

Bad Childhood, Good Life—Part 3

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By Dave Havir

BIG SANDY, Texas—On July 23, I gave a sermon titled "Bad Childhood, Good Life." I chose the title of the sermon after reading a book by that name written by Dr. Laura Schlessinger in 2006.

The purpose of the sermon was to provide information about how people can blossom and thrive in life in spite of an unhappy childhood. The goal was for the information to be helpful in two possible ways.

First, this understanding could possibly help people continue to grow beyond their unhappy childhood.

Second, this understanding could possibly assist people in helping other people who are seeking to grow beyond their unhappy childhood.

Preoccupied with 'closure'

The third chapter is titled "Closure Versus Resilience" and is found on pages 69-94.

Dr. Schlessinger gave her perspective that too many people have a preoccupation with the concept called "closure."

On page 70, Dr. Schlessinger wrote: "Since about 1995, when the term 'closure' was first introduced, the counseling industry grabbed this concept tightly, threatening and promising that you would never be able to be happy and function well in life without bringing your emotional history to a satisfactory conclusion, aka closure.

"This closure required lengthy examination of your history of abuse or disappointment and perhaps years of therapy, not to mention a confrontation or three with whoever contributed to your hurtful past.

"Folks who say they were getting on with life satisfactorily without these efforts are said to be in denial, minimizing their issues, avoidant, and distracting themselves from their real problems. The threat is that if these so-called 'repressive' behaviors continue, they will cause you to emotionally erupt at some point and spew destructive psychological lava in all directions . . .

“At the risk of getting ahead of myself, let me state here that, generally, going back over and over the memories of trauma will likely get you sicker and sicker—as too many of you have probably learned by now.

“Also, I have long worried about what I’ve seen as a societal and mental health world *pressure to be sick* because of some experience, or to label oneself a victim of ‘something’ from your childhood.”

Awaiting an apology

Dr. Schlessinger also mentioned that many people spend too much time anticipating an apology from those who have hurt them.

On page 82, she wrote: “Some of you are convinced that you can’t—or won’t—get on with your life in a more satisfying way until you get either an acknowledgment or an apology from the parties that hurt you. Obviously, there is an inherent problem in this equation if they are dead or they haven’t changed a molecule of their being!”

On pages 85-86, she wrote: “An apology is not about yesterday, it’s about a possible tomorrow . . . Yesterday is filled not only with someone’s misdeeds for which an apology would seem appropriate, it is also filled with your agony and the consequences of your own bad choices as you reacted badly to their misdeeds . . .

“Apologies from the perpetrators of your Bad Childhood are nice, but not necessary for you to have a Good Life.”

Focusing on resilience

Dr. Schlessinger concluded this chapter by recommending that people seek to have resilience rather than closure.

On page 93, she wrote: “I would like formally, at this point, to trade in the term closure for *resilience*. Resilience is the quality that really improves your life, not any concept of things being over and done with.”

Dr. Schlessinger mentioned that resilience “implies that you are”:

- Motivated to make things better.
- Willing to form trusting relationships.
- Going to identify and recognize the life situations that trigger emotional crises echoing your Bad Childhood and make efforts to control your reactions, ultimately regaining control of your feelings, instead of being a slave to them.
- Changing your distorted ways of looking at people and situations by giving the people in your life today the benefit of the doubt and by a commitment to communication.