

Instructor: Pastor Alden Laird

**Session Three: "Ten Bad Therapy Steps" (Chapter 3)**

**A. Secular Perspective (Bad Therapy by Abigail Shrier):**

**Bad Therapy Step One: Teach Kids to Pay Close Attention to their Feeling**

Quote: "How is a child supposed to get through a day of school if she's never learned to put aside her hurt feelings and concentrate on the lessons in front of her? How will she ever be a good friend if her own feelings are always, at every instant, front and center? How will she ever hope to function at work? She can't. She won't...if you want to accomplish anything - among the worst things you can do is attend to your disappointments, discomforts, and painful relationships right now. No winning head coach asks his players to consider their feelings at halftime because thinking about yourself shatters your ability to get things done." (pp. 43-47)

**Bad Therapy Step Two: Induce Rumination**

Quote: "Venting may produce relief, but rehashing the same hurt can become pathological. It is also one of the most significant iatrogenic risks of therapy." Leif Kennair notes, "... a lot of these different interventions are actually worry and rumination-increasing interventions...habitually give voice to your negative thoughts or personal problems - you're co-ruminating at least. But I believe they are ruminating more. **And rumination is the major predictor for depression.**" (p.48)

**Bad Therapy Step Three: Make 'Happiness' a Goal but Reward Emotional Suffering**

Quote: "In so many ways, we signal to kids: your happiness is the ultimate goal; it's what we're all livin' for...According to the best research, we have it all backward. If we wanted our kids to be happy, the last thing we would do is to communicate that happiness is the goal. The more vigorously you hunt happiness, the more likely you are to be disappointed. This is true irrespective of the objective conditions of your life." (pp. 49, 50)

**Bad Therapy Step Four: Affirm and Accommodate Kids' Worries**

Quote: "Accommodation deprives children of the opportunity to vault a challenge and renders them 'actually less capable... Banishing normal chaos from a child's world is precisely the opposite of what you would do if you wanted to produce an adult capable of enjoying life's intrinsic bittersweetness...Andy yet consider how we proceed. We beg doctors to give our kids antianxiety medications, teachers to give them untimed tests. We purchase plastic visors so bathwater never runs over our toddlers' eyes, and carefully remove sesame seeds from their hamburger buns. We aren't just driving ourselves insane. We're making our kids more fearful and less tolerant of the world....**Therapists can make kids' anxiety worse.**" (pp. 50, 51)

**Bad Therapy Step Five: Monitor, Monitor, Monitor**

Quote: Professor Peer Gray writes, "When psychologists do research where they want to add an element of stress, and they want to compare people doing something under stress versus no stress, how do they add stress? They simply add an observer... "if you're watched by somebody who seems to be assessing your performance, that's a stress condition." (pp. 52-54)

**Bad Therapy Step Six: Dispense Diagnoses Liberally**

Quote: "But obtaining a diagnosis for your kid is not a neutral act. It's not nothing for a kid to grow up believing there's something wrong with his brain...One of the side effects that we see is that people learn how difficult their situation is. They didn't think that before. It's demoralization...**I've also talked to parents who went diagnosis shopping...**" (55, 56)

**Bad Therapy Step Seven: Drug 'Em**

Quote: "But the impact of starting a child on psychotropic medication is incomparably different. Every experience of a child's life - so many 'firsts' - will now be mediated by this chemical chaperone: every triumph, every pang of desire and remorse. When you start a child on meds, you risk numbing him to life at the very moment he's learning to calibrate risks and handle life's ups and downs...**Once on meds, he's likely to believe that he can't handle life at full strength...**" (pp. 57, 58)

**Bad Therapy Step Eight: Encourage Kids to Share Their 'Trauma'**

Quote: "One of the most significant failings of psychotherapy is its refusal to acknowledge that not everyone is helped by talking about their problems. Many patients are harmed by it...Not every kid who's experienced serious adversity will be helped by 'sharing' their traumas? **The act of talking about your past pain does not necessarily relieve it? Discussing a traumatic experience even with a trained therapist, can sometimes increase suffering...some people will just need to go off and be on their own, but also that some need support...**" (pp. 58, 59)

**Bad Therapy Step Nine: Encourage Young Adults to Break Contact with 'Toxic' Family**

Quote: "When parents confront the adult children who've cut them off, the most typical explanation they give is: 'Well, my therapist said, you emotionally abused me or you're emotionally incestuous. Or you have a narcissistic personality disorder.' The parents respond defensively, and that just feels like proof positive to the adult child..."

**Family estrangement is a major iatrogenic risk of therapy not only because it typically produces so much desperate, chronic distraught to the cut-off parents. It also strips the adult child of a major source of stability and support...Worse it leaves those grandkids with the impression that they descend from terrible people...They must have done something unforgivable."** (pp. 60, 61)

### **Bad Therapy Step Ten: Create Treatment Dependency**

**Quote:** "Therapists can do harm to someone's agency and belief in themselves. Treatment dependency is a common iatrogenic risk of therapy. I think that's probably the simplest explanation of the problem: that we're just teaching people that they're not adequate humans...Bad therapy encourages hyperfocus on one's emotional states, which in turn makes symptoms worse." (pp. 61-65)

