

One of the tasks I was looking forward to when I became Superintendent of Wesley Mission more than 27 years ago was providing some leadership in the field of counselling. Every city church has a huge load of people coming for counselling but Wesley Mission even more so. The Mission has always taken care for those people who are troubled, disabled, perplexed and confused, therefore the counselling load was high. But more than that a few years earlier Sir Alan Walker had founded LifeLine and therefore we had an enormous stream of people coming to be counselled and other people who needed to be trained as volunteer counsellors.

I had developed what we call the “Cheltenham Counselling Centre” in my suburban ministry in Melbourne and we brought together people with varying skills and backgrounds and training and established a one on one counselling service. I had also read very widely in the whole field of counselling and human psychology. I had undertaken some courses at the Cairnmiller Institute, a specialised institute for people who are going to undertake counselling.

I had been counselling boys I had on probation and parole from the juvenile justice system in the slums of Melbourne. Many of them had very poor self-esteem levels and I had spent much time in helping them sort themselves out. When I was a country parson I had many people in the rural sector who did not have access to quality counselling or psychologists of any kind in the community and when it was heard that I was working in counselling and was the chaplain in the psychiatric hospital, many people came for counselling concerning their personal and emotional problems. In the thirteen years as a suburban minister in Cheltenham we had built up an extensive counselling programme with hundreds of people from the community finding their way to our doors seeking to be counselled from one or other of our competent staff. I discovered that from the very earliest days I had the capacity to listen, to analyse peoples’ problems and help them discover some answers. Because most ministers are compassionate people, those who came for counselling found that they were helped in an environment that they appreciated. And because we never charged people, there were many who were on very limited incomes for whom this was the only counselling they could afford.

The opportunity to work in oversight of the training of counsellors for LifeLine was a wonderful opportunity bringing together the experience of the previous twenty years. For 25 years I have spent almost every Tuesday Night training a counselling class of 60 - 80 young and enthusiastic trainees who were completing 24 weeks of serious training. Our trainers are mainly Psychologists and Psychiatrists although every week I open the counselling training by taking the theme for the night

and then indicating how Christians can counsel with the insights of Jesus on that particular issue. Over the years I've had more than 2000 people in my counselling courses. At the start of the twenty first century I find that those coming for counselling are quite different from those who first came more than twenty years ago. In general they are younger, more highly educated, most having completed their degrees in psychology at university and most intending to give us a short term of two years only service. In the old days we had some very fine counsellors who served us faithfully year after year but these days, most, younger counsellors want to get the credit on their Curriculum Vitae and then get on with something else.

Apart from LifeLine I found it necessary over the years to establish a specialised financial counselling service, which we called CreditLine. Today it has grown with a very large full time staff and with centres all over Australia and is the largest financial counselling service in the nation.

In the early eighties I was having so many people come to us for whom English was a second language that we established Ethnic LifeLine in order to provide counselling in half a dozen different languages. Eventually we got to about twenty different languages and the programme was taken over by the state government who was now setting up an interpreter service.

We had YouthLine, which was a specialised programme of training young people to counsel other young people. That work continues to this day although others would copy the programme and set up a specialised Kids Help Line. There were hundreds of stories of the way counsellors helped kids in crisis.

Melissa lived on our north shore with a respectable family.

By nine she was chubby child with bright personality and she was found sexually desirable by her father. She was abused and by ten she was drinking her father's alcohol to deaden some of the pain. The sexual abuse and drinking continued and each man she trusted, abused her. By fifteen she trusted no-one and had become a homeless streetkid stealing and abusing alcohol and drugs. Melissa lived with other homeless kids beneath the Sydney Harbour Bridge. During the next six

months she was regularly abused, raped, threatened, cold, hungry and constantly frightened. In her mess she contemplated suicide. She motivated herself to ring our YouthLine counselling service and came to see one of Wesley Mission's youth counsellors, Chris Varcoe.

Chris quietly and steadily talked with her for six months while she still lived on the streets, until she felt she trusted him. Wesley Mission arranged safe accommodation and long term support. Melissa Baker matured. She felt God calling her to Himself. She became a Christian. We went to Morling College and studied to become a minister in spite of the fact she had dropped out of school. She graduated with her Bachelor of Theology, then did her Master of Theology. Today she is a lecturer at Morling and a candidate completing her Doctor of Philosophy! She is also today Chaplain to the New South Wales Police dealing with street kids. Her book, "Jade's Story" has since been published.

One of our significant counselling service centres I established in 1985 was Wesley Gambling Counselling Service. This was a specialised counselling service to help gamblers who were finding the increased opportunities to gamble, because of the growing incidence of poker machines and casinos. We had enormous numbers of people coming for gambling counselling and that work continues unabated. Today Wesley Gambling Counselling Service is the largest in the nation. We are also responsible for providing advice to gambling organisations such as Star City Casino so that they can identify problem gamblers and so that there is a place to which they can be referred. All told my involvement in training people in counselling has become a major factor of my life and role as Superintendent of Wesley Mission.

What have I learned over the years concerning counselling?

For one thing, patience. I was troubled in the 1960's that in order to help some people I had to have an extensive number of counselling sessions. Sometimes I saw a person twenty or thirty times and it was troubling me that I was spending too much time on an individual although the progress that individual was making made me realise that the continuance of the counselling sessions was vital.

