



Getting It All Together

A few "nagging implications" aside, Paul R. Keating judges the Seminars to be psychologically just about flawless.

A FRIEND SAYS her teen-age daughters were transformed, never happier, have really settled down. A young girl was finally able to let go of a troubling romantic entanglement that had kept her depressed. Reports of foundering marriages that finally discovered their base for fulfillment are near legion.

What prompts these testimonies of transformation? The genuine application of the principles Bill Gothard presents in his Institute of Basic Youth Conflicts, that awesome phenomena of marathon seminars for the eager, formerly tired, jaded, lost masses. In nearly 32 hours of lectures Gothard offers a basic formulation of how to live the Christian life. Through the use of charts and graphs, stick figures and outlines within outlines, there is the unfolding of a psychologically sound, if not

profound, pattern of Christian living. What emerges is an amalgam of Harris' secular "I'm OK—You're OK," Peale's "Positive Thinking," the wisdom of the ages and the genius of revealed biblical insight.

If anything is a shibboleth of our age it is everyone's near desperate effort to find himself. Gothard's formulations of scriptural patterns of life offer the charted course that guarantees discovery, an escape from bitterness and conflicts, a freedom from plaguing sexual struggles and the formula for choosing the right mate.

Gothard is psychologically faultless as he lays the compelling groundwork for his thesis. It has to do with the self, its image, its acceptance. We are each one God's design, no matter how puny, deformed, average, stunningly handsome or gross we may be or feel. Our Creator, the very Lord of the Universe, made no mistakes. He has a specific plan in mind for the utilization of each one of us—and He's not finished with us yet—just in case you weren't pleased with the progress so far.

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How refreshing to have in the conservative evangelical wing of the church a clear affirmation of the worth and significance of the individual—God's unique creation. Too many in recent generations shipwrecked on the denial and "hating" of the self. (Consequently we were left to hate our neighbor as we hated ourselves and continued to split church after church.) Gothard does in 90 minutes what counsellors and psychotherapists hope to accomplish (maybe) after six months of 50-minute sessions, and offers bright hope to this generation to allow for the differences of God's dealings with us.

Once the self has been accepted, Gothard puts it in a family structure for its nurture and guidance. The will struggles between parent and child and siblings are described, but then scriptural principles of forgiveness, caring and denial of pride are delineated. A primer course is given in personal and group analysis as surface and root causes for our feelings, motives and struggles are described. Each spiritually maturing self is shown how a clear conscience (a great prophylaxis against emotional disturbances, depression or breakdown in any therapist's book) is obtainable when we do not defraud others or lie but rather keep communication channels open by seeking forgiveness.

Nowhere, seemingly—and that's a sad commentary on the church—are young people, or anyone for that matter, being taught how to integrate scriptural principles into a unified philosophy or psychology of life. Gothard, this generation's spokesman for the truths of the Keswicks, the camp meetings and the deeper life Bible conferences of earlier years, has done just that. What a relief for parents and teen-agers to have some sane and agreed upon rules for dating patterns, respect for parents, exquisite maturity, Christian commitment. No wonder thousands at a time eagerly participate!