



## Imperfect Humanity

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**B**eing human is difficult. Life does not happen the way we want it to happen. There are all sorts of zigs and zags. For all the times we are pleased and surprised, it seems there are just as many times when we are unhappy and disappointed. Although some or most of our needs may get met, others do not. Even though we may be well-nourished, we often want more. Even though we may well be loved and appreciated, we sometimes conclude we are not loved or appreciated enough.

Because we cannot control all the events and experiences we encounter, we may sometimes give in to the temptation that it is possible to do something that will make everything work to perfection. We may think, *“If only I would perform such and such a task or somehow become a little more perfect, everything would then work out exactly as I might want.”* In pursuit of this fantasy, we may set off to try to bring all things out of chaos and into the “perfect order” that will serve all our needs and fulfill all our desires.

Of course, “perfection” never happens. Everything does not work out exactly the way that we might want it to. No matter how hard we work, the ups and downs of life still go up and down. We still get disappointed and have times when we do not feel as loved and appreciated as we would like to feel.



At some point on their journey to adulthood and maturity, most people realize the truth of what it means to be human. Most eventually arrive at a time of peace and contentment. These feelings are more elusive for some. In that case, it is important to understand such feelings and be at peace with one’s own timing.

It is also important to recognize and accept any disorder, such as OCD/scrupulosity, that complicates efforts to improve one’s overall outlook.

Everyone has moments of happiness, and times when it may be difficult to find joy anywhere. It is essential to recognize the human condition, seize the truth, and live the truth, thereby permitting the Spirit of the Lord to work in creative ways.

In the Gospels, which deliver the messages of Jesus, we encounter through parable and story the everyday people he met and knew. Each story is about imperfect people, not those whose acts are totally together. Jesus' stories speak to us of ordinary folks like you and me, but perhaps there is one thing that distinguishes the people in his Scripture stories from us. They understand that when they encounter Jesus, they hit the jackpot. Once they realize they have found what they truly desired, they see that nothing stands in their way and they claim it for their own. They do not reach perfection. No one can. But they feel something more precious: acceptance, love, and forgiveness.

Jesus teaches us that the kingdom of God is "...like a treasure buried in a field which a person finds and hides again, and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field." Again, "it's like a merchant searching for fine pearls. When he finds one of great price, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it" (see Matthew 13:44-52). Each story Jesus tells zeroes in on a point. Here, a valuable object is "out there somewhere." A person looking for it discovers it, then sacrifices everything to possess it.

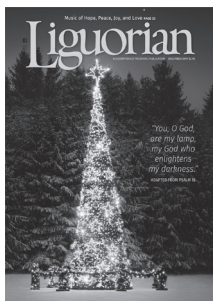
According to Jesus, some skills are essential for the people who seek the kingdom of God, waiting to experience the fullness of the presence of God

in their lives. Perfection is not on the list, thankfully. Rather, it seems that those who develop a searching mind and heart, who are willing to give up everything for a treasure no one else even notices are best suited for the kingdom of God. In other words, the followers of the Lord live in the same world everyone else inhabits, but they live differently from all others: they anticipate the blessings of God and are open to the workings of the spirit of God.

Perhaps the gospel, this Good News, is a little more challenging for each of us than what we might first imagine. Certainly people who struggle with scrupulosity will feel more challenged. Regardless, perhaps Jesus' Good News might help us understand what is really required of us.

Despite our strengths and weaknesses, despite our perceptions about ourselves and about what is good and bad, perfect and imperfect, that which is really necessary is probably not what we spend our time and energy on. Perhaps it is important for us to develop a searching mind and heart and an openness to the workings of the spirit. These gifts and blessings from the Lord will permit us, despite our imperfections, to seize his invitation to be part of his kingdom. When that moment comes, we must be willing to jettison unimportant things and go for the treasure in the field and the pearl of great price. ✨

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# Four Behaviors of Jesus to Use to Reduce Conflict and Stress

**Servanthood**, the first behavior, means to love one another and ourselves as God loves us. We see Jesus' own loving servanthood in the ways he behaved during the time he spent with us on earth. Concern for and acting on the needs of a loved one demonstrate the behavior of love.

The **forgiveness** Jesus modeled and talked about provides another behavior that directly counters conflict and stress. We face harm from someone in the course of each day—whether through a verbal put-down, forgetfulness, ignorance of our needs, a disdainful look, flagrant lack of cooperation, lies, and countless other ways. People do not always meet our needs in a loving way—whether intentionally or unintentionally. Our responsibility in these situations lies in returning the harm done to us by restoring the presence of love.

Like the father of the prodigal son in one of Jesus' parable (Luke 15), our response to harm should be a response of love. We find a way to “throw a party” for those who have harmed us. We listen and respond to their needs. From a behavioral standpoint, forgiveness works in a practical way by building up the relationship of love that another person has broken by harming us.

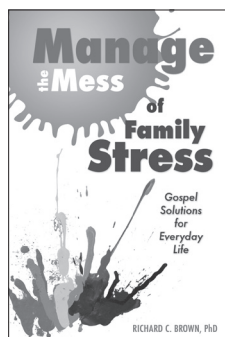
The third behavior of Jesus—**the use of our intellect**—logically and psychologically counteracts conflict and stress. When we practice forgiveness as described above, we may need to balance the love we have for the person who has harmed us with the recognition that we have a right to walk away from the negative behavior. Our intellect—our power to arrive at truth in solving life's situations—needs to come into play when we're called to achieve this kind of balance in our interactions with others.



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The fourth behavior of Jesus that naturally helps resist and conquer conflict and stress is **speaking out**. Even if we are trying to listen to and respond to the needs of others, and even if we are practicing loving forgiveness for harms done, we still may not make headway in dealing with the conflict and stress that comes from our relationships. So we must use this final behavior of speaking out in defense of our own needs and the needs of others. When the first three solutions fail to resolve conflict and stress, we can speak out so our needs or the needs of others stand a better chance of being responded to.

Though Jesus has many other behaviors for us to model, these four taken together provide an ideal package for dealing with daily life at home and at work. ☼



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# Mailbox

ONE LIGUORI DRIVE, LIGUORI, MO 63057 • NEWSLETTER@LIGUORI.ORG

**Q.** *It is almost Election Day. I am always filled with anxiety during this period of time. I feel torn when I consider the different candidates. No candidate seems to represent what I feel is most important. I get very discouraged and worried that I might make the wrong decision.*

**A.** A few years ago, I penned a reflection for the SA newsletter that seemed to be quite helpful. It did not provide all the answers, but it did provide some useful guidance. I have made this reflection available to all on Facebook.

Just visit the “Understanding Scrupulosity” page and you will be able to read it. I hope it helps to lessen your anxiety.



**Q.** *This may sound strange, but am I required to help my elderly neighbor when I see her struggling with everyday tasks? I am much younger than she is and could perform the tasks very quickly, but I do not offer to help. Am I committing a sin of omission?*

**A.** Let us remove your question from the context of sin. I think what is important here is basic humanity: the willingness to be of service to a human person who is in need.

There is really no need to go beyond that. If you see another person struggling with something and you can help, then do so. It is as simple as that.



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