One day I was attending a series of lectures by Professor Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, an outstanding American psychotherapist. She was giving lectures on 'The Principles of Intensive Psychotherapy.'

I thoroughly enjoyed that particular course and it opened my eyes in many ways enabling me to better counsel people who came to me. She was the daughter of Dr Eric Fromm, a German born social psychiatrist who like many other psychiatrists had travelled to the United States. He rejected Sigmund Freud's theory that behaviour is influenced primarily by our instincts particularly our sex drive. Dr Fromm said our behaviour is influenced by sociological factors such as the social and cultural environment in which we grew. I had read his books such as "The Art Of Loving" and others and really felt that he was giving the great insights. His daughter was influenced by Dr Karl Menninger from Kansas whose work I'd also read. Consequently as I sat in her lectures on "The Principles Of Intensive Psychotherapy" I felt that I had discovered an approach that would help in my counselling.

After one session I raised with her the problem I was having with a certain man named Don. Don was an intelligent bright man married with three children with a good job. The problem was that he was an extreme procrastinator. He couldn't make up his mind or move himself to do anything. The result was that his marriage was falling apart, his employers were threatening to sack him and his mental health was in a terrible situation. Don had come to see me about his problems. I had never met him previously. He told me that a well known Melbourne psychiatrist Dr Gold had referred him to me as being someone able to help him. I had talked with Don for probably thirty sessions and felt that he was just enjoying my attention.

I kept giving him various tasks to undertake which he always completed satisfactorily. According to my understanding he should now be coming to a point of being able to make strong decisions for himself without procrastination. But that wasn't happening. I spread the case before Professor Fromm-Reichmann and then asked her "How much time would you spend counselling a man with this problem?" Dr Fromm-Reichmann looked at me and said, "I do not believe I can help him under 200 hours of intensive psychotherapy" That floored me. I would have to be a lot more patient if I was really going to help change the life of a person like Don. It also made me realise that I was not the person who should be spending 200 hours with one person while I was minister of one of the largest protestant churches in Australia and a church, which was growing on all fronts. It was a wrong use of my time to be giving so much time to one individual. Having learned the issues I saw my role should be to teach other people to provide the counselling to him. I would need to multiply myself if I was to be efficient in my use of time. In coming to Wesley Mission and being involved in weekly lecturing trainee counsellors I was fulfilling this wise use of time.

The second thing I had learned from counselling was the value of confrontation. Most of us in our counselling were brought up on the values of listening and reflecting upon what the client had to say. One of our hardest tasks was to teach our counsellors not to give advice which so many of them were always ready to do but instead to really listen to what the person had to say, to help them clarify the issues and enable them to come to some conclusions themselves. We believe that our clients would encode their feeling one way or another and that what we had to do was reflect back to them what they were saying in such a way that they could understand what it was that they really felt.

We followed the philosophy of Professor Carl Rogers. We trained our counsellors in the skills of listening and reflecting, paraphrasing and summarising. The primary role of a counsellor is to listen. By listening to what the client says we can help them sort through the complexity and confusion of their situation, understand their feelings and explore the options available with them so that they feel something useful has been done.

It was at this time that I was introduced to the American psychiatrist Dr Frederick Perls, and 'Gestalt Therapy'. I was taught how to confront certain people with issues in their lives. Instead of merely reflecting what they thought, I would confront them with the issue so powerfully that they were shaken to their roots and their carefully built world of security was rattled. Professor Carl Rogers had said, "Listening, rightly done, is the most significant thing you can do for a person." Now I learned that for some people, on a rare occasion, total confrontation with them about themselves and their situation was the only way to break down carefully erected walls that gave them security.

I realised that this was what Jesus was doing when he was talking with the woman at the well. She kept asking him questions about where to worship, and the difference between Jews and Samaritans. Jesus suddenly said to her "Call your husband and come here" the woman replied "I have no husband" then Jesus said with perception "You are right when you say you have no husband because you have already had five husbands and the man you are living with is not your husband." That really shook her! She opened up to Him in the most amazing way so that her whole life was completely changed through His incredible counselling skills.

Over the years on occasions I have needed to confront people with an accurate situation. I have found that this has shattered their carefully constructed defences and they saw themselves and their

situations clearly for the first time. Confrontation rightly used can be the real means of helping heal a person.

A third value that I learnt was the influence of compulsion. I had met compulsive drinkers, compulsive gamblers, compulsive eaters, and compulsive dieters and with all of these you also meet compulsive liars. Breaking down that compulsion is often difficult. The famous Sydney psychologist Dr Lyn Barrow who did so much to help us understand how we can live more effective lives was the person who first helped me understand compulsion. It was out of learning from Dr Barrow that I developed our Wesley Gambling Counselling Services because gambling is one of the most compulsive habits that people can have, leading to stealing from their spouses, mothers, workmates and employers. Compulsive gamblers, compulsive liars and compulsive fools. Until the compulsion is treated there will be no healing.

The final thing I have learnt in counselling over the years has been the invidiousness of co-dependency. I think the first time I ever realised the significance of co-dependency was with a lady who was a member of my church in Cheltenham. Lydia was a courageous woman and joined in many of our activities despite the fact that people gradually came to understand that she was an abused wife. Her husband Morris was a brute of a husband who physically and sexually abused her, who kept money from her and would not allow her to join in many church activities. All the women knew Lydia and they pitied her greatly. In meetings people would pray for her and give her great encouragement. She always had a wistful look upon her face and people were moved greatly to support her. Some gave her money when she was short and others went and visited her with gifts during the daytime when Morris wasn't around. Some diligent people prayed that God would somehow send a thunderbolt from heaven and strike Morris.

