

Stewardship of the Heart: 4-Part Educational Series

This psychoeducational series was developed by members of Intuitus Group Counseling Clinic, PLLC, and Independent Professionals, in Cedar Park, Texas, to address the needs of our community following local and international emergence of abuse by clergy. Abuse, within the frame of this class, includes any misuse or over-reach of power by a clergy person or ministry leader that crossed a significant boundary or violated the dignity of another person; this can include sexual abuse, while also including less criminal (though still damaging) abuse of power within faith communities.

Stewardship of the Heart has been presented in a closed-group format, in 4 parts of 75-90 minutes each. Meeting on 4 consecutive weeks is recommended.

Sharing of this material is done with the understanding that iterations of this group will be led with the influence and expertise of the clinician(s) presenting the material and facilitating the discussions. Material known to be directly sited from other sources is outlined as such; other material is a compilation of the learning, personal work, and expertise of members of Intuitus Group.

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Questions regarding the content and use of these materials may be directed to: admin@intuitus-group.com or Jennifer@intuitus-group.com

May God bless you and your work,

Intuitus Group

Cedar Park, TX

Stewardship of the Heart: 4-Part Educational Series

Attendee Agreement

Confidentiality Agreement: All information disclosed within class sessions *is confidential* and every attendee has a right to privacy of personal information shared. Confidentiality within a class setting is a shared responsibility of all members and leaders. Class leaders may not disclose any client communications or information, except when required by law. While class attendees' adherence to maintaining others' confidentiality is not protected, we ask all attendees to agree to uphold others' confidentiality in order to preserve mutual respect and trust within this setting.

_____ adheres to professional, legal and ethical guidelines in confidentiality established by professional organizations and law. Legal and ethical exceptions to confidentiality include: a clear or present danger to harm yourself or another, knowledge of the abuse or neglect of a minor child or incapacitated adult, or responses to a court room subpoena or as otherwise required by law.

As a member of this group, I agree to not disclose to anyone outside of group any information that may identify another group member. This includes, but is not limited to, names, physical descriptions, contact information, and specific communications discussed within the group setting.

By signing below, I indicate that I have read clearly the information above and have asked and had answered any questions or concerns I have regarding the Attendee Agreement. I also understand that this series is being offered for education and support services, and is not psychotherapy. I am aware that signing the Attendee Agreement is required for my admission into group and my refusal to sign is this Agreement will exclude me from participating in class sessions.

Printed Name

Signature

Date

Stewardship of the Heart

Outline for Session 1

Dynamics of Power & Abuse of Power

1. How did we get here? Psychological education of common experience (Narcissism)
 - a. What it looks like – taking 1-up position, rules don't apply, pedestal then criticism, etc
 - b. How others are affected – confusion, betrayal, try to regain connection/approval
 - c. Does it have a name - abuse
 - d. What's normal after experience? (Coping skills - healthy & unhealthy)
 - e. What is re-victimization
 - f. Not angry at the whole person, upset with his choices & actions
2. Passive Narcissism vs. Aggressive Narcissism
 - a. Narcissism = completely unaware of others' feelings, acutely aware of own feelings, needs
 - b. Passive - cannot take responsibility, protects self, blames others, wallows in self-pity, attached to his/her own woundedness,
 - c. Aggressive - maintains control, seeks to regain control if lost, threatens those that oppose, justifies bad behavior
 - d. Narcissism coupled with Grandiosity
 - i. The exalted status of the person creates a way for a grand victim to emerge (Aggressive Narcissist becomes passive Narcissist). When both are present in the individual, it inflates the victim status to ridiculous proportions, shifting focus away from victims to him/her self (the perpetrator). Not poor victims that were allegedly abused, but poor Father who is so good.
3. Questions for discussion or reflection
 - a. Is there something familiar here?
 - b. Have there been moments of 2nd-guessing self?
 - c. What hurts the most?
 - d. What are the strongest emotions that come up?
 - e. (Building up to self-care):
 - i. What are the current outlets for these emotions?
 - ii. Who is in your support circle?