## **B. Biblical Perspective (The War on Children by John MacArthur): Chapters Two and Three**

### **Chapter Two: "Whose Children Are They, Anyway?"**

1. **Quote:** "It is particularly important that we fight this war faithfully on behalf of our children, because in reality they are not merely our children. Children belong to God in a unique and vital sense. That is true of all children...While He graciously places children in their parents' care and custody, He does not hand them over as if they were chattel. Parents are not entitled owners; they are uniquely accountable to God as stewards and caretakers of the children He has given them...God's own paternal interest and His tender mercies extend in a particular way to children who are too young to make independent moral choices for themselves (Jonah 4:11; Mt. 19:13,14)...But first of all, note that in this context, the Lord pointedly refers to these little ones as 'My children' (Ezek. 16:21). They belong to Him in a special sense....But it's remarkable that it took just one generation for Israel to fall away from God...One generation of parents and grandparents failed to erect doctrinal guardrails, and the whole nation careened off into spiritual disaster for centuries...Worst of all, parents in that culture went even further by murdering their children as sacrifices offered to idols." (Jer. 7:31; Ezek. 20:30,31; 23:37) (pp. 17-26)

2. **Quote:** "Mothers' wombs - designed for the nurture and protection of unborn babies - are now literally the most dangerous place of all for millions of unborn children. Millions of children conceived in America have been aborted before birth. a preborn baby today has a massive probability of being murdered in the womb rather than surviving until birth...The war on children is also a sinister, supernatural war against God because children belong to Him. That truth is highlighted in Mk. 10:13-16...Our children are not ours alone, or even ultimately, They belong to God, and our lifelong commitment is to make sure that we teach and influence them regarding God's will and the gospel of salvation." (pp. 28-35)

### **Chapter Three: "Hampered By The Curse Of Sin"**

**Quote:** "Children, being the most vulnerable among us, are prime targets for the enemy of our souls. They bear the crippling disadvantage of human fallenness, and they are therefore naturally enticed by evil. Any experienced parent understands that children do not gravitate naturally toward what is good. Their curiosity and energies must be guided toward honor, integrity, and morality. Of course, the very notion of righteousness is meaningless apart from God, and Scripture is the ultimate authority that defines what righteousness is. So once a culture abandons biblical values, it becomes impossible to shield children from evil influences...Complications of the Fall, the curse, and the consequences of sin quickly took hold within the hearts of all Adam's offspring - and those difficulties endure even today...In other words, family life itself is already challenging because even the best parents are themselves sinners. On top of that colossal disadvantage has been piled all the mischief perpetrated by the kingdom of darkness, led by Satan himself." (pp. 38-40)

**Quote:** "**People today still prioritize their own desires at the expense of their children.** The number-one excuse women [and men] give for aborting babies is that they regard the duties of motherhood [parenting] as an inconvenience and interruption to their own life's plans. This is a form of idolatry not significantly different from the paganism of those who slaughtered children in ancient times...Consequently, children are sacrificed on the altar of self. Unborn children are offered to abortionists as a sacrifice to satisfy the parents' craving for freedom, lust, pleasure, and selfishness." (pp. 42, 43)

**Quote:** "You cannot guarantee the eternal salvation of your child - that's not yours to do; it is the work of God. But as a parent, you can - you must - be the primary instrument in your children's spiritual growth and instruction (cf. Prov. 22:6) - that is yet another truism - a general truth - not a guarantee. But it is normally the case that children grow up to become a reflection of what their parents taught them...Parents are not sovereign. but it is your responsibility to be an example of godly faith, to teach them the gospel, and to exemplify love for all things pure and holy...**Children are adorable, but they are, after all, little sinners.** This wretched culture needs the next generation to be virtuous, godly, and wise. It is the duty of parents and grandparents to make that investment together and enjoy the reward of their loving efforts in the children who are a rich blessing." (pp. 52-55)

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Review the 10 "Bad Therapy Steps" - which of these give you the most concern? What can you do about it?
2. Do you regard your children as first belonging to God? Why is this critical in the abortion culture of our day?
3. How do passages like Ps. 115:14, 15; 127: 3-5; 128 and 139:13-18 shape our understanding of the miracle of children?

*"Every week, for a 'fifty-minute hour,' my therapist lent me her full attention. If I bored her with my repetition, she never complained. She was a pro. Whenever made me feel self-absorbed, even when I was. She let me vent. She let me cry...she helped me realize that I wasn't so bad. Most things were someone else's fault. Actually, many of the people around me were worse than I'd realized! Together, we diagnosed them freely. Who knew so many of my close relatives had narcissistic personality disorder?...In quick order, my therapist became a really expensive friend, one who agree with me about almost everything and liked to talk smack about people we (sort of) knew in common...When I agreed with my therapist, I told her so. When I didn't, we talked about that. And when I felt I needed to move on, I did. Which is to say: I was an adult in therapy...Children and adolescents are not typically equipped to say these things. The power imbalance between child and therapist is too great. Children's and adolescents' sense of self is still developing. They cannot correct the interpretations or recommendations of a therapist...Nevertheless, parents my age have been signing up their kids and teens for therapy in astonishing numbers...I talked to moms who hired therapists to help their kids adjust o preschool or to process the death of a beloved cat. One mom told me she put a therapist 'on retainer' as soon as her two daughters reached middle school, 'So they would have someone to talk to about all the things I never wanted to talk about with mom.'" (pp. 4 and 5)*