I had followed the pattern of my predecessor. I pitied Lydia greatly and went to visit her during the daytime and she constantly asked me to pray for her husband. We all thought Lydia was a saint. This went on for years with nothing happening. We visited Lydia and prayed for her husband. Then one day after reflecting upon her situation I told Lydia that I was no longer going to come and visit her. What I intended to do was to pray for her earnestly that God would work a miracle in her heart. And instead of praying for Morris I intended to visit him at his work and speak to him during his lunch hour. I intended to visit him on a number of occasions and confront him with the way he treated Lydia. I was sick of Lydia being abused while we visited and supported her and all we did was pray for Morris. Now I was turning the situation around. I was going to pray for Lydia and I

would go and confront Morris. She begged me not to visit him. She was frightened that he would blame her for the fact that I had visited him and he would then later take it out on her. It was a powerful argument but I was sure I was right.

I went and visited Morris at his work. He was surprised when someone called him from his office to see me just as lunch hour was beginning. I asked if I could eat lunch with him wherever he ate at a bar of a pub if he went there for lunch or out of a paper bag. Whatever he did I would do but I wanted to have an hour talking with him. I was surprised. Morris seemed a fairly decent bloke. He readily agreed and we sat down together in the work canteen and I had a good hour-long chat. We spoke about Lydia and I was amazed to see how caring he seemed to be for her. However I knew many men who were abusers, were also people who could put on a good story. Often after abuse they were most apologetic and sought forgiveness. So I wasn't taken in by Morris' good presentation to me.

The following Tuesday lunchtime I was again at his work and again spent an hour with him and the following week another hour. I gradually began to realise there were two sides to the story. In point of fact, Lydia enjoyed playing the part of the abused wife and receiving the consolation, attention and pity of all of the other women, and contrary to what we had been told, it didn't seem as if Morris was in fact an abuser. Now having built the personal relationship with Morris I asked him if I could visit him one night at home together with Lydia.

Lydia was around to my home like a rocket as soon as she heard that I was going to visit her and Morris together one evening after tea.

Well I'll let you guess what happened. But the fact was that Lydia was co-dependent upon Morris and she had built up an personae in the eyes of other people which was not factual. She had enjoyed the attention, the pity and the support of other women. Morris actually deeply appreciated the visits and it enabled him to say a few things to Lydia that he wanted to say but could never get across. My visits continued until Morris made a commitment to Christ, was baptised and became a member of the church. Now Lydia was faced with an incredible problem. She had to change her attitudes! They were harder to change than Morris's and I had to have long counselling sessions with her before she became the Christian that she should be.

One of the most exciting aspects of ministry is to spend time helping people make the most of themselves and becoming the people that God intended them to be. The only thing better than actually counselling people is the work of training counsellors who will be able to multiply our effectiveness in helping people grow. Today 2000 counsellors help people because of the lessons I have learned.

At Wesley Mission, this one church has over 3,000 volunteers, headed by a great Adventist Christian, Mr Alan Bates. They contribute 8,000 hours each month of quality service, not counting any contribution to Parish service. This means 120,000 hours each year, which if done by staff would increase our salary bill by \$1.5 million, which we could not afford! In Christian work the volunteer brings much more than personal help, financial support and physical labour. The volunteer also brings personal care, interest, prayer support and the fellowship of the whole church. The spiritual commitment of volunteers adds something beautiful to all your work. Volunteer telephone counsellors, such as our 400 trained Life Line Counsellors who are on the telephones every hour of every day accomplish what professional psychiatrists and psychologists can never do. This has been documented in medical journals. "American Health" (Mar.88) proclaims, "in the body/mind economy the benefits of helping other people flow back to the helper. New research shows that doing good may be good for your heart, your immune system and your overall vitality." Dr James House and colleagues of the Uni. Of Michigan have followed 2,700 adults for ten years and found that doing regular volunteer work in the community " more than any other activity, dramatically increased vitality and life expectancy." Men who did no volunteer work were 2 times more likely to die during the study period than men who did volunteer work at least once a week.

Dr Eileen Rockerfeller and Dr Allan Luks write: "We could see a sudden rise of volunteerism. Good Samaritans might cease to be a rare breed. Just as people now exercise and watch their diets to protect their health, they may soon scrape peeling paint from their elderly neighbour's house, collect money for local charities, teach illiterates how to read, or clean up trash from a public park - all for the same self-protective reasons. Doing good for others is good for you."

Volunteering is not a substitute for paid work and is undertaken without coercion. Organisations who are involved in the recruitment and referral of volunteers have noted that 52% of unemployed people placed in Volunteer positions without coercion, go onto paid employment because of the benefits that they have derived from their Volunteer effort. These benefits include increased self

esteem, improved or maintained skills, the learning of new skills and in the case of the long term unemployed youth, the development of a work ethic culture.

Every superintendent at Wesley Mission has had a huge load of counselling of troubled and distressed people. Often because the Superintendent has a high public profile people come to him from all over the city in order to talk confidentially about their personal issues.

