

Session Five: "The Schools are Filled with Shadows" (Chapter 5) and "Trauma Kings" (Chapter 6)

A. Secular Perspective (Bad Therapy by Abigail Schrier):

1. Quote: "In private schools, they are called 'shadows,' but in public schools you'll hear them called 'ed techs,' 'paraprofessionals,' or 'parapros.'...part special ed teacher, shadows are hired privately by parents or supplied by public schools to stick closely to one particular kid, ostensibly to smooth the kid's acclimation to class...Today public schools assign shadows to follow kids with problems ranging from mild learning disabilities to violent tendencies, and private schools advise affluent parents to hire shadows to trail neurotypical kids for almost any reason. To help a kid make friends on the playground, to soothe a kid wriggling in his seat, to help a kid succeed and have fun at school. 'Do you think now might be a good time to raise your hand? Why don't you share your snack with Paige'...More monitoring, more dependence on an adult, less practice handling themselves, less inducement to believe that they can....If hiring an actual shadow exceeds your school's budget, the school psychologists will often recommend handing a kid a fidget toy as an alternative means of soothing him...**When researchers put fidget toys to the test to see whether they improved attention in kids, they found that when fidget spinners were used, there was an initial decrease in activity level, followed by poorer attention overall for the kids who used them.** Dr. Ortiz summarized the findings for me: 'Probably a waste of money, and maybe the effect is the exact opposite of what adults are looking for.'" (pp. 89-91)

2. Quote: "Teachers I talked to all noted a rise in tantrums, violence, screaming in a teacher's face, throwing objects around the classroom, slamming doors, catcalling, all in the last decade. Kids seem to exercise no control over their behavior, teachers told me. **And a large part of the problem they said, is a school regime that demands no self-discipline from students, believing such expectation unreasonable if not unevolved...Kids at best seem unhelped by the therapies and meds and accommodations showered upon them. They can't or won't control their emotional outbursts. They can't or won't get their homework in on time. In greater numbers than teachers ever remember seeing, they can't or won't do for themselves.**" (pp. 97, 98)

3. Quote: "...no concept was more often invoked at the public-school conference [Schrier attended] than the notion that all these kids had experienced an 'adverse childhood experience' or 'ACE,' colloquially known as 'their trauma.' In the minds and imaginations of many of today's educators, the best way to help disadvantaged kids is by assuming that all kids have suffered harm and treating them en masse with blanket mental health interventions, as if therapy were fluoride to be dumped in the drinking water....There is no good reason to believe that most kids are traumatized. **The best research indicates the opposite: even among victims of heartbreaking circumstances, resilience is the norm.**" (pp. 99-106) **Note**: See pp. 99, 100 for the typical ACE criteria factors.

1. Quote: "For thousands of years, we expected most people who suffered even colossal misfortune to bounce back. Researchers confirm that the vast majority of those who suffer even severe hardship, left to their own devices, will be able to do just this: pull themselves up, get back on the horse, try again. Some even posit that we can be made better off - stronger, smarter, more determined, more grateful - by the thousand natural shocks of a bumpy childhood. Then something changed. We surrendered our faith in the native human ability to surmount hardship and told our kids that they could not possibly recover, let alone emerge stronger... Therapists nevertheless grabbed the reins of the culture and breathed life into a specter that haunts us still: 'childhood trauma.'...We are, as a culture, enthralled by the notion of childhood trauma - wary of inflicting it, eager to spot it. Books that insist we all have hidden trauma from our childhoods live on bestseller lists. They do not budge...No, the source of our unhappiness is our childhood trauma, akin to a disease - another underserved impairment...Any present predicament points to a past injury...Can't concentrate? Trauma! Trouble forming relationships? Trauma! Tightness in your chest? Trauma! Cancer, substance abuse, sexual promiscuity, stroke, irritable bowel syndrome? Trauma, trauma, trauma, trauma!...The idea of 'trauma's shadow on your psyche' has profoundly changed the practice of psychotherapy, education, and how we raise our own children...**And the notion that every one of us carries the damage of even our ancestors' childhoods has become an indelible feature of our societal self-portrait.**" (pp. 110-119)

2. Quote: "People are complicated - the brain, endlessly so. And every psychiatrist I spoke to emphasized to me that we really don't know very much about how the brain works...Why did I become a drug addict when none of my friends did? Why did my marriage fall apart? It's natural to want an explanation. If your life is not as you wish it were, it isn't your fault. Something done to you in your past made you that way. That's how the snipe hunt for childhood trauma begins. 'Memories,' once dredged, are rarely independently verified, and the resulting theory of childhood trauma becomes unfalsifiable. If you think you've been damaged, you are...**Perhaps the remembered event, raked from your mental riverbed, had no impact on your life until a therapist placed the loupe of your focus upon it, suggesting it had the power to clarify your adult woes.**" (pp. 121-128)

3. Quote: "Elizabeth Loftus, the world's most decorated memory researcher states: 'Memory works a little bit more like a Wikipedia page, you can go in there and change it - but so can other people - children especially - to believe all sorts of things through leading questions...But basically anyone can be led with the right amount of suggestion. Not every person all the time, but any group of people can be led to remember things that didn't happen with suggestions.'...**"But trauma-informed care and trauma-informed education simply presume the injury and commence treatment. Iatrogenic effects are bound to follow.**" (pp. 128-133)