How self-care and our image of God relate to this

1. God Concept vs. God Image
 - a. God Concept: a person's *cognitive* understanding of God
 - i. Generally developed through what one is taught about God and relates more to one's theology (e.g., God is all loving, all knowing, all powerful, etc).
 - b. God Image: a person's *experiential* understanding of God and how they relate to Him
 - i. Generally developed through one's relationship with his earthly father/parents or through one's relationship with a father figure (especially clergy)
2. One of the greatest lies that the enemy tricked Adam and Eve into believing is that God is not a good father.
3. How our image of God can become distorted through our unhealthy relationship experiences
 - a. Earthly father: can easily project our treatment from our earthly fathers onto God the Father, as fathers are meant to resemble and point to our Heavenly Father (e.g., punisher, distancer, soft, controlling, never there, etc.).
 - b. Priestly father: can easily believe that the priest is the ultimate earthly authority on God and is infallible, as priests are a more direct representation of God to the laity; unhealthy relationships with priests can trigger confusion regarding God's relationship with us
4. How our image of God can influence how we react to being targeted or victimized (some examples)
 - a. Wrathful/Authoritarian images of God:
 - i. Can influence one to please the other or second-guess oneself

- ii. Raises the other up and puts self down
- iii. Diminishes one's sense of worth and diminishes one's motivation (or justification) for self-care – won't feel one has the right to set boundaries
- iv. Can launch one into a rebellious/angry state against authority
- b. Image of God who is more distant or abandoning:
 - i. Can influence us to stay in negative relationships because its keeps us "secure and safe", although distortedly
 - ii. Stay because "at least this person wants me."
 - iii. May believe we deserve the treatment we receive and stay in the pattern
- c. Image of a loving God who also seeks our wholeness and cooperation
 - i. If developed, this image helps one to see his worth and to not tolerate mistreatment; tends towards self-care and future prevention
 - ii. This image sets the foundation for receiving one's authentic identity in God and also calls one to self-responsibility and cooperation with God
 - iii. If one has this image but not a personal relationship with God, then an abusive relationship may challenge the image, which can result in either positive growth toward God or remaining stuck in the unhealthy pattern
- 5. If one already has a personal relationship with God, he will most likely have a better understanding of his worth and may be less tolerant of violations to his dignity (lead-in to next group)
- 6. Discussion Questions
 - a. What are my concepts of God vs. my experiential image of Him?
 - b. How have my past experiences molded this image?
 - c. How has this image influenced my interactions with God, priests, others?
 - d. What can I do to work towards developing a true image of God?

Resources:

- *Boundaries Updated and Expanded Edition: When to Say Yes, How to Say No To Take Control of Your Life* by Henry Cloud
- *Codependent No More* by Melody Beattie
- *Whole Again: Healing Your Heart and Rediscovering Your True Self After Toxic Relationships and Emotional Abuse* by Jackson MacKenzie
- *Disarming the Narcissist*, 2nd Edition by Wendy T. Behary, LCSW
- *How to Handle a Narcissist* by Theresa Jackson
- *Narcissists Exposed* by Drew Keys