When Alan Walker was Superintendent he was overwhelmed by the amount of personal counselling that came to him and an idea came in 1961 to use the telephone to allow a 24hr per day counselling program manned by volunteers to provide someone who could always be there when a desperate person needed help. The idea of a Christian Counselling service received enthusiastic support from members of the church who undertook a training program in counselling. The re-construction of a Flinders street Darlinghurst property began in 1961 and became the first LifeLine centre. The title of the service was given to it by the sub-editor of the Sydney Morning Herald who called this new telephone counselling service "LifeLine". Volunteers trained for 6 months in order to equip themselves to counsel people in all kinds of personal difficulties. Alan Walker opened the Lifeline Centre on Saturday 16th of March 1963. Immediately the telephones began ringing. Each telephone counsellor worked a four-hour shift once a fortnight and summarised the details of every conversation. The following morning a small committee examined the reports and determined if any follow up support was needed. In the first year there were 11,600 calls.

The second call was answered by Ivan Reichelt, an elder from the 7pm congregation who was one of LifeLine's longest serving counsellors having served for 26 years. He took the second call in and a man with a query in his voice asked "Do you know how many holes are in a crumpet?" The man was not a practical joker. He was a mentally sick man who desperately needed help and he was trying to describe his own feelings about himself. Alan Walker continued to be involved heavily in the training of counsellors from 1963 to 1978. Over 15 years he trained hundreds of counsellors.

The genius of LifeLine was that it had about it an anonymity - people could ring without revealing who they were. It also had confidentiality because they knew that whatever they said to the counsellor would be kept strictly confidential. There was also the ubiquity of a telephone. People could turn to that phone wherever they were. Soon the 11,000 calls had reached 25,000 when I

became the chairman of the Lifeline board and in 1979 took charge of the workings of LifeLine Sydney.

By this time we had a large number of LifeLine centres around Australia and overseas. Today that number has grown to 270 cities in the world where there are LifeLine telephone counselling services. When I took over the leadership of LifeLine there were two very serious problems. The first was that the type of counsellor which had been trained in recent years which had come into LifeLine reflected a Christianity that did not truly represent the evangelical commitment of Wesley Mission members. The result was that some of those counsellors were leading Lifeline away from its Christian basis. It was becoming a secular humanist advice line. The second problem was that LifeLine Sydney was running with poor management, which need urgent attention.

The second problem was handled quickly. I terminated the existing management and appointed committed Christian management without personal problems and baggage that was complicating the previous management. And to help overcome the secular humanist thrust moved the LifeLine centre from Darlinghurst where it operated as an independent unit into Wesley Centre in Pitt Street where it was under our eye 24 hours per day.

With new staff, new enthusiasm and the direct oversight of Wesley Mission Lifeline Sydney soon began to break all records for the numbers of people effectively helped. Soon we had topped 60,000 calls per annum.

By 1981 I was taking time to examine the nature of those who were calling LifeLine and the kind of problems that people were facing. Out of that we developed a whole series of new ministries. The greatest reason for people calling LifeLine in those days was what we described as social isolation - people who felt utterly alone, who had no one with whom they could relate or talk. Quite a number of these people were repeat callers who found a friend who was willing to give support and encouragement to them. We quickly learned to encourage those people to come to Wesley Missions Singles' Society or to become involved in some of the other activities of the Mission where they could meet with others. This had an interesting impact upon the life of the congregation because we very soon developed a large number of people attending services, groups and activities who could be described as being socially inept - good people but just unable to relate well with other people. This group of people rapidly increased as a percentage of the congregations particularly in the 3pm

and 7pm congregations where our members were understanding and accepting of people who were different.

This was going to be very demanding upon the elders within the life of the church to provide support and encouragement who needed one on one support. A second group of callers were those who were so depressed with life that they could see no reason for continuing. These people were potential suicides. Some of those people in fact committed suicide after ringing to give a final call and their number was unable to be traced in those days. It is always distressing to a counsellor to find a person who suicides. I remember receiving a letter at home from a man who simply told me where he had left his will and possessions and asking me to explain why it was he was killing himself to the defacto; where his body would be found and requesting me to go and speak to his partner who had been living with him and explain the facts to her. By the time I had received that letter the following day he was already dead. I notified the police about the location of the body.

Then I went and told his partner who was worried because he had not been home all night. She was so supported during the time of the funeral and there after that when I looked up on the first week of the next training course that commenced I saw her sitting in the front row. She became one of our regular and very reliable counsellors.

There were many other reasons why people rang LifeLine in those days. Some days there were family issues with people unable to cope with children and we often were able to refer these to our Dalmar Child and Family Care and provide volunteers who would come to their home and help them with the business of bringing up children. Others were suffering from mental illnesses such as Schizophrenia and severe depression or anorexia and we were able to tell those people that help was available in spite of the fact that they had no financial resources. We made it possible for those people to become patients within Wesley Hospital, a mental health hospital run by the Mission. Others suffered Post traumatic Syndrome (such as former soldiers from the Vietnam conflict. We were able to give these special attention. Talk to any of our supporters and you will find an inspiring story of gratitude and hope.

