Author Interview — Mindy Caliguire
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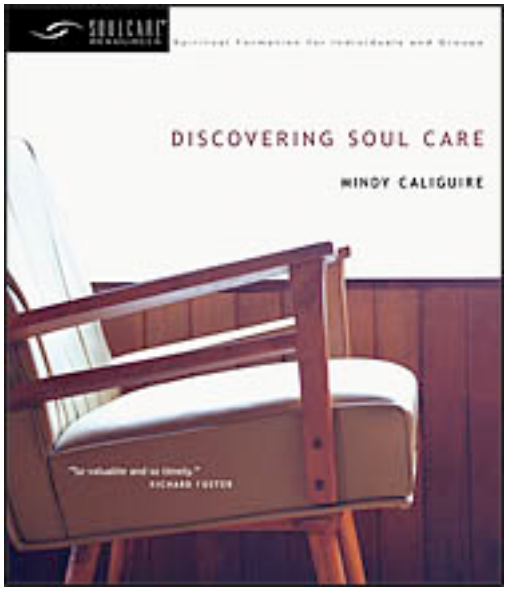

Mindy Caliguire, author of *SoulCare*® Resources

IVP: In Discovering Soul Care you write about "Soul Health." How do we gauge the health of our souls?

Caliguire: I believe we gauge the health of our souls by learning to recognize the symptoms of soul neglect. There's a great quote from Dallas Willard's Renovation of the Heart that talks about the importance of learning to hear the soul's cries (it's used in Discovering Soul Care). Those symptoms have some universal elements (things most of us experience), but I urge folks to become acutely aware of their own primary symptoms so that, once they begin to sense those feelings or reactions or whatever, they more quickly recognize the root issue and thus more swiftly redirect themselves to God's immediate presence and care.

IVP: In Discovering Soul Care you also include sections on "Soul Becoming" and "Soul Decisions." What do both of those mean?

Caliguire: "Soul Becoming" captures the idea that souls are not merely inert entities that either possess or do not possess the "Jesus stamp" to get into heaven. Rather, souls are alive and constantly morphing, growing, changing: constantly becoming. "Soul Decisions" calls out the important role our decisions play in the development of the soul—identifying the choices that we can and must make in order to restore vitality and life to the soul.

IVP: You have also written Spiritual Friendship. Why are spiritual friendships so vital for soul care and what are some barriers to developing such friendships?

Caliguire: First, I believe the relationships between believers were intended to be a primary means by which the Spirit would move among his people, producing life and growth. Thus, they are, or can be, an enormous means by which we connect with God and experience transformation. And part two is this: unfortunately, most Christians are deeply alone and intentionally hidden from one another (most are hidden from themselves, too, but that's another topic!). So not only is this a key area of spiritual power and potential, it is also the most widely abandoned and feared (often for good reason).

Simple barriers such as pace of life and physical distance from friends can make intimate, life-giving friendships difficult. But the deeper barriers are our internal resistances to being known more fully by anyone else as the messy, "mixed-bag," incomplete, wounded and broken people we in fact are. It's so much better on the other side of vulnerability . . . but it is still difficult to choose, particularly when we are mired in guilt and shame. Oddly enough, Jesus' people are often anything but free, and are generally not characterized by grace. Much of this centers around how self-protected and defensive we are, particularly in our relationships.

IVP: How do you hope people will use and grow from Soul Care Resources?

Caliguire: Good question! My hope as a teacher, and now as I dip my toe into being a

writer, is always to introduce a few ideas and then gently push listeners (now readers) into their own story, into their own experience and, most importantly, into their own real- time connection with God. So as a result, these "books"—or whatever they should rightly be called—aim to be interactive between me and the reader, between the reader and God, and even between the reader and others. There are discussion guides at the end of each section, so they can serve a small group or discussion group format. I guess my dream scenario is that a few friends (new or old) who share the desire for a deeper experience of their spiritual life would read and work through these materials on their own and then together share their learnings and help one another see "signs of life," or areas of progress, healing and growth.

Another important way of answering this question would be to borrow from Dallas Willard's VIM acronym developed in Renovation of the Heart. In order to experience transformation, he asserts, we need to have all three of these key elements: Vision, Intention and Means. With Soul Care Resources, I hope to address the subject of transformation by tapping into all three: the vision of a healthy soul, the responsibility to make a decision to live a new way and of course providing the means (spiritual practices) to support that intention toward the vision.

Many resources exist on the means themselves; ways to pray, ways to engage Scripture, ways to do various spiritual practices. All good, but my hope is to also provide the context for practices so that, one day, soul health and authentic transformation are more commonly experienced. I want the topic of transformation to move from a heavy, depressing and guilt-ridden "have to," to a sincere, hope- filled and freeing "want to." It seems, despite all the available "means" for most of us, our souls are largely in trouble in the Christian community.

I wish I could say I had trouble finding an audience for my message. Unfortunately, that's never true. So what's lacking? According to Dallas's model, I believe we have ample resources for means around us. But why do we not move toward them? I'm not sure I fully understand, but I do intentionally try to awaken areas of vision and intention—in the hopes that once all three elements are available, transformation will more naturally occur in the body of Christ.