universe, we may need to increase neighborly love or be more personally disciplined; for our hearts, we may need a closer walk with God.*)

For the most part, confident people are

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