Jim Tully's story began with traumatic nightmares until Wesley Mission helped change his life. Jim was only a boy of 15 when he joined the RAAF and later went on to serve in the Vietnam War. But in 1997 Jim began to relive the trauma of his war experience with the onset of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or PTSD. As Flight Engineer Jim took more than 50 flights in an RAAF Hercules

over Vietnam between 1966 and 1971. “We flew in supplies and returned with wounded and dead soldiers. Many of the soldiers had no limbs because they’d been blown off by mines. After five years of that, it really got to me,” Jim said. The flights back and forth were very dangerous and according to Jim, there were some nasty incidents. “I was lucky to get out of the war alive,” he said.

But it was not until almost 30 years later that the memories of his experiences became chronic. It was the recurrent nightmares that Jim found most difficult and in 2000 he sought help through the Wesley Veterans Health Services program. The program helped Jim using Cognitive Behaviour Therapy and Group Therapy. “They went to great effort to explain what was going on, the effects of PTSD and what was to be done to help me handle the situation,” he said.

Jim’s hobby for restoring 1940’s era motorbikes was the catalyst for healing. He was asked to picture himself riding past the disturbing images in his mind and his nightmares ceased. “I’d focus on getting on my motorbike and riding past the dead bodies to meet up with all my mates. There’s been no recurrence of the nightmares since. I really love not having to wake up to something horrible,” he said. The bike that got him through his trauma was an antique British BSA J12 1936 model 500cc with green petrol tank. The bike has won six trophies. Since then he has rebuilt two more and is currently working on a 1929 model.

To show his thankfulness, Jim has become a Wesley Mission donor on a regular basis. “Since the program, I’ve been told I am a changed man,” Jim said. “One friend told me I had sparkling eyes. I feel reborn in a sense.” “I believe donating regularly is the least I can do to support the good work of Wesley Mission”.

But I found another group of people who had consistent problems with their money. These were people who were running into debt, who were unable to control the new credit cards that were so freely being given out by banks and those people that were losing money because of increasing gambling on poker machines. I realised if LifeLine was to effectively continue its work it would need to develop a subsidiary series of specialised services.

We had YouthLine a programme that was organised and run by youth for youth. Eventually YouthLine handed over most of its activities to the Kids Help Line where it continues strongly to this day.

CreditLine I established to help bring specialist counsellors with training in financial management, such as accountants, tax experts and bank managers who became counsellors. People who often rang with very deep problems and then came with bundles of unpaid bills and accounts to work out their situation one-on-one with one of our face to face financial counsellors. The task of credit counselling is today an enormous one and the work has spread now to cover the entire nation. Every credit counsellor throughout Australia has access to a special hotline into our CreditLine when they have problems and need advice. CreditLine is today the largest financial counselling service in the nation.

In 1981, there was concern with the large number of immigrants into the community who were suiciding. I decided to establish Ethnic LifeLine, a service where we trained people from a score of nationalities and provided counselling in more than twenty languages plus a free interpreter service. This service took off like wildfire, not so much from people who wanted to commit suicide from different ethnic backgrounds but from people who wanted someone to translate the instructions on a new washing machine that they had purchased or to understand the ingredients in a packet from a supermarket. This free Ethnic LifeLine counselling and interpretation service eventually was taken over by the State Government and run as a free government service providing interpretation to new arrivals who did not speak English.

In the middle 1980's a chance conversation with the then premier Barry Unsworth alerted me to a growing problem. Barry Unsworth indicated that his advisors had told him that gambling was going to become a major issue in society over the next ten years. He encouraged me to set up specialist counsellors just to deal with compulsive gamblers. These people needed strong psychological training as well as general counselling skills. I employed Mitchell Brown as the first full time gambling counsellor in the nation. Today he has built up an enviable record as being the father of gambling counsellors throughout the nation. We have been responsible for training most of the gambling counsellors in the nation. We likewise provide a nationwide telephone service for counsellors in remote and rural areas. In recent days this work has expanded into various ethnic communities and we provide Korean and Chinese gambling counsellors to deal specifically with the problems from those communities. With the opening of the casinos not only has the number of compulsive gamblers increased, but also the State Government levy upon casino turn-over has meant that the government through the Casino Community Benefit Trust of which I have been a trustee since its incorporation, has been able to fund up gambling counselling across the state.

The old problem of suicide stayed with us. By 1990 I began to despair at the continuously increasing number of people who killed themselves each year. Because of the effectiveness of a campaign the Wesley Mission had run in 1979 to introduce seatbelts, .05 random breath testing and several other methods, the road toll in Sydney was being reduced year by year. The time came when suicide was the major cause of death outranking that of even road death among healthy Australians. Today 2800 people every year commit suicide and about 14 times that number contemplate or attempt it. That led us to set up a national strategy called Wesley LifeForce Suicide Prevention Service.

Today in conjunction with local community groups we have conducted hundreds of seminars training tens of thousands of ordinary Australians to identify the signs of suicide and to take practical steps to help a person who may be a future victim. We recently conducted seminars in 64 country towns throughout Victoria and are at the moment completing hundreds of seminars covering every community in NSW.

The final area of work, which became a specialist support service to people in need, was the establishment of Wesley Legal Service. This is a service which has brought together a group of qualified barristers and solicitors who work for Wesley Mission and who take up the cause of people who have lost their homes, jobs and personal self worth because of their own stupidity through gambling. The numbers of people who lose their home and who face court because of gambling debts is enormous. Frequently their families are very severely disadvantaged because of the sickness of compulsive gambling.