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Outline for Session 2

Dignity and Dignity Violations

1. What is dignity?
 - a. Inherent value and worth that cannot be taken away – but can be violated by ourselves or others (*Dignity*, by Donna Hicks)
 - b. CCC 369: “...man and woman possess an inalienable dignity which comes to them immediately from God their Creator.”
 - c. CCC 364: “The human body shares in the dignity of “the image of God”: it is a human body precisely because it is animated by a spiritual soul, and it is the whole human person that is intended to become, in the body of Christ, a temple of the Spirit
 - d. Dignity is the acknowledgment that I am made in the image and likeness of God and you are made in the image and likeness of God.
2. How do we acknowledge our dignity and other’s dignity?
 - a. We acknowledge each other’s likeness through how we treat each other.
 - b. Object vs. Subject
 - i. When we treat others as an object we treat them beneath their dignity. When we raise others up as a subject in our lives, we treat them as their dignity requires. We uphold the God image in them.
 - c. Knowing and following the elements of Dignity
3. Elements of Dignity – each can be violated by others, and we can violate our own dignity by allowing elements of our dignity to be disregarded or violated.
 - a. **Acceptance of Dignity** - Approach people as being neither inferior nor superior to you; give others the freedom to express their authentic selves without fear of being negatively judged; interact without prejudice or bias, accepting that characteristics such as race, religion, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, and disability are at the core of their personal identities.
 - b. **Recognition** - Validate others for talents, hard work, thoughtfulness, and help; be generous with praise; give credit to others for their contributions, ideas and experience.
 - c. **Acknowledgement** - Give people your full attention by listening, hearing, validating and responding to their concerns and what they have been through.
 - d. **Inclusion** - Make others feel that they belong, at all levels of relationship (family, community, organization, and nation)
 - e. **Safety** - Put people at ease at two levels; physically, so that feel free from the possibility of bodily harm, and psychologically, so they feel free from concern about being shamed or humiliated and free to speak up without retribution
 - f. **Fairness** - Treat people justly, with equality, and in an even handed way, according to agreed-on laws and rules.
 - g. **Independence** - Empower people to act on their own behalf so that they feel in control of their lives and experience as sense of hope and possibility.
 - h. **Understanding** - Believe that what others think matters; give them the chance to explain their perspectives and express their points of view; actively listen in order to understand them.
 - i. **Benefit of the Doubt** - Treat people as if they are trustworthy; start with the premise that others have good motives and are acting with integrity.
 - j. **Accountability** - Take responsibility for your actions; apologize if you have violated another person’s dignity; make a commitment to change hurtful behaviors.
4. Ten ways we are tempted to violate our own and others dignity:
 - a. **Taking the bait** – letting bad behavior of others determine own behavior.
 - b. **Saving face** - lying or deceiving to cover up.
 - c. **Shirking responsibility** – reluctance to apologize for mistakes or violating dignity

- d. **Depending on false dignity** – desire for external recognition/praise/approval/validation of one’s own dignity
 - e. **Maintaining false security** – clinging to relationships where our dignity is routinely violated
 - f. **Avoiding confrontation** – ignoring dignity violations to self or others
 - g. **Assuming innocent victimhood** – refusing to see self from an outside perspective to consider how you might be contributing to the problem
 - h. **Resisting feedback** – refusing an outside perspective regarding how our behaviors might be influencing or affecting others
 - i. **Blaming and shaming others** – deflecting blame by trying to make others look bad
 - j. **Gossiping and promoting false intimacy** – being critical or judgmental about others who are not present, rather than speaking the truth about self
5. Responding to Dignity Violations
 - a. Notice and allow for emotions to be present: a sign that a dignity violation has occurred and needs to be addressed.
 - b. Express emotions and emotional needs to trusted person
 - c. Discern how to address dignity violation:
 - i. Is it safe to address it directly with person who violated dignity
 - ii. Is it likely my dignity will be violated again
 - iii. What boundary could be set in order to uphold my dignity and the dignity of others around me
 6. Questions for discussion or reflection
 - a. What elements of dignity have you experienced violations against?
 - b. What elements of dignity are you really good at upholding for yourself and others?
 - c. In what ways have I been tempted to devalue my own dignity?

Resources:

- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*
- *Dignity: Its Essential Role in Resolving Conflict* by Donna Hicks
- *Leading with Dignity: How to Create a Culture that Brings out the Best in People* by Donna Hicks

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Outline for Session 3

How Not to Take the Bait: Narcissism in Relationships

1. Answer to "why me?" The Empathy test: first round volley to see if you will tolerate it. Will you give in and please them, stroke their ego, try to make them feel better, take on what's theirs in some way. Those who respond favorably "pass" and will be targeted again.
2. Those who respond to childhood neglect by becoming pleasers "take the bait" on the first test, that's why there's a second one. Not taking the bait = not pleasing - also Dignity "not taking the bait."
3. Cognitive dissonance: often people think they're "going crazy" or second-guess self rather than immediately reacting to a boundary crossing. People feel the need to reconcile the intrapsychic discomfort of the two opposing thought/action patterns: "That feels weird/yucky" vs. "he's called by God and doesn't make mistakes."
 - a. Patterns of justification are built to resolve this dissonance - "I'm just making a big deal out of nothing."
 - b. This is why the empathy test works, and this is understood well by the offender.
4. Questions for reflection:
 - a. Do you see yourself as a pleaser?
 - b. Can you think of examples of empathy tests? ... of cognitive dissonance?
 - c. When do you or others appear to be more vulnerable to these?
 - d. What do you imagine could be examples of not taking the bait?

