

Good Grief

FAITH VERSUS FREUD

Chuck Colson/Break Point
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The aftermath of the massacre at Columbine High School followed a predictable pattern: First came teams of police investigators. Then came the grief counselors, more than a hundred of them, ready to help the survivors deal with their anguish.

But as it turned out, the counselors had no one to counsel. Not because the kids weren't grieving, but because they were turning to a more effective grief counselor: the Church.

Take, for example, Patrick Simington. Like his schoolmates at Columbine High, Patrick was offered the services of professional grief counselors. But instead of talking to the counselors, Simington joined his friends at a memorial service at the Light of the World Roman Catholic Church, which has an active charismatic renewal movement. Four young members of that movement were lost in the massacre.

Patrick's mother told the *Washington Times* that what is really helping him get through this crisis "is his faith."

Well, Patrick isn't unique. Columbine student Lauren Johnson was encouraged by her parents to seek out a professional counselor. Instead, she turned to the staff at West Bowles Community Church—the home church of shooting victim Cassie Bernall. Johnson told reporters, "I just like it better this way." And she added, "It seemed like most of the kids from the school were there."

As the *Washington Times* notes, "Many Columbine students are bypassing offers of secular therapy and turning instead to their churches." Grief counselors wait in vain for kids to knock on their doors, while pastors and church youth leaders have been overwhelmed by kids, parents, and others coming for help. In one elementary school, officials had to force kids into the grief counseling.

As Chad Stafford, the pastor of the First Assembly of God Church in Denver explains, kids aren't wanting psychology at this time.... They want to know, "Why did this happen?" "Grief counseling may give kids information, he adds—"but we're able to give them guidance."

Stafford is right. The most that professional grief counselors can do is help people sort through their own feelings. As Linda Seebach of the *Rocky Mountain News* writes, the "grief work" model of counseling has its origins in Sigmund Freud's theory on the "work of mourning." Since followers of Freud rule out the possibility of life after death, their own task is to help people break their emotional ties to the departed, not to encourage hope or to answer questions.

The concept of “grief work” often includes venting any negative emotions associated with the loss—even to the point of expressing irrational anger at the departed.

If that’s the best grief counselors can offer, well, who can blame the kids of Littleton for saying “thanks, but no thanks?” They’re to be congratulated for searching out the hope that only faith in Christ can provide.

Remember, when Lazarus died, Jesus didn’t tell his sisters, “He’s dead, get over it,” or “Take your anger out on him.” He told them, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will never die.”

The fact that the kids in Littleton are putting their faith in the church instead of in the therapists is further proof that the image of God is in each one of us. We are made to seek the truth, and we can know no peace until we find it. The secular counseling and therapeutic profession may not like it, but the best they can offer is no substitute for the real thing.