Recently one of our solicitors reported to me that she had been preparing with a QC a fraud case where the client stole \$900 000 from her employer and lost it all on poker machines. She is only a young woman who has a passion for tennis and loves walking her pet dog. But this coming Friday she will go to jail for a long period of time. She is also working with a prisoner at Emu Plains who stole \$76, 000 from her employer and put all of her money into poker machines. She is now doing two years prison and we are conducting an appeal on her behalf. Our solicitors appeared on behalf of a young father who has three children under the age of five who received an over payment of \$60, 000 from Work Cover and did not return it. He spent the money on the poker machines and as it is, was to be sentenced to a prison term. Our legal team eventually were able to have him released on a 2 year bond and he went home tearfully to spend Easter with his wife and three young children.

We have been to court for a significant number of very elderly women all of whom have been aided by unscrupulous bank and club managers to mortgage their homes in order to get more cash to gamble in poker machines. Those managers were successfully taken to court, the gambling debts cancelled, the homes returned to the very foolish elderly women and the managers concerned both from the clubs and the banks were dismissed.

For 25 years every Tuesday Night I have been involved in training over 2000 people for our telephone counselling services. My name is in the telephone book with my telephone number prominently displayed because I believe that I should be available for people to ring in times of crisis. Consequently on many nights of the week I have calls at 2 or 3 am from people wanting to tearfully tell their tales of woe or of contemplated suicide or of a ruined life. I am glad that I am able to refer these people on to our counsellors who are available 24hrs per day and who have specialised training to help them at their point of deepest need.

Sir Alan Walker realised that the telephone was a powerful tool when it was linked to trained committed counsellors. And Wesley Mission has provided free counselling services to more than 3 million people who have come to us for counselling through the telephone in the first instance but then in increasing numbers in face-to-face supportive work. We do this because it is part of our calling to provide a mantle of care over the streets of Sydney.

### **Pastoral Counselling.**

During my ministry at the Cheltenham Church of Christ, the load of people desiring counselling grew and my appointment book was filled up weeks in advance. I started making case notes of scores of people on 6" x 8" cards who had come to me for help. These notes were not for the use of anyone else but simply to record my approach with them and to enable me to ask myself questions such as when was I best able to help them? What were their common symptoms? What passages of scripture brought best results?

Everyone who came for a counselling session was sent away with an assignment. They had to work at a relaxing therapy, which I would write out for them or they had to undertake confidence-boosting exercises or they had to write lists of personal and hidden sins which were then destroyed. At the same time that they were watching the list of sins being flushed down the toilet, they had to

take into their own soul the fact that their sins had been taken away from them through God's forgiveness. I wrote on cards spiritual exercises for people to undertake and then the following week at the next interview they would bring me their assignments completed. Many people found that they needed to do something like this in order to concentrate the mind and not allow the lessons learned in an hour of counselling to evaporate. I needed it as well so that I wouldn't fall into the trap of being just a giver of advice.

### **Preaching With Insight.**

As the workload in counselling developed I realised that I would need to develop new approaches to counselling. The first was what I called "counselling as preaching".

This was something totally new to me but which had been suggested by a study of the sermons of Norman Vincent Peale. People who don't know this amazing American's pastoral record tend to think of Norman Vincent Peale simply as the person who put together the "Power of Positive Thinking" and a dozen other best sellers. But Peale was a past master at taking common problems and then preaching on those problems so that hundreds of people could be counselled at the same time. In fact through his television and radio talks each week he was counselling more than a million people at any one time on a common issue. He built a wonderful centre combining techniques of psychology and religion headed by Dr Smiley Blainton.

As a suburban minister I started to develop my sermons along the line of counselling as preaching. I would take a common experience - say, the sense of inferiority or a person's lack of confidence, or a person's uncertainty about how to cope with stress - and then develop the symptoms for causes and then look at the scriptural passages concerned with such issues, and then in turn from the scripture how we could cope with such an issue. I suddenly found these sermons really gripped people. Hundreds of people wrote letters and made comments about how they had been personally helped. I also found that brought a deeper relationship between me as a minister and my members. They knew what they told me was kept in confidence but that the issue would be seriously considered as a common problem among people.

I brought a great deal of insight from the pastoral care of the church into the role of preaching and developing the scriptural passages and looking at how the scripture guides us in coping with our deepest needs. Letters began to arrive in great numbers saying how for the first time people saw the relevance of scripture, saw their lives being changed because of what the scripture had to say in

their particular hour of need. I preached sermons on how to control fear, calm anxiety, handle anger and aggression, dissolve frustration, defeat depression, strengthen inner weakness, cope with pressure and so on.

Rev. Dr. Gordon Powell who was in St. Stephen's Church, Macquarie Street, Sydney wrote a most encouraging letter that inspired me to go on. I then brought together some of these sermons and published them as little booklets. Thousands sold every month. Soon a hundred and fifty thousand of them had been sold. I then wrote the book "The Secret of Confident Living" to which Alan Walker wrote the foreword and Dr. Norman Vincent Peale wrote to me "I have read with admiration your inspired book 'The Secret of Confident Living' and I am impressed by the wisdom, sound guidance and the creative inspiration which it contains. This book has the thought substance and the motivational quality to make it a truly indispensable aid to successful living." My preaching found wings. People asked me to preach on various topics and requested that I show from the Bible further practical aid to Christian living.