B. Biblical Perspective (*The War on Children by John MacArthur*) (Chapter 5): **"...Not Against Flesh and Blood"**

1. **Quote:** *"The war on children is raging in education, entertainment, psychology, politics, and practically every other earthly realm where parents or children can be influenced. But it is not just an earthly battle; it extends far beyond all those domains...It is chiefly a spiritual conflict, with the devil himself as commander in chief of the incursion. In other words, the conflict we are concerned with is a vast, far-reaching satanic assault on children...Our ultimate adversaries are not people, but demonic forces peddling unbiblical ideas and false belief systems."* (p. 83 - Eph. 6:12; II Cor. 10:4)

2. **Quote:** *"We now live in the postmodern era, where the dominant idea is that if any absolute or universal truth exists, it cannot be objectively known with any degree of certainty. 'Truth,' therefore, is always a matter of one's personal perspective. That is why people commonly speak of 'my truth' and 'your truth.' ..."If you believe you were born in a body that doesn't match your gender, your belief (rather than any objective fact) is supposed to determine what's true and valid even if it's 'valid' only for you...Children are suffering the most significant consequences in this battle, because those perpetrating postmodern attitudes about truth and reality are targeting the youngest people. The assault started in early childhood, where it is carried out through education and the media. Consequently, the profound responsibility of our stewardship as parents is a matter of the utmost urgency...the prevailing culture likes to attribute all our problems to oppression, inequity, trauma, a poor self-image, systemic injustice, or some similar external cause. The Bible, however, teaches clearly that the root of the human problem lies within our own hearts... What is needed, then, is the transformation of a fallen heart, and that is accomplished only through the gospel... We cannot attribute crimes and wickedness to external circumstances beyond the sinner's control."* (pp. 83-89 - Prov. 4:23; Deut. 6:4-9; Mark 7:20-23; Eph. 6:4)

3. **Quote:** *"It is truly remarkable that we do not harm each other more frequently. the question is: How is it possible for so many people to live together for extended periods without resorting to violence? The answer is that God's common grace and goodness restrain the full expression of human evil. He has given us a conscience, our parents, government authority, and the presence of the church, and all of these serve as deterrents to the evils we are capable of.. Wherever sound biblical influences are eliminated, some replacement religion will be invented, and it will align with the prevailing culture. In this culture of love for hatred, movements ranging from white supremacy to Critical Race Theory emerge - promoting a plethora of false ideologies...These serve as religious belief systems suited for a secular society...The notion that our problems are all caused by other people and circumstances around us fails to address the core issue. Our most basic problems stem from within ourselves, because of our inherent and natural wickedness and our natural inclination toward sin."* (pp. 88, 89)

4. **Quote:** *"As parents diligently raising your children, you must address four areas of their development, Luke 2:52 records that Jesus increased 'in wisdom an stature, and in favor with God and men.' That statement encompasses intellectual, physical, spiritual, and social growth. All four of these categories are addressed in various ways in the book of Proverbs...The key word associated with Solomon's name - and one of his principle concerns as a father - is wisdom. The wisdom Solomon has in mind is heavily weighted with the concept of discernment - which Solomon himself might define as skill in distinguishing truth from falsehood; an ability to make prudent decisions rather than foolish ones; devotion to godliness and an aversion to wickedness; skill in dealing with other people; and a habit of self-control. That covers all [of the above stated] categories."* (pp. 90-95 - Luke 2:52; Prov. 2:11-15; 3:13-18)

5. **Quote:** *"It seems at the moment that public schools are determined to teach schoolchildren that every kind of sexual deviancy is acceptable, and they must never feel guilty or be ashamed of any kind of carnal lust. But according to Scripture, children need to be taught that every kind of sexual sin is a particularly deadly path to tread: 'Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body' (I Cor. 6:18). The warning against sexual sin continues throughout Proverbs. It is the overarching theme of the entire seventh chapter. Whoever pursues such sin is marching himself into disaster 'as an ox goes to the slaughter'" (Prov. 7:22)...All these lessons from the book of Proverbs are invaluable instructions for parents: Fear your God, speak the truth, guard your mind, select your companions, control your desires...Parents need to study the wisdom of Proverbs diligently. The quest for sanctified wisdom is a lifetime pursuit... **In spite of sin and Satan, faithful parents who follow heaven's instructions can fulfill their responsibilities and enjoy the blessing of mature, wise children...Victory in the war on children is offered to parents who raise their children to love God, know His truth and obey it, and stand strong against the destructive and deceitful weapons of the world."** (pp. 99, 100)*

Discussion Questions:

1. Explain the problem of "shadows" that Abigail Schrier discussed. Where could it be a help or a hindrance?
2. What are ACE's? How could they facilitate a danger to the natural resilience to even heartbreaking circumstances?
3. Why has the intense elevation of reviewing past trauma served as a minefield for false memory syndrome?
4. How can trauma-informed care/education lead to iatrogenic effects?
5. Do we consider Eph. 6:12 in the light of the intense war on children, or do we tend to only see the earthly proponents?
6. Can you affirm that *"Our most basic problems stem from within ourselves and our natural inclination toward sin"*?
7. In spite of our corrupt society, what gives you hope that your children/grandchildren can become spiritually mature?