Self-Care 101

1. What's the benefit and cost of pleasing?
2. Becoming better person versus a different person. How virtue growth versus virtue manipulation differ (How is God calling you to grow? vs Good Christian/Catholic people don't ____, caring people do ____).
3. Boundaries and self-care are two side of the same coin. It's important be able to ask for what you want/need, and to be free to say yes or no to others' requests.
4. Likely, when we're better at self-care we're less likely to fall into these patterns (e.g., pleasing).
5. Questions for reflection:
 - a. Do I know how I'm feeling? How?
 - b. Do I know when a boundary is crossed or my empathy was tested? How?
 - c. When am I more tuned in (or less tuned in)?

Forgiveness

1. Forgiveness is not – see sheet (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015, p 41, or Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000, p. 38)
2. First, determine ways you have been unfairly treated, particularly in ways that involved deliberate action or neglect.
 - a. Uncovering Phase – examining how you have been hurt, how this affected you, awareness of emotional impact and other effects to self and others.
 - b. Decision Phase – willingness to consider forgiveness, or a change of heart toward the offender.
 - c. Work Phase – accepting the pain and changes that occurred because of the offense, learning to view offender in context with compassion. Give a moral gift (of change of heart) to the offender – this may or may not be known to the offender.
 - d. Deepening Phase – Finding meaning in own and others' suffering, insight that you are not alone, realization of a new purpose or perspective in life.
3. Questions for reflection:
 - a. What do you see as barriers to forgiveness?
 - b. What encourages you toward the process of forgiveness?
 - c. Potential journaling exercise for the Uncovering phase: List all the ways/times you feel you have been hurt by this particular person or entity. Then, identify the 3-5 ways/times which you believe were more deliberate offenses, or more serious offenses in how they impacted you. Next, journal about how each

of those impacted you emotionally, spiritually, physically, relationally, and so on. After you have had some time to reflect on this, consider this: If I were to forgive this person for these offenses, what exactly would I be forgiving him/her for?

Reconciliation

1. Involves at least two people.
2. Depends on the offender's willingness and ability to change the offensive ways.
3. Depends mainly on the ability of the individuals involved to reestablish trust and a sense of safety in the relationship.

Resources:

- *Nice Girl Syndrome* by Beverly Engel
- *Christine Louis de Cannonville*
- *"Too Nice" (childrens book)*, by Marjorie White Pellegrino
- *These People are Driving me Nuts* by Dr. Gregory Popcak
- *Wise/fooling virgins parable*
- *Catholic Mindfulness* by Greg Bottaro (and corresponding Catholic Mindfulness course)
- *The Art of Forgiving*, by Lewis B. Smedes
- *The Forgiving Life*, by Robert D. Enright
- *8 Keys to Forgiveness*, by Robert D. Enright

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Outline for Session 4

Building Resilience

1. What is resilience?
 - a. Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress — such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems or workplace and financial stressors. It means "bouncing back" from difficult experiences.
 - b. Research has shown that resilience is ordinary, not extraordinary. People commonly demonstrate resilience (e.g., 9/11).
 - c. It does not mean that one does not or will not experience difficulty or distress; the road to resilience is likely to involve emotional distress
 - d. Not an "either you have it or you don't" trait; it involves behaviors, thoughts, and actions that can be learned and developed over time
2. Factors in resilience
 - a. **Primary factor:** having caring and supporting relationships within and outside the family
 - b. Capacity to make realistic plans and take steps to carry them out
 - c. A positive view of yourself and confidence in your strengths and abilities
 - d. Skills in communication and problem solving
 - e. The capacity to manage strong feelings and impulses
3. Strategies for building resilience
 - a. The path to building resilience will look different for each person
 - b. Make connections
 - c. Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems
 - d. Accept that change is a part of living
 - e. Move toward your goal
 - f. Take decisive actions
 - g. Look for opportunities for self-discovery
 - h. Nurture a positive view of yourself
 - i. Keep things in perspective
 - j. Maintain a hopeful outlook
 - k. Take care of yourself