I followed this by a series of sermons on how to create a positive personality, looking at the issues of self-esteem, self-control, self-motivation, self-image, self-discipline and the like. Little booklets on these subjects sold by the tens of thousands and the book "Be A Winner - How to Create a Positive Personality" soon sold out. This was followed by another series called "Confidence in time of Trouble" and so on. That book also sold well. As a result a professor at Oxford University wrote to tell me how his life had been improved simply by reading that book.

I had discovered, as preachers had before me, that the Bible is living when it is applied to the personal problems faced by people. I also found that as a counsellor much work could be done not just one-on-one but talking to hundreds of people about the same issue at the same time the issues crossed all lines of denomination and geographical area.

The Cheltenham Christian Counselling Centre.

One day one of the local doctors whom I'd met two or three times in the course of visiting people stood at the study door. Dr. Rockford Stewart, a brilliant young physician in our community who was studying for his Fellowship for the Royal College of Physicians said simply "I've come to ask you a favour. I've heard you've had some training in psychology and that you counselled many people when you were at the Aradale Mental Hospital. I'm wondering if you could help some of my patients. They come to me for counselling and I recognise their symptoms but we physicians

have only had about half a dozen lectures on psychology. For me the problem of influenza or tonsillitis or appendicitis is easy but some of this human psychology is just sheer guess work. I'm wasting my time and their time trying to help them out. I'm wondering if I could send some of my patients to you who need some counselling?"

I told him I would be happy to counsel any of his patients whom he thought might be helped by being sent to me but in return I wondered if he would take some of the patients I was seeing who needed some good old fashioned tender loving care from a physician. He agreed to do that and very soon we had a fine cross referral of patients going on.

Then Dr. Gerald Duff, a long serving Catholic Doctor in our community asked me if I could discuss questions of the ethics of contraception with some of his patients. He said, "All of my patients know what they can do but the real issue is whether they should; they want to talk out the issues of being Catholic and using contraception. Father Bracken would kill me if he knew I'd advised them to use contraception. But I don't suppose that would matter if they came and spoke with you." So without meaning to I spent a lot of time counselling Catholic couples who had a conscience on the issue of contraception but nevertheless did not have any confidence in their ability to cope with additional children.

In those days when there were no medical benefits or Medicare such as we have today, Doctors did a lot of honorary work for the poor and I traded off some of the people who came to see me from Dr. Gerald Duff with the comment "I'll do a deal with you Dr Duff. I'll talk to your couples if you'll do some calls on some of my elderly who need some medical care." Dr Duff readily agreed and so I handled the conscience issue of contraception and he handled the issue of tender loving care.

I then encouraged the church to buy a large house nearby and established in 1977 The Cheltenham Christian Counselling Centre:

Mr Bill Fowler, a scholar principal gave Educational Guidance, other specialists gave vocational Counselling, marriage counselling, Emotional Counselling and so on. Twenty years later a new Cheltenham Premises, headed by Mary Dewbury, Marriage Counsellor and Registered Psychologist, opened for business.

We have built Wesley Hospital and purchased Wandene Hospital and expanded into Wesley Mayo at Taree, the only free standing psychiatric Hospitals conducted by the Protestant Church anywhere in Australia, and assembled one of the largest teams of psychiatrists and psychologists to provide professional services to people in need. I would meet regularly with these doctors to provide continuity of Christian service with our values being fulfilled through the professional skills of the medical team.

“The work of saving peoples’ lives at our counselling and health services, goes on day in and day out. In fact I knew of literally hundreds of people who have been saved from suicide and death because of this work.

Recently I interviewed a former patient Jean Loo on my television program. She said,

“My eating disorder had its roots when I was growing up, and chose not eating to make a statement or as a cry for attention. But during the time I was 15-18, anorexia took over my life completely. I guess over the years my self-esteem began to erode, due in part to uncontrollable things that happened to me, and perpetuated by the bad choices I made.

I tried to salvage this self-esteem through achievements – I thought that these could make me feel better and give me some semblance of self-worth. But one year I had everything – I was at the top of my school, I got my piano diploma and played in a national piano competition. I took part in a ballet performance, and I was even featured in the newspapers for a paper I presented on gambling... You’d think, “Wow, Jean... You must have been very happy then!”

Actually, I felt the lowest then... I had everything, and they didn’t satisfy... I grabbed on tighter to self-injury and anorexia to vent my frustrations, to exert control on the chaos I felt in my life. Anorexia was never about dieting; it was my voice, my silent rebellion against all the world. And then I came to Sydney to start Uni at 16, and all alone, without my family or friends, I took the chance to starve myself more. I got thrown into hospital again and again, and eventually Wesley Private Hospital for the eating disorders program.”

“But even while in hospital, I felt I didn’t deserve to be there, that I was just taking up someone else’s space... Each time the doctors made me eat I would do so just so I could get out, but I would run into my room in tears and cut myself as a punishment. Each time I was thrown into hospital, I started planning how I would escape... in fact, I have such a bad track record of checking myself out of hospital soon after each admission!”

“It wasn’t that the hospital was bad or anything – in fact, my team of health care professionals led by my psychologist Professor Touyz is as good as it gets, and I really appreciate all they did, it’s just that I was running away... I kept running away... from myself. Just had such a low self-esteem I didn’t want to believe anyone cared anymore. I didn’t want to believe I was deserving of life, or even of help anymore...”

“During one of my hospital admissions, a nurse called Pam lent me a Christian book on eating disorders. I found a Bible verse in there that spoke about my situation – Psalm 107:18-20 says, “They hated all kinds of food and drew near the gates of death. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them from their distress. He sent His word to heal them, and delivered them from their destructions.” I couldn’t believe it... this book, this Bible, written more than 2000 years ago, had this strange description that seemed to summarise my life! It said God could take me out of my living hell... was that true? I believed in it for a while, and cried my heart out... but the next day, as per usual, I checked myself out of hospital.”

“I was in and out of hospital another 2 times after that... on the very last time, on the day I ran away from hospital, I didn’t feel like going home. I had to go by the Town Hall train station to get home, and so decided to stop at Wesley Mission across the road. I ended up in Wesley Theatre, I looked across at the rows of seats and spotted some people I knew, having attended church before.”

“These were people with such peace in them, such love overflowing to others, such confidence... Because I’ve grown up going to church, I knew exactly why they were like that... Such peace, such love, such assurance could only come from their relationship with Jesus Christ... I wanted that so badly... I finally decided that more than anything else I wanted to be at peace, to have a life worth living, to be able to make

an impact on this society... If Jesus was the only way, then from that day on He could take away all my guilt and be the leader of my life.”

“I made my commitment to Christ in an evening service. Not that it was all smooth going from that day on. I didn’t self-injure or throw up or starve myself, but I often ended up crying and crying, curled up alone on the floor. But then, on the floor was the best position for me to get on my knees and cry out to God, and even though I thought every day would be my last day following Christ because it was so hard, God was faithful and pulled me to my feet the next morning.”

“I got involved in church, and for the first time in my life I wasn’t doing it out of duty, but because I really wanted to! I attended every church service I could, and at every opportunity took my Bible out so I could read about who God was. I soon discovered that who I was did not depend on what I did but on what Jesus Christ has already done by dying for me on the cross. I realised that He loved me so much, the value He put on my life was His own life... If He thought that was how much I was worth, it didn’t really matter how much I weighed or whether I got a High Distinction on my uni exams! And when I finally realised that, I could chuck out my weighing scales – I was free at last! Free to eat chocolates! Free to enjoy life! Free to be me!”

“I guess my message is that no one is too far, too hopeless for God to help. I thought I was pretty badly off, and kept telling my doctors, “I don’t care anymore... I’m gonna die from my eating disorder. So what?” I never expected to survive past the year, what’s more to be living without an eating disorder! But the Bible says that God’s hand is not too short to save, and if He could do it for me, He can do it for you too – God is no respecter of man that He would do it for one person only. If you cry out to Him, if you decide to acknowledge Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, He promises to take you out of the pit of despair and make you new. “

It would also be my task to train others in the arts of counselling. My series of twenty four lectures, "Counselling with the Insights of Jesus" has now been conducted more than thirty-six times, each of these courses taking more than five months, and attended by an average of 70 to 80 trainee counsellors. I have trained more than two hundred counsellors in Sydney.

But volunteer counsellors need leadership by serving professionals. At Wesley Mission we employ a number of Psychologists, Psychiatrists, Marriage Guidance Counsellors, family therapists and so on. It is my responsibility to get have the vision to see new areas requiring development and to raise the resources to employ professional staff at proper rates of pay.

Because of continuous media exposure, now 40 years on television and radio I receive a huge amount of mail from all over Australia. They contain the amazing and complex series of personal problems. Most weeks I receive over a 1000 letters a weeks addressed to me. We employ one woman just to open envelopes and decide where to direct the letters. I have three secretaries to help me write replies.

They write personal introductions and conclusions and them incorporate the most appropriate of many responses I have written on that particular theme. One man, a trained counsellor of thirty years standing, does nothing else except answer the hundreds of E-Mails and Internet letters that come from all over to world. On radio there is a further opportunity for counselling.

There is probably no better opportunity for a counsellor than through the anonymity of talkback radio. Done seriously and well, a late night program has powerful effects. Although I only allow one hour of my four hour weekly program for such counselling, I do take other time, each week, to touch one of fifty issues a year: Thus I cover in an introductory statement fifty significant issue. For twenty years Sunday Night Live was the most listened to religious program in Australia. I have invited several psychologists and psychiatrists to do segments with me, but although their professional skills were great, I have not yet found a psychologist who is a good broadcaster.

In the late 1980's I experimented with preaching, teaching and counselling every week, on radio through a true story of how I dealt with some presenting problem, which I know statistically would be in the personal experience of several thousand listeners or their family members. Their stories are quiet, positive, affirming and insightful. One book of them has been published. My stories, set in a pastoral context are the single highest rating half-hour on 2GB for any day, morning, afternoon or evening, by any presenter. People love stories. The concerned real people (but not their real names) of my experience, their problems, how I responded to them and the ensuing result – often with a surprising twist!

When Jesus was to be born it was said by Isaiah "His name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Prince of Peace." In all the years of teaching "Counselling with the Insights of Jesus" I have come to realise what a wonderful Counsellor Jesus was, how practical His teaching is at helping people handle daily pressures and stresses, and what a difference this Wonderful Counsellor can make in the lives of people who turn to Him in time of trouble.

When Shauna O'Grady stood at my door and asked if I could help because of the way her daughter hated her, she was starting me on a suburban minister's quest to become a Counsellor on behalf of Jesus.