4. Boundaries – reflect on how these relate to the Elements of Dignity
 - a. Law 1: The Law of Sowing and Reaping
 - i. The law of cause and effect is a basic law of life.
 - ii. Establishing boundaries helps codependent people stop interrupting the Law of Sowing and Reaping in their loved ones life.
 - iii. Boundaries force or allow the person doing the sowing also to do the reaping.
 - iv. Confronting an irresponsible person is not inflicting hurt when done in the spirit of honoring dignity; the consequences of the irresponsibility cause the hurt.
 - b. Law 2: The Law of Responsibility
 - i. Any time you are not loving others you are not taking full responsibility for yourself; you have disowned your heart (see also dignity violations).
 - ii. You are responsible for yourself and I am responsible for myself.
 - iii. Treat others the way you want to be treated
 - iv. Being responsible is not only about the giving but also in setting of limits on another's destructive and irresponsible behavior. It is not good to rescue someone from the consequences of their wrongdoing/sin.
 - c. Law 3: The Law of Power
 - i. You have the power to... agree with the truth about your problems.
 - ii. ...submit your inability to God.
 - iii. ...search / ask God and others to reveal what is within your boundaries.
 - iv. ... turn from evil (inside and outside of you)
 - v. ...humble yourself and ask God and others to help you with your developmental injuries and leftover childhood needs.
 - vi. ...seek out those whom you have injured and make amends.
 - d. Law 4: The Law of Respect
 - i. We need to respect and love the boundaries of others in order to build respect for our own.
 - e. Law 5: The Law of Motivation
 - i. Freedom first, service second.
 - ii. If you serve to get free of your fear, you are doomed to failure. Let God work on the fears, resolve them, and create some healthy boundaries to guard the freedom you were called to.
 - f. Law 6: The Law of Evaluation
 - i. Evaluate the effects of setting boundaries and be responsible to the other person (by treating them with dignity, allowing them to have their feelings).
 - ii. If the other person(s) experience pain as a result of the boundaries set, we can acknowledge that – and may consider changing the boundaries if we determine that we did not honor dignity with the initial boundary, or other circumstances have changed.
 - g. Law 7: The Law of Proactivity
 - i. Proactive people show you what they love, what they want, and what they stand for. Proactive people do not demand rights: they live them.
 - h. Law 8: The Law of Envy
 - i. Envy defines “good” as “what I do not possess”
 - ii. This is destructive because it guarantees that we will not get what we want and keeps us perpetually insatiable and dissatisfied.
 - i. Law 9: The Law of Activity

- i. Initiative is the God-given ability to propel ourselves into life. We respond to invitations and push ourselves into life.
 - j. Law 10: The Law of Exposure
 - i. Your boundaries need to be made visible to others and communicated to them in relationship.
- 5. Questions for reflection:
 - a. How do you view these concepts of resilience and boundaries in light of what we have discussed regarding abuse of power, narcissism, forgiveness, self-care, etc?
 - b. Where do you need to work on building resilience? Are there any strategies that resonate with you?
 - c. Where do you need to work on building boundaries? Is there a law that you haven't realized before?
 - d. When do you or others appear to be more vulnerable to these?

A Path to Nurturing a healthy God image – in God and in ourselves

1. Identify any flawed God images and how they contradict Scripture and theology
2. Study the healthy relationships Jesus had in Scripture and the boundaries He implemented to maintain healthy relationships (ex. Jesus never crossed anyone's personal or physical boundaries in such a way as to violate them).
3. Establish a personal relationship with the person of the Trinity you feel closest or safest with. Sometimes Saints/Mary/people of strong faith can be a place to start if this step feels too large.
4. Begin learning what healthy relationships look like (worth, dignity, boundaries), and practice them.
5. Identify the ways we allow our relationships to be unhealthy, and identifying the areas where we need to implement boundaries, and develop resilience.
6. Surround yourself with people who reflect God back to you – establish healthy relationships rooted in dignity.
7. Questions for Reflection
 - a. How would you describe what a healthy relationship looks like?
 - b. How can you cultivate this type of relationship within your earthly relationships? With God?
 - c. How would you describe Jesus's relationships in the Gospels? Where do you see Him implementing boundaries for His sake and the sake of others?

Resources:

- <https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/road-resilience.aspx>
- *Boundaries*, by Cloud and Townsend
- *Developing Resilience*, chapter 11 in *Trauma, Meaning and Spirituality: Translating Research into Clinical Practice* (2017)